Alessio highlights her experience, political independence in reelection bid

Kristine Alessio is running for her third term on La Mesa’s City Council. Although she began her tenure in 2012 as a Republican, she left the party in 2017 citing what she described as an unwillingness by the GOP to call out President Trump’s use of insults and threats and its unwillingness to confront racism and prejudice. Her experience on the Council and her status as an independent is one she hopes voters will view as an asset.

“I’ve enjoyed serving the residents of La Mesa. I’m from no political party. I think that you need a candidate that can bridge these differences,” she said.

Papenfuss running to be ‘voice of people’

Mark Papenfuss wants to bring “the voice of the people” back to La Mesa City Council.

“I feel that voice has been missing for quite some time,” he said.

Papenfuss was born and raised in Los Angeles and moved to San Diego in 1993 to go to school at SDSU and local technical schools, eventually earning a degree in computer engineering.

Durden jumps into race with unity message

La Mesa City Council candidate Allan Durden is “a big proponent” of the U.S. flag and as such he wants people of all races and political affiliations to fly it proudly.

“I call it a new flag – not because of the way it looks, but the meaning and what it represents,” he said.

“People have told me that Black Americans want to break the flag. That’s nonsense. We are the flag. You’re the flag no matter how you honor it — be it a salute, hand over your heart or taking a knee. The flag has got to stand for all of us. No one tells me how to honor my God, no one should tell me how to honor my flag — but honor it. I believe that.”

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Colin Parent

Allan Durden

Mark Papenfuss

Kristine Alessio

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Steve Vaus is banking that his record leading the city of Poway will convince voters on Nov. 3 that he is best to represent District 2 on the County Board of Supervisors.

The District 2 race is one of the tightest in the county. In the March 1 primary, Vaus garnered 31% of the vote, just 3.5 percentage points behind former state senator Joel Anderson — a nearly even split with the remaining votes going to Democrat-backed Kenya Taylor (26.7%) and long-shot candidate Brian Sesko (8%). Both candidates tout their conservative bona fides in the deeply red district, while promising bipartisan bona fides in the deeply red district.

However, Vaus also had a heart for music and soon pursued a career as a singer and songwriter. “When you got to get up at the crack of dawn to feed the cattle,” he said. “And I just went down and tried it and ended up getting the highest awards in the industry and being reasonably successful.”

“I have a heart for that social service aspect of the job,” he said. However, Vaus also had a heart for music and soon pursued a career as a singer and songwriter. “That had always been a passion of mine,” he said. “I wanted to try my hand at it and ended up getting the highest awards in the industry and being reasonably successful.”

“I'll never forget a couple years in, once I became mayor, I got a letter from a little girl that they needed a stop sign in her neighborhood. She was worried about her friends being safe from cars,” he said. “And I just went down and knocked on their door — the look of shock on her mother’s face that the mayor would show up at the door. “We’re all elected to be public servants,” he continued. “But far too many people in office focus on the public part — I prefer to focus on the servant part. I had all the public acclaim back in my entertainment days, I’m here to serve the people.”

As proof of Vaus’ record of serving the people, he points to a list of Poway’s strengths as a city — ranked as safest in the county; of Poway’s strengths as a city; ranked as safest in the county; ranked 16th in the state for education; ranked 20th in the state for median family income; and ranked best to raise a family; safe roads; and strong fiscal standing with paid-down pension obligations and significant reserves.

Right now we’re building a brand new senior and community center. It’s been talked about for 20 years. we’re finally getting it done and we’re paying cash,” he said, adding that the city recently completed a revitalization of its downtown and also has added around 490 acres of open space. “All together, I think that offers a great blueprint for the rest of the county,” he said. “Being a supervisor is like being a super mayor, Day in and day out I’m taking care of the people here in Poway and that’s what you got to do as supervisor.”

Transportation issues are of major concern to District 2 residents, especially in the back country. Vaus said he would continue the “balanced” approach he has taken as SANDAG chair if he is elected to board of supervisors, by promoting mass transit in urban areas and funding roads in rural areas.
At SANDAG, Vaus said he has already prioritized roads projects in District 2.

“Twenty years ago SANDAG made commitment to widen road from Ramona to Lakeside to four lanes. That’s been ignored,” he said. “I was able to lead a coalition of Democrats and Republicans to reprioritize the expansion of the 67 and completion of the 94/125 interchange; improvements or expansion to the 52 and improvements or expansion to the 78.”

Vaus said the coalition has budgeted $90 million to start the work.

When it comes to urban area, Vaus said there needs to be more options, but added that he sees a challenge getting people back on mass transit because of the pandemic. One way to meet the county’s transportation goals, he said, would be to encourage telecommuting by exploring countywide broadband WiFi — a proposition he added could also solve distance learning issues for families that lack Internet connection.

“We got a lot of opportunities to do big things, we just got to make sure they are the right big things,” he said.

COVID RESPONSE

When it comes to dealing with the pandemic, Vaus said he supports being cautious about reopening because he doesn’t want to see mandatory shutdowns again.

“What the county is doing right is they’ve been acting very fact-based. We can’t have rules and regulations that are like a light switch — on, off, on, off,” he said. “I know it’s frustrating to a lot of people, but safety has to come first.”

Vaus said Poway was one of the first in the county to offer small business long-term loans.

“That has been incredibly helpful to our small businesses,” he said, adding that Poway was also one of the first to adopt a plan to allow businesses and churches to operate in outdoor public spaces.

Poway also started program where city purchased 100 picnic tables to loan to restaurants while restrictions are in place.

“Afer we get through with the pandemic, all the picnic tables can go into our parks.”

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

With fires currently threatening homes in District 2’s back country, Vaus said it is important for the Board of Supervisors to listen to locals and especially fire departments before approving any new housing developments in the district.

“[My sister] didn’t have the ability to take care of herself. She lived a rough and tumble life in the streets at times. We can do better than that.”

—POWAY MAYOR STEVE VAUS

“You got to listen to your community planning boards. You got to make sure something fits with the character of the community and isn’t going to present fire challenges,” he said, adding that he is against developers using the ballot initiative process to circumvent local stops developments in their backyards.

“I worry about when these things go to the ballot,” he said. “Should someone in San Ysidro be voting on whether or not a new project goes in Fullbrook? I don’t think that’s appropriate. Are folks going to take the time to really understand what the challenges are, what the problems are? No, that’s going to come down to an advertising war.”

Vaus said he sees housing opportunities that “make a lot more sense” along the I-15 heading north, rather than in East County.

“Once she turned 18, they couldn’t keep her any longer in the treatment facility, so they just turned her out and she wasn’t ready for that,” Vaus said. “She didn’t have the ability to take care of herself. She lived a rough and tumble life in the streets at times. We can do better than that. We have to do better than that.”

Vaus said he thinks the county has taken important strides in dealing with mental health and gives credit to Supervisor Nathan Fletcher who helped start a program to fund putting homeless individuals into hotel rooms in the unincorporated areas of the county.

“Homelessness doesn’t respect city boundaries and we need to treat it that way,” Vaus said. “Look at Lamar Park out in Spring Valley. It gets cleaned out and tons of trash and tents removed but they keep coming back because there isn’t anywhere else to go.”

Although the county program is a “glimmer of hope,” Vaus said, there is still work to be done.

“It’s a now problem and it’s a longer-term problem. Let’s get them into those hotel rooms, but we need to solve the longer-term problem of transitional housing and then permanent housing, but I think we’re headed in the right direction.”

One plan he said he would look at would be to repurpose county-owned buildings into homeless shelters.

Ideas like that will take building support from across the county and across the political spectrum. Vaus said he is poised to do just that and pointed to his endorsements, which include mayors and city council members past and present from both sides of the aisle, as well as fire and law enforcement associations.

“I think it’s because they all know that as supervisor I would put people before politics and I’ll get things done,” he said. “I’m driven by people, not by politics. I’m not endorsed by a political party, I’m endorsed by people.”

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdnews.com.
La Mesa approves police oversight, new non-police services

By KENDRA SITTON | La Mesa Courier

La Mesa City Council moved forward with police reforms in a special meeting on Sept. 5. In a 3-2 vote, the council approved the plan for hiring an independent police auditor and forming a community police oversight board.

In a unanimous vote, the council also approved the HOME (Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement) Program which involves social workers and mental health providers respond to non-emergency calls regarding homeless people instead of police officers.

OVERSIGHT REFORM

A year since a task force was formed to create a board for citizens oversight of the La Mesa Police Department, the City Council approved the policy the task force crafted that would hire an independent police auditor and create the board.

The vote was divided, with Council members Kristine Alessio and Bill Baber voting against the proposal. The two lawyers pushed to move the vote an additional two weeks so there would be time to meet with Police Officer’s Association (POA).

A few hours before the meeting the POA requested a “meet and confer.” Outside council said the POA did not have grounds to request the potentially arduous process because the legislation does not affect POA members’ employment. Instead, the proponents of the board want to discuss the issue and reach a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in “good faith.” If the POA makes a successful case to city staff and counsel that a meet-and-confer conference is needed, then that could be agreed to, they said. Alessio and Baber worried that without the meet and confer, the city will be open to a lawsuit from the POA.

“Being a lawyer, I don’t want to be sued,” Alessio said.

Others worried that the last-minute request from the POA was a way to run down the clock and delay long-promised reforms. Without knowing whether the issue will be resolved through a discussion or the more official meet and confer process, the council voted to move forward with the reform they have promised was in the works for years.

Whether through a discussion, meet and confer or a lawsuit, the city needs to reach an agreement with the department about how the auditor will have access to the department’s records, files and personnel. According to the task force that spent months researching whether subpoena power is important, many cities are able to have police oversight based on an MOU and the additional power is unnecessary.

The auditor will take over the bulk of the investigative work with volunteer board members able to craft recommendations for the police chief based on the auditor's findings. Some incidents will automatically be referred to the auditor, including officers causing serious injuries and shootings. Since La Mesa has been rocked with controversy over incidents that did not involve serious injury, including the harassment and arrest of Amaurie Johnson earlier this year, the board can also look into other incidents due to their role as an overall policy advisor.

People can also make complaints directly to the board or auditor rather than the department about incidents involving the police.

The committee will also have the ability to look at events from before the committee was formed, which could be helpful in making policy recommendations based on the history of the department as well as seeing if certain complaints are part of an ongoing pattern. Alessio questioned the efficacy of this but the other three council members approved the ordinance as is.

The task force came to the conclusion that in a general law city, the committee would not have more power if it was created via a ballot measure or via the city council, so it was put before the council as an easier method of approval. Although it may not be as permanent as a ballot measure, a new ordinance is in place to bring an independent auditor and citizen oversight to La Mesa after years of calls for change from the community.

HOME PROGRAM

The City Council approved a program have social workers respond to non-emergency calls regarding the homeless instead of the police.

“Homelessness is not a crime, it’s a social issue but the police department responds to it,” said Acting Chief Matt Nicholas.

Currently, police respond to all calls regarding the homeless even if the individual is not believed to be a threat to themselves or the public. Police responses have the potential to use force disproportionately and escalate a situation. Police would still respond to calls deemed dangerous but non-violent requests would be handled by a team with better mental health training who could de-escalate the situation and provide counseling.

Many cities have similar programs. Nicholas and other city staff members visited Eugene, Ore., home of one of the longest running crisis response teams in the nation that responds to substance abuse, mental health and homelessness issues.

The county recently approved a similar pilot program that would dispatch mental health professionals to non-violent psychiatric calls. However, it covers the entire public and does not focus on homelessness specifically.

In La Mesa, the new program will focus solely on homelessness with the potential to expand in the future.

There are two phases to the program. The first would be to expand homeless outreach through People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) with one-time funding from the regional Task Force on Homelessness while awaiting funding approval from the state that would give over a million dollars over five years. Pending approval, in the second phase, the program would move in-house which will let the program adapt to meet city needs.

The total one-year cost is expected to be around $218,000. Initial funding would come from a Community Development Block Grant and through the CARES Act. Later funding will come from the Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) with La Mesa Police Department supplementing $30,000 through AB109 Public Safety Realignment. Costs could decrease by jurisdiction, and the program will have purchased a vehicle and training costs will decrease.

“Social workers who will be a part of the HOME team could connect homeless individuals with services and even take them to medical appointments. The team is not limited by jurisdiction so they could respond to calls that stem from the CalTrans “no man’s land” and connect homeless people to services and appointments outside of city limits,” Nicholas said.

Nicholas spoke in favor of the program because it would free up police resources to respond to actual emergencies, improve response times for emergency and non-emergency calls and cut costs for the police department.

The new program was approved unanimously.

Reach contributing editor Kendra Sitton at kendra@al- news.com.

NEWS BRIEFS

HEART OF HELIX GOES VIRTUAL

On Sept. 26, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation will hold its annual fundraiser event online. The Heart of Mt. Helix event will feature live music and games and will be free to join. VIP tickets will also be offered, starting at $150. VIPs will receive a catered delivery from local restaurants, while enjoying the online festivities from home. All the money raised goes to funding maintenance of Mt. Helix Park, an historic outdoor amphitheater and nature preserve built in 1925. Mt. Helix Park does not receive government funding and relies solely on community donations.
Open During Covid-19!
Competitive Prices
Preventive Maintenance Available
No Overtime Charge
All Work Guaranteed!

These offers cannot be combined with any other discounts

We beat any prices within 5-10% for the same quality equipment & workmanship compared to any legitimate contractor

(858) 571-8865
FREE Estimate with Installation & FREE Service Call with Repair
(These offers cannot be combined with any other discounts)

Visit Our Website: www.thaheatingandair.com/plumbing

24/7 Emergency Service!
Dems to host down ballot candidate forum

Join the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club for an informative in-person Zoom get-together Wednesday, Oct. 7, with a rundown of candidates on the ballot in November. We’ve invited about 35 candidates to speak to our members, with each of them getting just two minutes to make the case why you should vote and support them.

We’ll start with our usual 6:30 p.m. informal discussion, with programming starting at 7 p.m. Get the Zoom details at lmdems.com/events.

Kicking things off: A brief review of all the state propositions on the ballot, from our own Sean Quintal, president, who understands the laws and legislation, delivering clarity and simplicity to guide your informed vote.

Then come the candidates! We’re expecting an aspirant army from key Congressional and local races.

We’ll kick things off with Todd Gloria and Barbara Bry, running for San Diego Mayor, and the two Democrats vying for Susan Davis’ old seat in the 53rd Congressional District, Sara Jacobs and Jeannie Kim.

These two races epitomize the change in San Diego from a solid Republican town to a major Democratic city. Neither party has ever had two Democrats in the November runoff. We do now. Winner take all. We’ve grown up. We’re blue.

We’ll hear from Ammar Campa-Najjar, who’s running against Republican Darrell Issa for the 50th Congressional District seat that was recently vacated by the convicted felon Duncan Hunter Jr.

Liz Lavertu will provide an update on her campaign for the 71st Assembly District seat, as well as Tim Nader in his quest to be elected to the San Diego Superior Court Bench as Judge for Seat 30.

We then plan a quick review of important, but frequently overlooked, down ballot races for city councils and school boards. All of these jurisdic-tions hire staff, spend taxpayers’ money and have substan-tial influence on the quality of our lives. Democrats have rarely run for these seats in the past, so it’s important they work to establish governing majorities. That’s changing.

Raul Campillo will review his plans to become only the second Democrat to hold the San Diego City Council District 7 seat which encompasses a substantial portion of our members’

POLITICS / OPINION

Repubilcans: volunteer and vote

When we vote in November let us stop and think who has done the most for minorities in terms of higher employment rates, creating opportunity for reverse 911 notifications – known as AlertSanDiego — as well as Tim Nader in his quest to be elected to the San Diego Superior Court Bench as Judge for Seat 30.

We plan a quick review of important, but frequently overlooked, down ballot races for city councils and school boards. All of these jurisdictions hire staff, spend taxpayers’ money and have substantial influence on the quality of our lives. Democrats have rarely run for these seats in the past, so it’s important they work to establish governing majorities. That’s changing.

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Letters

TRAVEL PLANS?

I will never go to New Jersey State.
I will never go to Chicago or Illinois State.
I will never go to San Francisco.
I will never go to Portland, or Oregon.
I will never go to New York City or New York State.
I will never go to New York or Wisconsin.
I will never go to Minnesota.
I will never go to New Jersey State.
I will never go to Minnesota.
I will never go to Portland, or Oregon.
I will never go to Seattle or Washington State.
I will never go to Kenosha or Wisconsin State.
I will never go to San Francisco.
I will never go to Chicago or Illinois State.
I will never go to Portland, or Oregon.
I will never go to New Jersey State.
I will never go to Minnesota.
 I will never go to Portland, or Oregon.
I will never go to Seattle or Washington State.
I will never go to Kenosha or Wisconsin State.
I will never go to San Francisco.

—Randy Swanson, La Mesa

News from your County Supervisor

Get ready: My heart goes out to those who lost their homes and other property in the recent Valley Fire. Just know that San Diego County is doing all it can to help.

At my request, the county has agreed to waive permit fees for those looking to re-build houses and other structures that were damaged or destroyed in the disaster.

The fire was a warning shot for what we may face in coming weeks. Early fall is when we typically have our biggest wildfires, like the deadly fires of 2003 and 2007.

Making sure you’re prepared for a disaster has never been more important.

I can’t say it enough: Put together a go-kit, download the SDEmergency app and sign up for reverse 911 notifications – known as AlertSanDiego — at alertsandiego.org.

Helping our economy: My BOS colleagues recently joined me in approving $4.1 million in federal grants to 254 small businesses in my district.

The list includes more than 80 restaurants and about 50 salons, barber shops and other personal grooming businesses.

Many small businesses in East County continue to struggle as we all endure a public health crisis with no immediate end. These grants are another way the county can directly support neighborhood businesses that are the backbone of our economy.

So many are in serious need, and these grants put a priority on those most impacted since the start of the pandemic.

Helping our economy – and seniors: The county’s Great Plates initiative is now even greater.

We recently expanded the food-delivery program to ensure that more seniors in need, along with the disabled, receive meals. We also moved to increase the number of participating restaurants.

For more information, call county Aging & Independence Services at 800-139-4661.

—Dianne Jacob represents District 2 on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. For questions, suggestions or feedback, call 619-513-5322 or email dianne.jacob@sdcourts.ca.gov.
Plan to convert Holiday Inn into housing for homeless mixed

BY KENDRA SITTON | La Mesa Courier

At the La Mesa Mayor and City Council’s request, San Diego County Board of Supervisors withdrew an application for millions of state funds to convert a Holiday Inn in La Mesa into permanent supportive housing for homeless. During the vote on Tuesday, Sept. 22, the motion passed in a 3-2 vote with Supervisors Dianne Jacob, Jim Desmond and Kristin Gaspar voting to pull the application while Supervisors Greg Cox and Nathan Fletcher voted to move forward with the application.

The shuttered hotel at 8000 Parkway Drive is in a commercial area. The county and partner Affirmed Housing Group’s application included 139 units for homeless people and provision for 24/7 security. Many of the elected officials who opposed the project said it was due to the process involved with the application, not the merits of the site. The county, not the city involved, approved the application before it was voted on by the city.

“I really have difficulty with the process. The need is there. Absolutely the need is there,” said Supervisor Jim Desmond.

This was partially due to the short timeline of the Homekey Program because it was funded through the CARES ACT. All funds must be spent by Dec. 30, 2020. According to a County Health and Human Services staff member, the state announced the existence of Homekey funds on July 22, 2020. The county looked at several sites but only one proved viable. The City of La Mesa was informed of the county’s intent to develop the site on Aug. 12 and the application was sent the following day.

With the grant application deadline a few weeks following day. With the grant application deadline a few weeks after the program was announced, the county did not plan to hold community meetings until after the funds were officially awarded in October.

La Mesa Mayor Mark Arapostathis contested this timeline, explaining that the developer of the project had contacted one City Council member, not the entire City Council. It was then that the city manager reached out to the county, not the other way around.

The county voted on the program on Sept. 15. In response, La Mesa City Council held a special meeting on Sept. 21 and voted to request the county to withdraw the application.

“This project was imposed on us,” Arapostathis said.

The mayor said even the city’s homelessness task force is on the record opposing the project. He also said during the meeting, around 160 residents spoke and only 14 were in favor of the project. The next day, the county agreed to La Mesa’s request to pull the application.

“There we have a chance to respect local control,” Supervisor Dianne Jacob said. “We’d be hypocritical then that the city manager reached out to the county, not the other way around."

The decision means the area will lose out on $19 million in Homekey funds.

—Reach Kendra Sitton at Kendra@sdnews.com.

POLITICS / NEWS

News briefs CONTINUED FROM Page 4

for upkeep, improvements, and free community programming.

“More than ever our nature preserve and Parkland Park have become absolutely vital to our community for mental health, nature exploration, family bonding, play, exercise. Community events and more. As we approach the 100th anniversary, we have a deep need to raise funds for several large restoration projects. We also hope to have enough money to continue our free community programming and events in 2021. We do not receive government funding and this annual event is how we survive,” said Krista Powers, executive director of the Mt. Helix Park Foundation.

For more information, to make a donation or to purchase tickets, visit bit.ly/3YolDlp or call 619-741-4363.

LOCAL CHORUS HIRE NEW DIRECTOR

The California Note Catchers, a ladies four-part harmony chorus based in La Mesa, is excited to announce they have hired Katie Taylor as their Pro Tem Zoom Director.

Taylor lives in New York and has an extensive musical background. She is the music and theatre director for PK 42 and has won several gold medals with her chorus that she directs as well as many honors for her quartet. She also produces custom vocal learning tracks that the California Note Catchers have used.

For more information, to make a donation or to purchase tickets, visit bit.ly/3YolDlp or call 619-741-4363.

CONTINUED FROM Page 6

neighboringhoods in Del Cerro, San Carlos, and Allied Gardens.

Colin Parent and Jack Shu will discuss their efforts to turn the La Mesa City Council into a governing majority for Democrats, which would be another first. And we’ve asked Tyra Fleming and Abu-Bakr Al Jafri to update us on their races to turn the La Mesa-Spring Valley School Board blue.

We plan to hear from Sammatha Hurst in her quest to win a seat on the Santee City Council District 4.

Much more to come, to update us on their races to turn the La Mesa City Council into a governing majority for Democrats, which would be another first.

We’ve asked Stephanie Harper and Yvonne Arambula to discuss their efforts to turn the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club.

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We are a ladies boutique in the heart of the La Mesa Village, we are very proud to carry a beautiful collection of clothing, jewelry, accessories and clean beauty products! We are also proud to have Holy Paleta in our store. These are delicious frozen pops (Paleta in Spanish) made from tasty natural ingredients.
Remember going to the movies? You and your family could go out for a night of romance, explosions and overpriced snacks, and enjoy yourselves in a room packed full of strangers, mask-free. Good times. While it’s true that a lot of this entertainment has moved to home video or streaming services, many upcoming films are on hold until both theater and production conditions are safer. So how about getting the jump on these postponed movies by reading the books that they’re based on?

“Death on the Nile” is an Agatha Christie mystery in which her popular Belgian detective Hercule Poirot is faced with the murder of a wealthy heiress while he is on a vacation cruise in Egypt. Suspects, motives and alibis abound, while Poirot must use his keen mind and ridiculous mustache to find the culprit(s). This new movie version of the story is serving as a sequel to 2017’s “Murder on the Orient Express,” also directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh. And like that film, our gaggle of suspects is played by an all-star cast: Gal Gadot, Kristin Scott Thomas, Kenneth Branagh. And like that film, “Death on the Nile” is serving as a sequel to 2017’s “Murder on the Orient Express,” also directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh. And like that film, our gaggle of suspects is played by an all-star cast: Gal Gadot, Kristin Scott Thomas, Kenneth Branagh.

Frank Herbert’s sci-fi epic “Dune” was published in 1965, and is one of the highest-selling science fiction novels of all time. In the distant future, the planets of an intergalactic empire are held together by a drug called melange (or “the spice”), which allows swift travel through space. The spice is only found on the desert planet of Arrakis, and as our story begins, the family of House Atreides is entrusted to oversee this planet for the emperor. The family is betrayed and massaged, and our protagonist Paul Atreides must flee for his life. Paul joins with the native inhabitants of Arrakis, becomes a trusted leader in the group, and they begin a rebellion against imperial rule to control the spice themselves. The story involves sci-fi weapons, court intrigue/backstabbing, mystical powers, and giant alien beasts. The novel was turned into a confusing movie in the 1980s, and is being remade as a pair of films with popular actors Timothée Chalamet, Josh Brolin, Zendaya and Jason MOMOA.

“The Nightingale” is Kristin Hannah’s 2015 novel about the Nazi occupation of France during World War II. It’s the fictional story of two estranged sisters and the ways in which they resist. Older sister Viviane struggles to raise her daughter and survive difficult economic times while also trying to rescue Jewish children. Isabelle begins working with the French resistance to find Allied airmen who’ve been shot down and helping them to escape and return to the fight. A movie version is scheduled for release in late 2021, starring actresses who are real life sisters, Elle and Dakota Fanning.

Have you missed the library? You are now able to visit us in person on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Our hours will be 10 a.m.–12:30 pm and 1:30–4 p.m. The midday closure allows you to pick up items that you walk-up door-side service, where spaces within the buildings. And overpriced snacks, and enjoy yourselves in a room packed full of strangers, mask-free. Good times. While it’s true that a lot of this entertainment has moved to home video or streaming services, many upcoming films are on hold until both theater and production conditions are safer. So how about getting the jump on these postponed movies by reading the books that they’re based on! featured artist: Annette Cirillo

Annette Cirillo, a second generation San Diego artist, is the Foothills Art Association’s October Featured Artist. Her artwork will be featured on the Foothills website and at the Foothills Gallery in La Mesa. Cirillo’s creative process is the product of her 30-year career as a cosmetologist, crafter and artist. Currently, her passion is painting acrylic on canvas. “I have had some training in the art world, but most of my expression is self-taught,” she said. “Through experimentation of styles and color, with the use of my favorite acrylic paint, I love to splash color on canvas, spray it with water, manipulate the canvas and watch the color and pattern drip, blend, move and develop into something very unique. I appreciate the individuality of each piece as it unfolds before my eyes.”

Describing her artistic method, Cirillo said, “From abstract to detail, I love to see the creative process come to life before my eyes. Color allows expression in so many ways. From fantasy of an individual’s unique style, to displaying your dreams in vivid color, I enjoy each project as it develops into a finished piece of art. I have taken several local art classes but enjoy experimenting in my own ‘she shed.’” See more of Cirillo’s artwork on the Foothills website at foothillsartassociation.com and on her website at annettecirillo.com.

—Linda Michael writes on behalf of the La Mesa Foothills Art Association.

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Sept. 25 – Oct. 22, 2020
sdnews.com

books / art

movies on hold, but their books are not

featured artist:

Annette Cirillo

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Describing her artistic method, Cirillo said, "From abstract to detail, I love to see the creative process come to life before my eyes. Color allows expression in so many ways. From fantasy of an individual’s unique style, to displaying your dreams in vivid color, I enjoy each project as it develops into a finished piece of art. I have taken several local art classes but enjoy experimenting in my own ‘she shed.’”

See more of Cirillo’s artwork on the Foothills website at foothillsartassociation.com and on her website at annettecirillo.com.

—Linda Michael writes on behalf of the La Mesa Foothills Art Association.

featured artist:

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Grossmont High’s Lakeside years shaped future

In the early 1900s, East County students commuted to San Diego by train or by horse and buggy to further their secondary school education at more “sophisticated” institutions such as Russ High School (later San Diego High School). East County residents had two small rural high schools, El Cajon Valley Union High School in east El Cajon and Riverview Union High School in Lakeside, but it soon became apparent that the community needed a larger facility, one better equipped to handle the educational needs of the students.

In the latter part of the year 1919, a new high school for the area was proposed and seriously considered. It was agreed by most people that a new school was needed, but the location for the school was a hotly debated topic. The residents of each grammar school area felt that their location was the ideal one for the school.

Over 100 years ago on Sept. 13, 1920, students began their first day of school at Grossmont High School in Lakeside, where classes were held for its first two years. Wait, Lakeside? Yes, Lakeside. The cover of the first two commencement programs state “Grossmont Union High School, Lakeside, California.”

On July 12, 1920, a formal proposal was approved for the new school, and on Nov. 5 of that year, the $110,000 bond for the school easily gained voter approval. The decision was readily made for the school’s location when Ed Fletcher, for a fee of $10, donated the land for the new school — 14 acres at the foot of Grossmont — and also provided granite blocks from his quarry to be used in the construction of the school. This generous donation provided more than enough land to build the proposed school, plus room for future expansion.

On Sept. 13, 1920, Grossmont Union High School enrolled its first students. But as the new campus was being built, the Riverview building in Lakeside became Grossmont’s first home for two years, from 1920 until the end of the 1921-22 school year. The first graduation class of Grossmont Union High School numbered 37 students.

Those first two years were memorably captured in the GHS’s yearbook, which has been named El Recuerdo for 100 years. The cover of the first faculty numbered 11, two of whom, Carl Quicksall and Ethel Prosser, became GHS education pioneers.

2020 Hall of Honoree Carl Quicksall in September 1920 taught math and science in the new school — Grossmont. His calm leadership and kind and wise demeanor inevitably led to his being named the second principal of GHS in the 1924-25 school year. During his 20 years as principal, from 1924-1944, Carl oversaw or created Boys Federation, Circle G, and the California Scholastic Federation chapter. He also served as a freshman or senior advisor to numerous classes over those years. From 1935-1937, as principal, he oversaw the WPA-funded dramatic expansion of the campus with the construction of the Manual Arts Building, the two-story classroom wing of the “Castle,” and the Auditorium-Gymnasium (the Old Gym).

Another 2020 Hall of Honoree is education pioneer Ethel Prosser, who began as an English and History teacher and

SEE FOOTHILLER FOOTSTEPS, Page 11

El Recuerdo School Bus, 1922
What Helix is virtually able to do

Over the past few months, the unfortunate theme has leaned toward, “Here are all the things we can’t do.” But as schools start the new school year, it’s as good a time as any to look at all the things we are able to do, and plan ways to continue to move forward.

First, while instruction at Helix High School is in 100% distance-learning format, teachers are finding ways to provide meaningful assignments, and are able to meet online with students who need more information, additional support, or just a chance to chat outside of class. Helix Academic Coaches are also available for one-on-one online tutoring sessions. Students meet with their Grade Level Team every Monday for Advisory — a time for the team to provide information for all students in the same grade level.

Helix National Honor Society (NHS) is still going strong, even with social distancing and online learning. More than 50 students meet on Zoom each week to discuss scholarship and leadership opportunities and plan the year. October events will include the creation of a new YouTube channel called “Read with a Scottie.” Helix NHS students will be reading about four to five books per month and teachers to watch. NHS students will also be live Zooming with elementary school classrooms to read and promote literacy. This is just one of their annual events like “Read with a Scottie” booth at Oktoberfest. Books will be donated to local schools and children at lunch pickup sites around La Mesa and nearby neighborhoods.

Beyond academics, staff is providing opportunities for students to participate in other activities. In performing arts, the Helix Dance program is putting together a virtual dance performance. The Highland Players (theater group) will produce “Clue” — all cast members will be in different locations, and the performances will be streamed live. The Vocal Jazz and Music program is working on a virtual performance, and is exploring opportunities for virtual performances, as well as ways to collaborate with choir alumni for additional performances. The Speech & Debate team has participated in several online competitions, and has an entire season of virtual tournaments scheduled.

The SADD Club (Students Against Destructive Decisions) is meeting weekly to continue to promote leadership and community involvement. This is a student lead group and offers opportunities for community service hours. Student leaders in ASB have planned a Fall Spirit Week where students will show their participation using online platforms, using themes like “Mask Monday” and “Flannel Friday.”

Helix’s ASPIRE program has been providing after-school activities for more than 10 years, and they won’t be stopped by a worldwide pandemic! Several activities have been able to adapt to the distance-learning environment and meet at least weekly so students can continue to participate.

Students are participating in a creative writing group twice a week, with the hopes of creating a mini-magazine of student work. The Tap Club meets via Zoom, as does the Anime Club.

The ACE (Architecture, Construction, and Engineering) program members meet weekly, and every other week, the Helix ACE Mentors meet with the students virtually from 3–4 p.m. Then from 4–5 p.m. they attend a virtual presentation from an ACE Industry Professional. On the alternate weeks, students learn basic Computer Assisted Design (CAD) skills via an online platform. The group will work on the project virtually through Zoom using all the same computer tools they used in the past.

In addition, some activities were built for this environment. The eSports program is offering opportunities for students to participate in online gaming, having partnered with Laveen Elementary School District in Phoenix. Students sign up to participate in custom Fortnite games, and games are played in duos (teams of two) and squads (teams of four). The last event had more than 100 participants. The eSports advisor is looking to host Fortnite and Minecraft tournaments through the San Diego County Department of Education.

Helix administration and staff are looking forward to the time when students can safely return to campus. Currently, Helix administration is developing protocols for small groups of students in “cohorts” (defined groups where the members remain consistent) will be allowed on campus to receive in-person academic support. The goal is to gradually increase the number of students served on campus over time, keeping the health and safety of students and staff as the primary focus, using guidance from public health and county officials. We hope to see conditions improve so we are able to add more opportunities for more students to be on campus as time goes on.

JENNIFER OSBORN writes on behalf of Helix Charter High School.

Foothiller Footsteps
CONTINUED FROM Page 10
influenced countless students from 1920–1952. In 1921, she was the first yearbook advisor and in 1922 was a driving force in the first generation of the GHS Alumni Association. In 1925, Miss Prosser was named Dean of Girls, a position she held until the late 1940s. In 1926, she helped to establish the Circle G — Grossmont’s honor society for high achieving and involved students. The indelible Miss Prosser also served as a class advisor from the 1920s through 1951, English Department Chairman, and even directed drama. More than 50 students past and present, visit the GHS Museum website at foothillermuseum.com. Due to the coronavirus and our move into our larger museum space, the GHS Museum is currently closed, but we are checking our emails at ghsmuseum@gusd.net and our phone messages at 619-668-6140.

CONTRIBUTED STORY PAGE 10

Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the GHS Museum.
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’Dine Diego’ month replaces Restaurant Week

Dine Diego hits the San Diego scene this fall for a blowout month of dining deliciousness. The one-time-only Dine Diego event will run Sept. 15 through Oct. 15 and will feature a diverse line-up of top San Diego eateries showcasing their safe dining offerings for alfresco, to go and in-house promotions.

Dine Diego takes the place of San Diego Restaurant Week for 2020 in an effort to support the unique and timely needs of the San Diego restaurant industry that is facing dynamic and ongoing challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the month-long Dine Diego, diners can expect over 30 participating restaurants to choose from that span across the county from the South Bay to East County and to the borders of Oceanside and Fallbrook to the north.

Dine Diego invites restaurant goers to take advantage of the region’s sunny weather and local restaurants’ new expanded patios and curbside tables made available under emergency orders due to the pandemic. For diners looking for takeout, the SanDiegoRestaurantWeek.com website has a searchable database of takeout options.

More than just a meal, Dine Diego invites participants to play. SanDiegoRestaurantWeek.com hosts an interactive bingo-style game board with dining options and the opportunity to win a San Diego staycation package. Participants are invited to snap and post a photo eating out or picking up food to go and complete five in a row, submit to a "game board" to be entered to win. Posting a photos on Instagram, following @SDRestaurantWk and the restaurants posted about, using the hashtag #52WeeksOfDineDiego in posts will increase the odds of winning 52 gift certificates to San Diego restaurants.

Game Board and Year of Dining winners will be announced on Oct. 15 to close out the month of Dine Diego and diners are encouraged to enter multiple times to increase their chances.

Tickets are not necessary for Dine Diego dining, but reservations are recommended. Visit SanDiegoRestaurantWeek.com for more information.

Restaurants interested in participating should contact sdrw@calrest.org. All restaurant participation and membership fees have been waived and restaurants have the flexibility to highlight their current in-house promotions, specials and offers.

CURRIED CHICKEN SALAD

A flavorful and easy fall salad to literally throw together for an easy dinner on a warm evening.

INGREDIENTS:
• 1 rotisserie chicken, skin and bones removed, cut into bite sized pieces
• 1 cup of mayonnaise
• Salt and pepper to taste
• 3 tablespoons curry powder
• 1/4 cup of chutney (I use Major Greys.)
• 2 stalks of celery, diced
• 2 green onions, sliced
• 1 apple, diced (Use a sweet apple such as Gala.)
• 1 cup of whole roasted, salted cashews
• 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
• 1/4 cup raisins

DIRECTIONS:
Mix all ingredients and let flavors mingle for a while in the fridge. Good served on iceberg lettuce leaves or on cut up Romaine lettuce.

PHOTO BY JULIE WHITE

WE HAVE 30 OUTDOOR TABLES!
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the ongoing restrictions from is needed now more than ever with awareness and draw business to a special place to dine, shop and butes that make the Village such to further beautify La Mesa Village. “First, we want events such as the La Mesa Classic Boulevard featuring three dif - lamp posts located along La Mesa... one to another,” she said. "We're built out so it's unlikely to be sin - family homes either. It's the one Phair company project. It is most likely to be multi-family and all-incomes and there are areas — whether they are mixed-use mortgage and everything. You've experienced what we experi - in La Mesa. I can see why people want to form a group just in case the police can't handle it.

**POLICE OVERSIGHT**

At the Sept. 15 City Council meeting, Alessio was vocal about adopting the proposed citizen oversight plan presented by a task force that wrote it. She said she was worried the Police Officers Association would sue the city because the task force did not “meet and confer” with them when creating the plan.

Supported farmers market for years.

"If I like the idea of it,” she said, adding the reference would be a Sunday morning market in the Village. "It was primarily the restaurants who were the most outspoken critic of the move, although she said she was only opposed to the day and time of the market itself.

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Supported farmers market for years.
Durden
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
not a patriot and another side tell- ing us you’re a racist that’s crazy,” he continued. “I think in La Mesa if we can just agree on that that may bring us a little closer together.”

Durden’s unity message for his campaign for a City Council seat — his first run for public office — is directly tied to his experience growing up Black in La Mesa.

LOCAL ROOTS

Durden’s family moved from Houston to La Mesa in 1976. His father — a coach for the Houston Oilers — took a position with the San Diego Chargers. The family chose moving to La Mesa over Kearney Mesa because Durden’s brother was a basketball player — it deserves a Ruud.

Durden’s family also went through the tragic cause we had a friend that lived here in the neighborhood today where I grew up.”

Durden’s brother was a basketball player for the Houston Oilers — took a position with the San Diego Chargers. The family chose moving to La Mesa over Kearney Mesa because of their father — a coach for the Houston Oilers — took a position with the San Diego Chargers.

In addition to the racism by some of his neighbors, the Durden family also went through the tragedy of losing Durden’s older brother, who was murdered by teenager trying to steal his phone.

“Even with all those things, we decided to stay in La Mesa. We wanted to stay,” he said. “I still live in the neighborhood today where I grew up.”

Durden attended Dale Elementary, La Mesa Junior High and then Helix High where he followed in his father’s footsteps and played football, eventually getting a scholarship to the University of Arizona, before bing drafted to play for the Detroit Lions in 1985. At the University of Arizona, Durden’s football accolades included being named All Pac-10, All American, and was also inducted into the Arizona Sports Hall of Fame.

Off the field, he earned a BA and a Charter Leadership Fellow Designation in financial services, which is the field of work he has been in since leaving pro football.

“My experience includes team leadership, operations management, strategic management and I’ve partnered with a lot of corporate leaders and business owners helping them achieve their goals as well,” he said. “I’ve represent- ed La Mesa as a student-athlete, a business leader and I look forward to representing [the city] as a City Council member.”

POLICING IN LA MESA

Durden is a political newcomer who said “one particular incident” spurred him to run for City Council.

“I was down at the Vons shopping center the day after the riots and I was watching people clean up and kind of assisting here and there and a lady came up to me ... and she asked me, ‘Why are so many minorities moving into La Mesa?’” Durden shared. “I said, ‘Wow, OK. How long have you been a resident of La Mesa?’ She said, ‘I’ve been a proud resident for 25 years.’ And I said, ‘Wow, that’s great. Well I’ve been a resident of La Mesa for 45 years, does that mean you moved into my neighborhood?’” And she was appalled and kind of stomped off. That kind of made me think I got to do something about this.”

Other incidents followed. Durden and his wife — who is white — were recently profiled by people taking their pictures and writing down their license plate while driving home by “guys in yellow vests,” he said.

“Any one of these issues could have validated my family leaving, but we decided to stay. I keep on emphasizing that because I want people to know,” he said. “I grew up in La Mesa. My friends are here. I raised my family here and all I know is we got to get better together. This is ridiculous.”

Durden blames the profiling on outside agitators coming into the city he doesn’t see racism in La Mesa getting any worse from when he was young and his neighbors tried to petition for his family to move.

“When I live it’s becoming more diverse,” he said. “I just think we need to turn that corner and have a council that is repre- sentative of the community.”

Durden describes himself as “to- tally liberal” but points out that he has many conservative friends.

“I love my friends. We can have an argument, have a discussion, but we can also have a beer,” he said.

When it comes to where the city should spend money to deal with economic fallout from the coro- navirus, Durden favors increased funds for social services like pro- viding meals to children while they are not in school.

“It’s going to be difficult. The business owners definitely need their money because we need busi- ness owners to thrive, but we have some people that need money to live. So that balance is going to very difficult,” he said.

HOUSING

Helping La Mesa’s most vulnerable is also a priority for Durden when it comes to housing policy.

“I am a person that believes in af- fordable housing,” he said. “I believe we have spaces in La Mesa where we can build affordable housing — whether it be close to the trol- ley on Amaya, or close to the trol- ley on Spring Street. I don’t know how affordable it would be to build Downtown. That is not affordable. I don’t want a huge Downtown. I want the Village vintage, keep it the way it is. I want it to grow but I don’t want it to grow up.”

Durden’s idea of growing the Village is to build up all the com- merce areas in La Mesa and con- sider them all part of the “Village” — not just the area around La Mesa Boulevard and Spring Street.

“Other than that, I have no agen- das other than to keep the city safe,” he added.

—Reach editor Jeff Clemenson at jeff@sdnews.com.
Parent—continued from Page 1

Parent’s 2016 election victory to the City Council was his first run for public office, although he had been involved in politics for some time. His first “real job” in politics was working for Gov. Jerry Brown’s 2010 campaign and following that he worked in the governor’s housing and community development office “While there, I was really focused on affordable housing and economic development policy,” Parent said.

After working in Sacramento, Parent returned to San Diego where he joined the San Diego Housing Commission before leaving to join local transportation safety advocate group Circulate San Diego as policy council where he worked on promoting safe routes to school and other safety policies for pedestrians. Parent took over as executive director of Circulate in 2017.

FARMERS MARKET

Because of his extensive background pushing for pedestrian-friendly, walkable communities and walkability, it is unsurprising that Parent views his vote to bring the La Mesa Farmers Market to the city’s downtown as one of his most significant responsibilities. Parent said to keep it there, as one of his accomplishments in his time on the City Council.

“It is a no-brainer to a lot of voters that it was controversial,” he said. “It was a surprise to me too, because every Friday night I would go out there and see thousands of people having a good time, enjoying their neighborhood and being a part of the La Mesa community.”

Parent said most businesses in the Village supported the market, and only a “relatively small group” was “not happy about it but had inquired over some council members.”

The eventual vote that kept the market in the Village was not without controversy, however. The La Mesa Village Association lost its control over the market— and the money it was getting to promote the Village businesses. Parent said he ultimately voted for the Village business owners. “I would love to have kept it under the Village Association” to him by other council members that the only way to get enough votes to keep the market was to take control away from the Village Association.

“My strong preference was to continue the contract with the Village Association to keep the business community in the driver’s seat of that event, but I could not get two other votes to do that,” he said.

Parent said he introduced a program—the Village Enhancement Fund—as a way to counter the possibility of the market moving elsewhere.

“At that time when I saw applications that were coming in, I knew there was a very real possibility that sites like Council would move forward with the Village Association’s bid,” he said. “When I proposed the Village Enhancement Fund, it was to hedge against that possibility to make sure that no matter what happened with the Farmers Market, there would still be some revenue that the business community would have access to put on events and promote the Village.”

ADU VOTE

Similar to his support for the farmers market, Parent sees his support for the city’s Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance as a popular position, despite pushback from a minority of critics.

“What we have in La Mesa is a small group of people who want to maintain economic and racial exclusion in their neighborhoods and are extremely incensed that these neighbors might be able to invest in their own property to create a new rental unit,” he said.

“It is a weird, troubling thing in La Mesa that you have this small group of really angry people trying to fight against new homes and new opportunities for home owners.

To Parent, these kinds of blocks to housing are a continuation of the historical practice of red-lining—a practice residential communities have used to exclude minorities.

“Is it true that the people arguing about this are waking up in the morning and think they could be racist? No. But is it informing their perspective? Yeah,” he explained.

In the year since the ADU ordinance was adopted by the city, there have been over 100 applications to build. Parent said—a number he points to to prove the program’s popularity.

“When you’re looking at a dozen people who don’t like it versus 100 people who have clearly decided they’re going to benefit from it, that to me is a good indication of a public policy success,” he said, adding that the city’s projections show that 3% of property owners will ultimately take advantage of the ordinance and build an ADU.

“That’s not going to solve the housing crisis, but nor is it going to have any significant impact on any neighborhood,” he said.

CITY-Owned PROPERTY

On Aug. 11, the City Council met with developers who made an offer to purchase the Allison Avenue parking lot. Although by state law, real estate negotiations are required to be in a closed session, any actions by the city has to be reported and any decisions must be ratified at a public meeting. Despite rumors to the contrary, Parent said it is unlikely that the parking lot will be sold.

“We do need to have more homes in La Mesa—and I think people agree with that—but there are a lot easier places to do than that on public land that is currently being used by a lot of important businesses,” he said, noting that sites like Wilson Station would be a better site for a neighborhood station lot where a housing project is already in motion or the underutilized Civic Center parking lot are much better choices for development.

“Those are areas where we should be having talks,” Parent said. “The Allison Avenue lot is sort of a money-making land bank. It’s not a Golden calf that’s been discovered. That shouldn’t be a priority for new apartments.”

POLICE OVERSIGHT

On Sept. 15, Parent voted in favor of adopting a Citizen Public Safety Oversight Commission in La Mesa. The proposed citizen oversight board was proposed as a result of publicized incidents involving La Mesa Police use of force on Black residents. Before the vote, Parent expressed confidence that the board would support citizens’ oversight of police.

“My view is, I’m grateful for members of law enforcement who work hard and do a good job,” Parent said. “But I also feel — and think most La Mesans feel — that we should expect some accountability for mistakes that are made in the service of our communities,” he said.

“Both should be having talks,” Parent said. They can work together in a way that is constructive and not “based around demonizing any individuals or departments of city government.”

He added that oversight won’t solve all the problems but in an “important piece of the puzzle to rebuilding trust in law enforcement.”

Parent also sees a need for public engagement in hiring a new police chief. LMPD should also approach its assessment of the new chief’s actions before and during the Black Lives Matter protests with “humility” and realize that “it did things wrong,” he said. At the same time, parents need to respect the law and other people’s property.

“Peaceful protests are good — they’re part of what makes America America. We should protect and cherish those things,” Parent said. “But violence, threats of violence, public disorder, those are things that need to be handled, regardless of who is responsible.”

COVID RESPONSE

In describing La Mesa’s handling of the coronavirus crisis, Parent said, “We’ve had some ups and downs.”

He noted the city being overly cautious in closing down parks earlier in the pandemic.

“In some ways that’s good because we’re learning and we are adjusting as we go. Of course if we have new information,” he said.

The city’s biggest mistake, he said, is in its use of CARES Act funds.
degree in internet and information services and has remained in that field of work ever since. This is Papenfuss’ first run for public office, although he said he has been watching politics and researching the issues closely.

“I don’t like where the direction of the city is going. I felt like the people were not being listened to,” he said of his reason for entering the La Mesa City Council race. Papenfuss also shared his criticism for what he describes as the council’s inaction on police matters. He cited a report that LMPD had well over 100 use of force complaints against officers over a four-year period, but only a handful garnered any discussion or action. He said La Mesa Police could have taken these reports more seriously.

“After the Helix incident, the city council and the mayor made a very strong stance that we can’t talk to the police, we can’t tell the police what to do. So we didn’t talk to them, we didn’t meet with them — and I don’t like that response,” he said. “I think, even if you can’t tell the police department what to do, you could still take ownership of and have a conversation with the police — sit down with the police chief and say, ‘These are our concerns. What are you doing to address these?’ This is what we would like to be looked at. And that wasn’t done.”

Papenfuss has similar concerns about the proposed citizen oversight committee.

“I definitely support the oversight committee, but at the end of the day, if they can’t tell the police what to do, then if you go by the city council’s logic, then what’s the point?” he said. “But I support it because, if nothing else, it brings more attention to the police force. It brings more accountability. It brings more responsibility and it brings up the questions I think need to be asked.”

Papenfuss said he would support a move to make La Mesa a charter city to give more teeth to oversight.

“To me, the city council should be the ones with the power. The mayor and the city council should be the ones that make the decisions and make the calls so I would support a charter in the charter to reflect that,” he said.

When it comes to hiring a new police chief, Papenfuss said he would want to see a city council working with the oversight committee and the city council and is “community focused.”

COVID RESPONSE

Papenfuss is less critical of the city’s response to the COVID pandemic, which he said has been good, pointing out that La Mesa must comply with county and state guidance on dealing with it. “I understand people want more freedoms, they want less rules and restrictions,” he said. “I get that, but at the same point and time we need to be responsible. We need to take steps to protect people as much as we can.”

Papenfuss said the city allowing for dining areas to be extended outside onto sidewalks is an example of a good policy because it helps businesses and still offers some protection to people.

“It is a very hard line to navigate because you don’t want to go to far one way or the other,” he said. “If you go too far with the protections, you really hurt the businesses, but if you go too far the other way it can really hurt some people. But I do think the city is doing everything they can in this situation.”

In dealing with the coming economic and budget fallout from the pandemic, Papenfuss said the city needs to shelve “pet projects” like MacArthur Park and fund help for businesses and public safety.

“I think we really need to focus on the safety of the community — the first responders of the city, the police force and should be looked at. And that wasn’t done.”

GROWTH

Papenfuss also shared some ideas he has for economic growth in the city. He said he would use the success of the farmers market to bring people into the city and would like to get businesses outside of the Village involved by making space for them to have booths. He added that local businesses should be able to access money from the Village Enhancement Fund (which he described as the city’s “fun fund”) to offset the cost of offering coupons to visitors.

To bring new businesses into the city, Papenfuss would like to see lower startup fees and taxes.

“Because anything you lose upfront, you’re going to make up in the long run from tax revenue,” he said.

One area of growth Papenfuss wants to see slowed down is housing.

“I am opposed to the direction the city is going in allowing these large apartment complexes, and I do not agree with the deals that are being made for these developers,” he said.

Parent said his other priorities if he is elected to the next City Council will be implementing the Climate Action Plan and expanding bike lanes and pedestrian safety.

— Reach editor Jeff Clemenson at jeff@sdnews.com.

The way we celebrate these days has changed. But one thing hasn’t. Though metallic foil balloons seem harmless, they can actually be dangerous around electric power lines. The metal in the balloons can cause the line to arc and spark. So keep balloons securely tied down or weighted when outdoors. Always deflate and dispose of them when the party’s over. And when we all return to our normal celebrations, think about using festive rubber or vinyl balloons instead.

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Parent continues from Page 10

funds. The city’s initial proposal was to use all the money for city costs or some relief to businesses.

“I think both those things are good to spend money on but we were completely missing any direct support for our most vulnerable residents,” he said.

Parent proposed spending an equal amount on businesses and renters behind on payments, but ultimately only managed to get some money for at-risk residents, with the lion’s share going to local businesses.

“Budgets are really expressions of values and I think La Mesa wants to look after our most vulnerable and we want to prevent people from falling into homelessness and we want to treat people with compassion,” he said.

“I was able to get a little compassion out of my colleagues but not what I think is a fair amount.”

With the economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic, Parent sees City Council budget discussions on the horizon.

“We’re in a position where we do have pretty substantial operating reserves, so we don’t have to make really hard choices right away, but we do get to look to the future,” he said.

Parent said his spending priorities are public safety and any program that helps get out of the economic troubles from COVID.

“We need to make sure that we’re not cutting our development services so tightly that no one can get a permit application to open a new business,” he added. “We need to make sure that if someone wants to come to the city and create jobs, a tax revenue generating business, we’re in a position to say yes to them.”

Parent said his other priorities if he is elected to the next City Council will be implementing the Climate Action Plan and expanding bike lanes and pedestrian safety.
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