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& Chino Hills News

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Our 131st year

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Prison escapee caught in less than 24 hours

By Josh Thompson

Chino Police Chief Karen Comstock is calling for improvements to the northern area of the California Institution for Men in Chino, following Sunday's escape of a 33-year-old inmate who was captured less than 24 hours later in the San Diego County city of Encinitas.

"This is the third oldest prison in the state. It's a very difficult institution to search because of how it is laid out," Chief Comstock said Tuesday. "The por-

tion of the facility where the inmate escaped does not have an electric fence."

Michael Garrett, 33, a San Diego County resident, escaped from his prison dormitory sometime between 4 and 9 p.m. Sunday, said California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation spokeswoman Krissi Khokhobashvili.

He was the first inmate since March 21, 2003 to escape the prison at 14901 Central Ave., prison officials said. That inmate—Robert Raymond Nira of



Michael Garrett

Riverside County— was captured six weeks later at a home in Paramount.

"At around 9:15 p.m., it was discovered that Mr. Garrett was not accounted for during the evening inmate count. An emergency search was immediately conducted, and Mr. Garrett was not found. Escape procedures were immediately activated," Ms. Khokhobashvili said.

Chief Comstock said her department got a call at 9:48 p.m. from the prison saying they had a "Stage 1" problem, meaning they were performing an emergency inmate count.

"Officers went to the pris-

on. Our job was to set up a perimeter around the prison while prison officials try to determine what is happening," Chief Comstock said.

She said Mr. Garrett was having a problem with prison officials that night, and was possibly in a "mental health collapse."

Sometime Sunday, the inmate left his dorm in a minimum-security facility and went to an area to grab equipment to help him escape through a northern fence line.

See ESCAPEE, Page A2

Health in the valley



Champion photo by Dawn Marks

Many people enjoy the potential health benefits of yoga. To learn more about this activity, and other ways to stay healthy and happy in 2018, read the special Healthy Living section on Pages AA1-AA10.

Council member accused of violating Brown Act

By Erin Tobin

He called it "the hardest thing he ever had to do."

Former Chino mayor Larry Walker made this statement Dec. 19 during a city council meeting before bringing up an accusation that one Chino city councilman was guilty of violating the Brown Act by having private conferences with other council members regarding the failed Chino Francis Estates project.

Finishing what he started on Dec. 19, Mr. Walker accused Paul Rodriguez without naming him at Tuesday's city council meeting.

Mr. Rodriguez is the newest member of the Chino city council, having been appointed on July 18 to replace Glenn Duncan.

"An unintended consequence of my presentation at the last meeting was people speculating who the comments were about," Mr. Walker said on Tuesday. "The comments were not about Councilman Elrod, they were not about Councilman Haughey, they were not about Councilman George and if you remember the subject matter, you know they weren't about the mayor."

Mr. Rodriguez said he had no comment about the accusation.

The Brown Act

The Brown Act is the state's open meeting law that requires public agencies to make their decisions in open forum where they can be observed by the public, except under specific circumstances.

According to the legislation, serial meetings between multiple officials either in person or by telephone or fax or go-betweens, constitute a meeting to develop a collective concurrence as to action are prohibited.

Mr. Walker said he brought the accusation back up during the public hearing section of Tuesday's council meeting, because he heard no action regarding the findings he brought forward during the Dec. 19 council meeting when the Chino Francis Estates project was discussed.

"It's been said, 'if you see something, say something!'"

See VIOLATION, Page A3

Don Bremer, former school principal, dies

Former Chino educator and local philanthropist Donald D. Bremer died Sunday morning at his home in Oceanside. Services will be held Sunday and Monday January 28 and 29.

Mr. Bremer was a school administrator here for 26 years, the last 14 as principal of Boys Republic High School.

He was born in 1934 in Sioux City, Iowa and received his bachelor's degree from Wayne State Teachers College in 1958, majoring in education and industrial arts. He and his wife Carol were given the college's alumni achievement award in 2012.

He served in the Army in 1954 during the Korean War, spending several months at the White Sands missile testing grounds in New Mexico, during which he married Carol, his college sweetheart. He was discharged in 1956 after also serving at the Fort Monroe Nike missile base in

Virginia.

After he graduated he and his family moved to Chino, where Mr. Bremer taught math and drafting while attending Cal Poly University. He received a master's degree in school administration from Cal State Los Angeles in 1962. In 1966, he became summer school principal, was vice principal at Ramona Junior High from 1967 to 1978, then went to Boys Republic. He was a board member for the Chino Teachers Association and a president of the Chino Administrators Association. He left Boys Republic in 1992 after 35 years in education.

Mr. Bremer was a president of the Chino Rotary Club, a member of the Big Bear Rotary after he and Carol moved there in retirement, and a substantial contributor to the Rotary Foundation and Boys Republic. He was also a member of the Elks and Masonic lodges.



Champion file photo

Former Boys Republic principal Don Bremer (right) is shown with his wife, Carol.

In retirement he spent time on their investment business, which included 345 apartments, homes and a medical complex in Chino.

Besides his wife of 62 years, Carol, his survivors include three sons, seven grandchildren, five great grandchildren

and a sister.

Viewing will be held Sunday, Jan. 28, at Forest Lawn in Covina. A celebration of life and reception will be held the next day at the First Christian Church of Pomona.

(See the obituary placed by the family on Page B3.)

Tenth extension granted to center

By Marianne Napoles

Chino Valley Center, LLC, has received its 10th one-year time extension for its commercial center on the southeast corner of Euclid Avenue and Kimball Avenue in Chino.

The Chino planning commission voted 6-0 on Monday, with Robert Nastase absent, to approve the request.

To date, only an Arco AM/PM gas station has been constructed on the northwest corner of the 3.23-acre site, according to a city staff report.

"We're going on the 10th year," said vice chairman

Brandon Blanchard. "What's going on?"

Melissa Beeler, representative for the applicant, said an Archibald's Restaurant will be built as soon as the city issues building permits. She said the applicant is a very small developer and has been financially unable to build based on an analysis of marketing conditions. "However, that is starting to shift with industrial growth and residential growth," she said. "We're looking at next fiscal year."

Commissioner Walt Pockock wanted assurance that trees were being maintained. Ms. Beeler said a landscape

maintenance plan is being followed.

According to the staff report, two sycamore trees were replaced on the site in 2015 because of damage from severe pruning. Other trees were also severely trimmed but survived. Since then, the applicant was required to have a licensed arborist inspect the trees annually.

City planner Warren Morrelion said the latest inspection from the arborist and city staff determined the trees are healthy and in good condition. He said there is no longer a need for an arborist report.

Madrona project struck down by Supreme Court

By Marianne Napoles

After a 17-year long battle, the California Supreme Court last week rejected a developer's request to review the Madrona housing project in Brea, east of Olinda Village, effectively ending all litigation.

Many Chino Hills residents engaged in a cam-

paign against the development that proposed 162 homes on 367 hillside acres because of concerns about potential impacts to Carbon Canyon Road.

The project had only one way in and out—Carbon Canyon Road on which 1,600 more vehicles per day were projected.

See MADRONA, Page A3

Parade faces scrutiny Violation

The Kiwanis Club of Chino Hills boat parade will be discussed at 7 p.m. Tuesday during the Chino Hills city council meeting at 14000 City Center Drive. According to a city report, the boat parade is fraught with significant unaccounted liability and ethical concerns and has been operating without a special event permit from the city.

In doing so, the event has circumvented the process to provide necessary input and oversight from subject matter experts in their respective fields of local government. The parade has also operated without the protection of parade liability insurance, according to the report. The operating budget for city staff for last month's

parade was \$15,635 and for the police department it was \$10,370, according to the report. An interoffice memo prepared by the police department stated that the costs to provide equipment and personnel for a closed parade route in 2018 would be \$61,324 for the police and \$10,000 for the city's public works department.

Continued from Page A1

and that's what I've done," Mr. Walker said.

Public record

Records that Mr. Walker released to the Chino city attorney Fred Galante on Dec. 19 include screenshots of a supposed text conversation between two members of the community and Paul Rodriguez.

Last year, the Supreme Court of California determined that texts and emails of public employees are public record if they concern official business, thus making them accessible by a public records request.

Two conversations

One text conversation supposedly between Mr. Rodriguez and a community member is dated September 13, 2017.

Was just curious, how do you know it will be a 4 to 1 vote against the mayor's plan for a building moratorium? the community member asked.

I have spoken to all the council, states a text message labeled as being from Paul Rodriguez.

In a longer text conversation taking place over two days labeled Aug. 30 and Aug. 31, Mr. Rodriguez supposedly states that the council is 4 to 1 against the Yorba Francis Estates projects.

The comments labeled as coming from him repeatedly state that Mayor Eunice Ulloa is the only person against the project. She wants it her way, that's all. How many people want and afford horses? one message supposedly coming from Rodriguez states. They (the other council members) all like it. Eunice has her own agenda. That's not good leadership, Chino will develop without her.

The Aug. 31 conversation also points to Mr. Rodriguez hoping that developments like the Chino Francis Estates and another project described at the Kramer property on Francis and Telephone avenues

will be model developments for the city.

I need the residents in District 1 to understand the development plan and the facts and not emotional slogans," another text states.

Mr. Walker said the texts are proof that the councilman violated the Brown Act.

Looking for an outcome

Mr. Walker said he passed the information on to the district attorney's office as well, and hasn't heard a response for them either.

"I have not threatened any litigation on this," Mr. Walker said. "If the City of Chino and the district attorney feel that the activities that have taken place are not of concern, it will be mildly surprising, but guess we'll live with it."

City attorney Fred Galante recommended that "because this is turned over to the district attorney it would not be appropriate for the council member or anyone else to speak on these issues."

Madrona

Continued from Page A1

An emergency access with a break-away gate would have been located at the top of Olinda Drive.

Caretaking and stewardship now have a stronger foothold in our little corner of the world, said Claire Schlottterbeck, executive director of Hills for Everyone, the group that filed the lawsuit and founded the Chino Hills State

Park.

Thank God it is over and what a shame we had to go through this, she said. Winning at the political decision level is always our first choice and litigation is a very distant last choice.

Hills for Everyone and its co-petitioners won at the Superior Court level in 2015 and the Appellate Court level in 2017, which ruled that Brea violated its own general plan.

All we ever asked was that the City of Brea follow its own rules, Ms. Schlott-

beck said.

The city will now need to be ordered by the Supreme Court judge to revoke all approvals the council granted for the project in June 2014 on a 4-1 vote.

The landowner is Old Standard Life Insurance Company because the developer, Shopoff Group, went bankrupt.

When the insurance company went bankrupt, the State of Idaho was appointed trustee to manage the project.

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