

» CORONADO NEWS INVESTIGATION: THE TIJUANA SEWAGE CRISIS, PART 5

Will Mexico keep its bargain?

\$144 million was OK'd for sewage problem; no funds yet released

By DENNIS WAGNER, CRAIG HARRIS, JULIETA SOTO and MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

With much ballyhoo, the United States and Mexico last summer announced they had agreed to spend \$474 million to collectively address the “Tijuana sewage problem.”

During an August ceremony, the two countries said the agreement outlined sanitation projects in San Diego County and Tijuana that would result in an “80% reduction in the volume of untreated wastewater discharged to the Pacific Ocean.”

Among the plans was doubling the capacity at

the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant to treat at least 50 million gallons of raw sewage daily from Tijuana.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the International Boundary and Water Commission, a bifurcated arm of the two governments responsible for negotiating and resolving water conflicts on the border, said the U.S. would pay \$330 million and Mexico would contribute \$144 million.

When Congress transferred U.S. funds at the end of last year, more cheers came from local politicians.

“Bureaucratic red tape has prolonged the decades-long crisis in the Tijuana River Valley, pre-

venting much-needed funding from getting to our communities,” said Congresswoman Sara Jacobs, a Democrat, in late December. “This funding will make an incredible difference for San Diegans, our economy, and our health.”

But, a review of documents suggests the total cost may be far more than advertised, and whether the entire plan can be carried out remains uncertain because of a lack of funding from Mexico. Further, Mexican officials told The Coronado News that some of its funding will come from “private participation.”

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Bill Pavlacka carving words in his sandcastle creation near the Hotel del Coronado. Staff photo by Madeline Yang

CORONADO'S SANDCASTLE MAN

By MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

Bright white hair tumbled out of his cap, the strands seeming to fight their way out, landing somewhere around his ears. His eyes were covered by a pair of black sunglasses, which seemed fitting for the day because the grains of sand that would've blown into his eyes stuck instead onto the rims of his sunglasses.

The sand by his feet, however, stayed where they were. It had been molded and shaped for more than a handful of hours, forming a castle that seemed to be shifting into flames.

It was Valentine's Day and Bill Pavlacka — the Sand-

castle Man — was carving out words like TRUE LOVE and KISS ME in the base of the castle.

The letters were written in perfect calligraphy as Pavlacka, a mainstay on the beach near the Hotel del Coronado, created his latest masterpiece. He's been honing his craft for more than a decade to the delight of beachgoers and corporations that hire him for special events at the resort.

A couple walking by stopped and pointed at the castle, pulling out a phone.

With a cheerful greeting, Pavlacka asks if they need help taking a picture with the sandcastle.

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Watchdogs want more transparency with schools

By JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

Like clockwork, a group of community members and parents at 4 p.m. once a month find their seats at the Coronado Unified School District's board meeting.

Whether it's spending or teacher education training, the group members — including a coalition called We the Parents Coronado — regularly make their views known during the public comment periods.

From December to March, Carolyn Rogerson, Anne Sonne, and Jim Fabiszak frequently made their views known about board protocols, committees and curriculum at regular and special board meetings.

“I like to shine a light on the dark places,” Rogerson said, adding she's not a member of We the Parents Coronado.

However, other community members told The Coronado News that while a small group often acts as watchdogs over the school board and district, they don't necessarily represent the will of the community.

And while members of We the Parents Coronado constantly call upon the school district for more transparency in policy decisions and spending, the group only has private meetings that are not open to the public.

Laura Wilkinson told The Coronado News in an email she considers the usual public commenters as the same handful of people whose input to “duly elected officials” have disrupted school board meetings for more than two years.

» Continued on Page 13

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CORONADO LOVE LETTER

It’s “Bond, James Bond” for Christ Church gala

By **FIONA RASAK**
The Coronado News

Christ Church Day School is gearing up for the return of its annual gala fundraiser – a first since 2019. Jaelyn Frey, chair of development at Christ Church Day School said she’s excited for parishioners, friends, family, faculty, staff, and community members who wants to support the school to attend.

In efforts to keep tuition low, the gala helps the school raise money so more families can join the school.

The gala helps bridge the gap between the actual tuition of the school and the expenses of the school.

Tickets for the event can be purchased at e.givesmart.com/events/tsx/, and the event will be at the Coronado Island Marriott Resort & Spa on April 22.

Frey, who also is in charge of fundraising efforts, started in August planning for the event and developed a development committee with Joanie Huck, who is the president of the school board, as well as Lauren Thrasher and Faith Bravo.

These women have put in a lot of work to put this event on and make it the best it can be alongside parents from the school, Frey said.

The gala is a “Casino Royale” James Bond themed event with formal dress attire with black tie optional.

The event will have live music, a casino,, dancing, and a sit down dinner.

Guests also can participate in silent and live auctions.

At Christ Church Day School, students attend chapel twice a week and the director of the church does spiritual nurturing with the kids.

The school enrolls students from “junior kindergarten” to sixth grade.

“The magnitude in which we have created is the coolest part. It started as an idea and goal and now it has become a huge event that will blow people’s socks off” said Frey.



Christ Church Day School is hosting a gala fundraiser with a “Casino Royale” 007 theme on April 22. Pictured here are Kipton Anderson, Hendrix Dykstra, Whitman Anderson, Violet Harms, Tal-lulah Harms and Finn O’Grady. *Photo courtesy of the school.*

EDUCATOR OF THE WEEK

Village Elementary counselor Jennifer Slusher named Social Worker of the Year

this week

25 • saturday

The Coronado Democratic Club will hold its monthly membership meeting at 11 a.m. in the Winn Room at the Coronado Public Library. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. for social time. The program will be a presentation by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) on the rise of antisemitism, and hate in general, during the last six years. The speaker will be Rob Hicks, Assistant Regional Director for ADL San Diego. The meeting is open to the public.

27 • monday

Children’s Movie Monday: Wall-E at 3:30 p.m. in the Winn Room at Coronado Public Library. Rated G, 97 minutes. No adults admitted without children.

28 • tuesday

Coronado Public Library’s newest book club, the Best of the Best, meets from 11 a.m. – noon in the Library’s Winn Room to discuss the 2022 National Book Award Winner, “Interior Chinatown” by Charles Yu, a deeply personal novel about race, pop culture, immigration, assimilation, and escaping the roles we are forced to play.

31 • friday

Community READ Finale Concert: Peter Sprague Beatles Tribute Band, 1 p.m. in the Winn Room at the Coronado Public Library. Project Hail Mary author Andy Weir dedicated the book to The Beatles. Guitarist Peter Sprague will lead his quartet, and the audience, on a magical mystery tour of Beatles classics.

through april 30

“Memories of Miniatures,” by Joan and Bill Helton on display in the Coronado Public Library’s Exhibit Corridor will be extended through April 30. In addition, a new mini exhibit just opened in the exhibit case next to the Reference Desk, showcasing Library Monitor Jonathan Moniz-Tran’s handmade feather leis.

CONTACT US

For news tips, story submissions and letters to the editor, contact Editor Craig Harris at craig@thecoronadonews.com or 602-509-3613

To advertise contact Ad Executive Braeden Stegman at braeden@thecoronadonews.com

Village Elementary School clinical counselor Jennifer Slusher was named Social Worker of the Year 2023 at the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) annual awards ceremony “Reaching for the Stars: You Make a Difference.”

The event, which celebrates and highlights the work of school social workers throughout the county, was held this year on March 10.

“I cannot express how happy I am to see Jen Slusher being honored and recognized among her colleagues! She is such an incredible person, and I cannot imagine doing the work I do without her,” said Village Elementary School Vice Principal Tanya White.

Slusher was nominated by her peers and was one of five awardees.

Slusher is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) with a master’s degree in Social Work from San Diego State University.

She has 25 years of social work experience and is in her eighth year at Village Elementary.

She shared that she believes that “positive relationships are essential in developing successful interventions and or supports. Even the most outstanding curriculum or intervention will not be effective if the student doesn’t feel connected and



Village Elementary counselor Jennifer Slusher was named School Social Worker of the Year at the San Diego County Office of Education’s annual awards ceremony. Slusher (center) was joined at the event by Village Elementary Vice Principal Tanya White (left) and CUSD Director of Student Services Niamh Foley (right). *Photo courtesy of CUSD.*

loved.”

Awards organizer, SDCOE Coordinator Jenée Peevy, emphasized the importance of recognizing the scope of work, from crisis intervention to individual and group counseling to home visits, that is provided by social workers.

“It is an honor to recognize these deserving individuals and the impactful work they are doing to help students, families, and school communities,” said Peevy.

“We are very fortunate to have

Jennifer at Village Elementary and part of our district counseling team. She is passionate, collaborative, and a fierce advocate for the students she serves. I was thrilled to be able to be there to see her receive this well-deserved recognition,” said Coronado Unified School District Director of Student Services Niamh Foley.

There are over 150 school social workers in San Diego County who provide social, emotional, and mental health services to students, families, and school staff.

PET OF THE WEEK

Meet Mabel

Mabel first came to PAWS of Coronado in 2020 after being neglected by her first owner. With a little TLC and proper veterinary care, Mabel blossomed into a confident and beautiful dog.

Once becoming available for adoption, she quickly found a new family, but somehow after 2-plus years, she found her way back to us. Mabel was the victim of her family splitting up and her main caretaker moving away. She’s sad and confused as to why she is back at our facility where her recovery story first began.

Mabel is a lovely dog with beautiful light brown eyes to match her coat. She enjoys every interaction with humans and is also friendly with other dogs.

Mabel is used to being crated while her family is away from the house and is house/potty trained.

She enjoys going for walks and is food motivated which makes her easy to train. She weighs 53 pounds



and is around 4.5 years old.

If you have room in your home for Mabel, apply for her today at PAWS of Coronado.

Please send your nominations for The Coronado News Pet of the Week to Editor Craig Harris at craig@thecoronadonews.com

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ISLAND INSIDER

Expert Analysis on the Coronado Housing Market

HELLO CORONADO!

Corey Simone here. Every Friday moving forward, I will be bringing you news, stats and information in the ever changing real estate market. Should you have a topic you want covered please email me at info@simonerealestategroup.com

Will SVB Bank Collapse affect Island Real Estate

Jonathan G. who is a Coronado resident has asked about the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and if there will be any direct effects to the real estate market.

Jonathan, thank you for the opportunity to answer your question. As I am sure you are aware, the Silicon Valley Bank, one of the most prominent financial institutions catering to the tech industry, has recently faced significant financial turmoil. The bank's struggles have raised concerns about its impact on the tech industry and the broader economy. However, the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank 'could' also have significant consequences for the real estate market.

It's also possible that Silicon Valley Bank made speculative real estate investments, which may have further exacerbated the bank's excessive borrowing. Experts have cited the bank's high debt levels and high concentration of risky loans as potential factors in its potential collapse, though the bank has not yet confirmed these reports. As the situation continues to unfold, regulators and investors will be closely monitoring the bank's actions and its potential impact on the financial system and the real estate market in California.

This news has caught the attention of the US government, with President Joe Biden acknowledging the potential impact on the tech industry and the real estate market in California. In a recent statement, President Biden noted the importance of the tech industry to the US economy and expressed concern about the potential fallout from the bank's collapse.

"The tech industry has been a driving force behind the growth of our economy, and we must do everything we can to support it," President Biden said. "The potential collapse of Silicon Valley Bank is a concern, as it could have far-reaching effects on the tech industry and the real estate market in California."

President Biden went on to say that his administration is closely monitoring the situation and working with regulators to ensure that the financial system remains stable. "We are committed to ensuring that our financial system is strong and resilient, and we will take whatever steps are necessary to protect consumers and investors," he said.

Thanks, but from where I am sitting, that doesn't really help ease minds... So, let's dive a little deeper to determine if this has any direct effects on real estate?

The real estate market in Silicon Valley and the surrounding areas is closely tied to the tech industry which will feel the direct impact. As tech companies have grown and expanded, the demand for housing and commercial real estate in the area has skyrocketed. Many tech workers earn high salaries, and they have been willing to pay a premium to live in the heart of Silicon Valley. This has led to soaring real estate prices.

While Silicon Valley Bank is based in Northern California, its collapse could still have an impact on the real estate market in Southern California. This is because the bank's lending practices and investment decisions have played a role in fueling the growth of the tech industry and real estate market in both regions.

One way that the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank could impact Southern California real estate is through a ripple effect. If the bank were to fail, it could lead to a decrease in lending activity and an increase in interest rates, which would make it more difficult for developers and homebuyers to obtain financing. This could lead to a slowdown in the real estate market, which would impact both Northern and Southern California.

However, following the news of the bank's trouble, interest rates on US government bonds fell sharply, with the yield on the 10-year Treasury note dropping from 1.50% to 1.46% in the week following the news. This drop in yields reflects increased demand for safe-haven assets and suggests that investors are becoming more risk-averse in the face of a potential bank system collapse. This could lead to lower borrowing costs for US consumers and businesses, as interest rates on mortgages and other loans tend to track the yields on government bonds. It's important to note that mortgage rates are influenced by a variety of factors, including economic growth, inflation, and the actions of the Federal Reserve. While the potential collapse of Silicon Valley Bank has played a role in the recent increase in rates, it is likely that other factors are also contributing to the rise.

Additionally, it is important to note, Silicon Valley Bank has financed real estate developments in Southern California, particularly in the Los Angeles area. This could lead to a disruption in these projects and a slowdown in new construction, which would impact the supply of real estate in the area.

It's possible that the bank may be able to avoid total collapse through a merger or acquisition by a larger financial institution. While the situation is still uncertain, investors and homeowners can take comfort in the fact that US regulators are closely monitoring the situation and are prepared to take action if necessary to protect consumers and investors.

It is important to note that the impact of Silicon Valley Bank's collapse on Southern California real estate is difficult to predict. The real estate market is influenced by a variety of factors, including interest rates, economic growth, geopolitical events and demographic trends.

While the collapse of a major financial institution like Silicon Valley Bank could certainly have an impact, it is just one of many factors that will determine the direction of the market in the coming years. Some homebuyers and investors may experience short-term disruptions, the overall health of the California real estate market remains strong, with high demand and low inventory driving prices up thus the bank's impact on the real estate market and the broader economy may be limited. I will be sure to keep you informed should we start to see a trend with other banks in hot water. If that happens, that will create a whole other set of issues that the real estate market will feel.

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OPINION

OP-ED: JAMES COOPER

SAME AS IT EVER WAS: DECADES OF SEWAGE AND STILL NOT ENOUGH REMEDIES

For years, the beaches of Coronado have been periodically shut down by governmental authorities as millions of gallons of raw sewage wend their way up the coast from Tijuana.

Rainfalls create runoff from storm waters which combines with human waste that emanates from pipe leaks at the deteriorating San Antonio de Los Buenos sewage treatment plant in Punta Bandera. For good measure, add industrial toxins from maquiladoras, border factories that dot the Otay Mesa landscape.

It flows into the Tijuana River Valley and out to the Pacific Ocean, eventually making its way to the shores of Coronado.

The valley navigates along an environmentally sensitive area, a vast watershed covering a 1,735-square-mile area straddling the United States and Mexico. Throughout the region, human safety and plant and animal health are at risk, never mind the intolerable stench that seriously impacts the quality of life.

Sewage keeps on coming

And while these two sovereign States have attempted to stem this binational disaster, the sewage keeps on coming.

Non-state actors (NSAs) like non-governmental organizations and citizen advocacy groups as well as local cities like Imperial Beach have stepped into the fray, but hopefully not the sewage.

But lawsuits are one thing; finding more permanent fixes are quite another matter.

The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) is the international agency created by a treaty between the U.S. and Mexico, tasked to deal with transborder water issues along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The agency has its antecedents in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo 1848 that concluded the U.S.-Mexico War.



James Cooper is Professor of Law and Director of International Legal Studies at California Western School of Law in San Diego.

A subsequent treaty between the two countries, one of many, is the 1944 United States-Mexico Treaty for Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande.

This treaty created the process by which “Minutes” – further ad-hoc arrangements of a binational nature can be fashioned to respond to changing conditions.

Treaty regimes, like pipes, need repair

These treaty regimes, like the pipes in the water treatment plant south of the border, however, are old and in need of repair.

The IBWC system may have worked 80 years ago, but most critics view the current mandate, structure, and jurisdiction of the IBWC as inadequate to handle the complexities involved with water management on the border.

In the end this system still relies on the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Mexico and the U.S. State Department and the respective Congresses of each country to fund activities.

There have been thoughtful attempts to update the work and reach of the IBWC. In 2015, the agency established three working groups related to water quality, sediment, and sand solid waste, all comprised of stakeholders from both side of the border through its Minute 320.

A Binational Core Group was established, comprising representatives of the IBWC, federal, state and local authorities and non-governmental organization from both countries, “to assist with the formulation of recommendations regarding transboundary issues in the Tijuana River Basin.”

Power of the purse

And while mechanisms to provide for the participation of citizens and public interest groups and recommendations can be helpful, these mecha-

nisms do not have the power of the purse.

Moreover, some NSAs, for all their good intentions, may be unaccountable to citizens and the community.

It may be time again for the two country partners to work out a new treaty to create a permanent set of solutions for the ongoing sewage spills, rather than rely on the understaffed IBWC.

The entry into force of the 2020 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement , the trade agreement among three sovereign States that replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement is a case in point.

The new treaty resulted in a \$300 million fund to address the Tijuana River sewage crisis, breathing new life into a set of remedies to begin to solve this seemingly never ending problem. Of course, those funds, after a procurement bidding process, are earmarked for contracts to corporations, other NSAs, to re-address the sewage issues.

Time for a new response

And the Mexican authorities need to step up their efforts to keep the country’s toxic waste from seeping into the U.S. side.

It is time to dispense with the endless cycles of feasibility studies and studies of those studies.

The binational region, the shared environment, and the quality of life on both sides of our shared border necessitate a new and robust binational response. It is time for both countries to not rely on the plethora of NSAs on the ground (or rather mired in the sewage).

After all, a safe and healthy environment is one of the public goods that sovereign States should provide to its citizens as part of the social contract.

James Cooper is Professor of Law and Director of International Legal Studies at California Western School of Law in San Diego. He is the author of *Same as It Ever Was*, a law review article on the Tijuana River sewage crisis that was published last year in the *Cardozo International and Comparative Law Review* and co-director and producer of an accompanying documentary video.

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CORONADO

Rachel Sanders, 10, shows who is the greatest showwoman at 6th annual “Coronado’s Talent”

By **MADELINE YANG**
The Coronado News

A chair-stacking acrobat, a stand-up comedian, a 16-year-old singer.

Those were among the acts Thursday night, as a “Coronado’s Talent” sign in bright, neon colors hung above while roughly 600 people walked into the Coronado Performing Arts Center.

There were 20 of Coronado’s most talented acts and three went home winners from the variety show, which raises funds for the Coronado Schools Foundation and The Coronado School of the Arts.

High energy

Show creator Alan Kinzel and co-host Larry Delrose strutted on the stage with high energy, with Delrose in a black suit and Kinzel in a smart white blazer.

Since 2017, Delrose has been the show’s emcee as well as the production architect.

Kinzel and his wife, Lisa, have operated the talent show for more than half a decade, their first show opening six years ago. The pair created the show, produce it and co-host it every year.

“It was the best show of all six years,” Kinzel told The Coronado News after the last performance. “The acts were so good and so diversified.”

Diversified program

And diversified, it was.

The show opened with five kids who go by Kid Tributes, covering a Led Zeppelin song, to a competitive jump rope team known as the Speed Spinners. And the show closed with the Coronado Arts Academy performing a live soundtrack to a new Disney+ show, with 17 other talents in between.

Four judges sat in front of the stage, brimming with emotion by several of the acts.



Rachel Sanders singing Never Enough from the Greatest Showman. Staff photos by Madeline Yang

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CORONADO

They were Coronado Mayor Richard Bailey, co-creator Lisa Kinzel, health and wellness coach Dan Boyle and Emmy award-winning journalist Jane Mitchell.

“It was a beautiful night of journeys, storytelling and surprises,” Mitchell said, having been a judge on the show for the last five years.

10-year-old gets standing ovation

One act in particular brought Mitchell and the judges to tears, and that was 10-year-old Rachel Sanders.

It felt like a collective wave of emotion washed over the crowd as cheers and applause erupted from the seats as she sang, reaching the high notes in her song “Never Enough” from “The Greatest Showman.”

Sanders’ last syllable had barely left her mouth when the judges and the crowd rushed to their feet and gave the night’s only full standing ovation.

Sanders was one of the co-winners, along with two other acts: Emily Smith and the Dream Girls.

“I’m excited, I wasn’t nervous though because I’ve performed the national anthem in front of a thousand people before,” Sanders said.

She had a soft smile on her lips as she walked down the stage with her father and her aunt, her calm demeanor confirming her words.

Her smile widened as people approached her left and right to commend her performance.

As the crowd slowly filed out, the winners stayed to be congratulated by their friends and family.

The energy in the theatre was getting quieter, the echoes of performers and the audience lingering in the air.

“It’s really for the arts,” Mitchell said as she looked around the stage.

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The Dream Girls (top) and Emily Smith (above) were co-winners at “Coronado’s Talent” along with Rachel Sanders.

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» CORONADO NEWS INVESTIGATION: THE TIJUANA SEWAGE CRISIS

PROMISES, PROMISES: WILL MEXICO KEEP ITS BARGAIN TO FIX SEWAGE CRISIS?

» Continued from Page 1

The financial aspect of the Tijuana sewage crisis is among the issues The Coronado News is investigating as a nearly century-long legacy of broken promises by both countries has resulted in a public health crisis that has exposed beachgoers, U.S. Border Patrol agents and U.S. Navy SEALs to a myriad of diseases from the fecal-exposed Pacific Ocean.

U.S. tab could hit \$801 million

According to EPA’s website, the initial phase of renovations consists of short-term projects to be started this year and completed by 2027. The agency predicts improvements will result in treatment of 43 million gallons per day of sewage that, presumably, is not getting sanitized today. A second phase of development would add another \$327 million in spending, for an overall price tag of \$801 million – a sum not mentioned in any government press conferences or news releases.

The projects are to be overseen by the Boundary Commission, whose American and Mexican representatives signed the agreement spelling out project details. However, the second-last paragraph in that 10-page document, known as Minute No. 328, hints at potential obstacles. It says all efforts to carry out the plan are “subject to the availability of funds” and other resources, as well as laws and regulations of the United States and Mexico. Replacement of a defunct treatment plant at Punta Bandera, six miles south of the border, is listed as part of Phase 1 and considered crucial to reducing the trans-border pollution.

Mexico has not allocated funds

Doug Eberhardt, EPA environmental engineer and chief of its regional infrastructure office, confirmed to The Coronado News that the Mexican government has not yet allocated funds for that \$33 million project. However, Eberhardt said he believes the endorsement of Minute No. 328 represents a formal diplomatic agreement. “We can’t send the Army in to force them to do anything,” Eberhardt added, “But it’s more than just a statement at a meeting.” Asked about Mexico’s relatively small funding contribution, Eberhardt said, “It was really just a negotiation... It’s in the United States’ best interest to have those waters free of sewage. It’s not foreign aid.” Coronado Mayor Richard Bailey, whose city’s ocean shores have been closed regularly in the past year because of Tijuana sewage, said he worked behind the scenes to get Congress to allocate an initial \$300 million. He’s optimistic the full plan will be executed. “The good news is the EPA has enough work to do now,” Bailey said. But Imperial Beach Mayor Paloma Aguirre worries that funding – especially from the Mexican side – remains a glaring uncertainty, and that’s now the No. 1 priority of her administration.

Top concern: New plant in Punta Bandera

Aguirre grew up in Mexico, got a degree in marine conservation and worked for the Wildcoast environmental group before becoming mayor. Now, she said, her administration’s top concern is to see a new facility at Punta Bandera. Aguirre said Baja California Gov. Marina del Pilar Ávila Olmeda has vowed to achieve that, but two predecessors made similar commitments and reneged. “They both promised they would fix that plant, and nothing ever happened,” said Aguirre, who is working with Baja officials. “I’m navigating very important diplomatic messaging here. But my job, in very simple terms, will be to keep the pressure on her.” Olmeda’s office referred questions to Baja California’s secretary for water treatment and Tijuana’s public services commissioner who said in a joint response that the sewage projects will take three to four years to complete. Secretary for the Water Management, Treatment and Protection Agency for the State of Baja California (SEPROA) José Armando Fernández Samaniego and Director of the State Commission of Public Services of Tijuana (CESPT) Víctor Daniel Amador Barragán also declined to directly answer how Mexico will pay for its share of the projects. They said Mexican federal funds would cover 49% of the costs for “San Antonio de los Buenos” or the new treatment plant at Punta Bandara, while 51% would come from “private participation.” The officials, however, did not explain what private entities are poised to take part, how they would be compensated or what responsibility and control they would have over operations. “These projects are joint investments, marking a turning point in the history of resource management and binational commitment in recent years,” the two



Imperial Beach Mayor Paloma Aguirre looks out to the Pacific Ocean. Newly elected, one of Aguirre’s top priorities is to stop the sewage flow from Tijuana, Mexico into the ocean. Staff photo by Dennis Wagner.

officials wrote. “These projects promote synergies in resource utilization.” During a U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission meeting on March 2, Commissioner Maria-Elena Giner, said she recently met with Baja officials and discussed how each project identified in Minute No. 328 would be funded. She said officials told her the Punta Bandera project would be federally funded. She did not mention a majority private investment. Asked why the United States is covering roughly two-thirds of the costs to deal with sewage that is coming from homes, businesses and factories in Mexico, Aguirre said Americans are suffering from the contamination. Meanwhile, she said leaders south of the border don’t feel politically compelled to solve the problem -- even as pollution also damages health and beaches in Mexico. Once that is understood, Aguirre said, it becomes clear why the International Treatment Plant was built on the U.S. side with American tax dollars, and why Americans will pay the lion’s share of a new project.

‘Greatest sense of urgency’

“If we hadn’t taken action on our side, we literally would have a river of feces coming across. It’s a matter of who has the greatest sense of urgency,” Aguirre said. “And if you live here, like me, and you are a surfer -- and in the last year you only had access to your own beach once – wouldn’t you pay to fix it?” That line of thinking doesn’t sit well with Baron Partlow, an Imperial Beach resident and leader of a grassroots group called “Stop the Poop.” “Why can’t Mexico treat their own problem?” said Partlow, who has lived in Imperial Beach since 1980. “They never follow through on their funding commitment...So, it becomes an American problem.” Partlow said he believes the only way Mexico will address the problem is if the United States cuts off some of Mexico’s water supply from the Colorado River, expels the Mexican consulate or imposes economic sanctions. Former Imperial Beach Mayor Brian Bilbray, who fought the same sewage battles as other political leaders, said he fears the new plan will be yet another waste of money whether it costs \$474 million or \$801 million. He agrees one solution would be to cut off Baja’s current water supply from the Colorado River, which was granted on a condition that none of it would return to the U.S. in the form of sewage. Another solution, he said, would be to shut down international border crossings. “If you don’t have an enforcement clause, that’s where it fails,” Bilbray said. “For every day sewage closes the beaches, the U.S. should close the border. That’d solve it real quick.” The economic and diplomatic ramifications of such a closure likely would be catastrophic not just for Mexico, but for businesses and consumers in the United States. But Bilbray contends the alternative is an outbreak of disease that he views as inevitable given the volume of sewage pollution. “It is probably worse than it has ever been, and there’s probably more money being made off it being a problem than ever before,” Bilbray said. “We’re facing a petri dish of problems. To this day I have hypersensitivity to just the smell of sewage.”



Dark, murky water flows through a canal in Tijuana on Jan. 16, 2023. Photo courtesy of Sara Gonzalez.

“For every day sewage closes the beaches,
the U.S. should close the border.”
Former Imperial Beach Mayor Brian Bilbray

THE TIJUANA SEWAGE CRISIS TIMELINE

Problems with raw sewage coming from Tijuana into the United States and onto San Diego County beaches, including Coronado, have gone on for decades. Here's a truncated list of the numerous failures to fix the environmental crisis.

EARLY YEARS

March 1, 1889: The U.S. and Mexican governments agree to establish the International Boundary Commission, designed to maintain a peaceful, well-defined boundary between the two nations.

1934: The U.S. and Mexican governments instruct the International Boundary Commission to cooperate in the preparation of a report on the Tijuana sewage problem.

1935: Tijuana builds a new community septic tank designed to accommodate the wastes of 5,000 people. This project comes five years after Mexican federal census figures have revealed the Tijuana population to be 11,271.

1938-39: Mexican and American officials decide it would be better to dump septic tank effluent from Tijuana directly into the ocean (rather than letting it first flow through the Tijuana River estuary).

Feb. 3, 1944: The United States and Mexico sign a treaty for the utilization of water from the Colorado and Tijuana rivers and the Rio Grande. The governments agree to give “preferential attention to the solution of all border sanitation problems.”

1948: Tijuana has almost 60,000 residents and no sewage treatment other than the septic tank built for 5,000. Americans complain about poorly treated flows coming through the outfall.

1950s

1952: A San Diego County report recommends connecting Tijuana and San Ysidro to the treatment/disposal system proposed for the San Diego metropolitan area.

Nov. 18, 1953: San Diego Regional Water Pollution Control Board conducts an investigation and finds water quality in the Pacific Ocean near the international border “has been seriously impaired for beneficial recreational use as a result of the discharge of essentially raw, undisinfected sewage from the International outfall sewer,” and 95% of the discharge generates from Tijuana.

December 1953: About 3.5 million gallons a day of poorly treated sewage is flowing through the international outfall.

June 1954: A bond issue for construction of the San Diego Metropolitan Sewage System (including a Tijuana connection) fails because of controversy over the proposed location.

July 1954: The governor of California asks the U.S. State Department to file a formal protest with the Mexican government over the sewage issue.

1954: San Diego County's public health department starts chlorinating the discharge at the outfall.

May 1955: The IBWC and its Mexican counterpart are authorized to investigate the problem. Investigation carries on for more than a year.

Early 1958: Tijuana agrees to remove solid wastes and scum from its septic tank, while the

San Diego County Health Department plans an intensified chlorination program. It functions from May 29 through September 14, when the county runs out of money. One week later, water quality along the beaches has reached unsatisfactory levels again.

March 1958: California governor again asks the State Department for emergency action. The State Department talks to Mexico, whose officials say they're studying the problem.

April 1959: The California Legislature asks the U.S. government for help in correcting the pollution problem.

August 20, 1959: San Diego County Health Department finds that Mexico is not removing sludge and scum from the septic tank. The county closes all beaches from the border to the north end of Imperial Beach.



Raw sewage water flows down a street in Tijuana in late January, 2023. Ongoing sewage problems in Mexico have polluted the Pacific Ocean, shuttering beach activities in Imperial Beach and Coronado. Staff photo by Dennis Wagner.

September 1959: Mexico announces it doesn't want to be connected to San Diego's new sewer system. They say instead they will build oxidation ponds and reclamation facilities in Tijuana. They say this project will cost only half a million dollars and can be completed in nine months.

October 1959: The Mexican federal government assumes responsibility for operating Tijuana's septic tank, at the same time cleaning it and installing new sludge pumps.

1960s

Dec. 1, 1961: Mexican officials begin running a new pump station, which transports sewage to the partially finished southbound canal.

January 1962: Mexico runs out of money to complete the open canal. Work on the canal stops at a point about 5.5 miles south of the border. Here the raw sewage flows down an arroyo, across the beach, and into the ocean.

Spring 1962: The Tijuana pump station fails, and all of the city's raw sewage flows across the border. Talk of an “emergency connection” to the San Diego metropolitan system begins.

April 1965: Storm run-off severs Tijuana's force main, and raw sewage flows north again.

December 1965: San Diego and the Mexican federal government reach an agreement to build an emergency bypass system, to divert Mexican sewage to Point Loma for treatment and disposal when the Mexican pump station fails.

October 1966: Work on the emergency bypass is completed.

Oct. 10, 1966: Heavy rains cause a rupture in the Mexican force main that carries Tijuana sewage toward the coast. The emergency bypass to Point Loma is used.

1970s

1971: The emergency bypass is being used several times a day.

March 1972: Mexico installs new pumps at their pumping stations and announces plans for improving the open canal.

January 1973: Mexico announces plans for an elaborate treatment plant to be located 15 miles southeast of Tijuana, at a cost of between \$4 million to \$8 million. Construction is scheduled to begin later that year, but lack of funding causes an indefinite postponement.

April 30, 1975: The Mexican press reports that a new sewage treatment plant is under construction a few miles south of Tijuana. But once again, lack of funding causes this plan to be abandoned, and the septic tank built in 1935 remains the city's only sewage treatment facility.

February 1978: Failure of a pipeline causes raw sewage to spill into Smuggler's Gulch.

May 1979: Tijuana's main pumping station experiences a major failure, and the open canal washes out 3.2 miles south of the border. From this time on, 70% of Tijuana's sewage is routed to the emergency bypass and the remainder flows across the border in a number of places.

1980s

January 1980: Storms bring heavy run-off and water from Rodriguez Dam coursing through the Tijuana River, and the force of that tide breaks the 30-inch pipe that has been transporting the majority of Tijuana's sewage to Point Loma. More than 15 million gallons a day of Mexican sewage stream through the Tijuana estuary and out to sea. The San Diego County Health Department quarantines four miles of beach, from the border up to the naval amphibious base.

1981-1983: Unusually rainy winters persist bringing many more sewage spills and quarantines. Dead farm animals washed up from Mexico are among the refuse found on beaches just south of Coronado.

April 14, 1982: A “blue ribbon committee” is formed, consisting of representatives from a half-dozen American govern-

ment agencies. They vow to abandon short-range thinking and come up with a permanent answer to the problem of Tijuana sewage spills.

November 1983: A report is released from Lowry and Associates engineering firm. It concludes that the ultimate solution is for someone to build a treatment plant near the border that will process up to 130 million gallons a day of sewage — and cost some three-quarters of a billion dollars. Officials on both sides of the border are stunned by this figure.

July 1984: The report on short-term and interim measures is completed. From among its offerings, the San Diego City Council endorses the idea of a 60-million-gallon-a-day, “bare bones” plant near the border that would cost an estimated \$55 million.

Summer 1984: The California Legislature approves more than \$5 million to go toward construction of the bare-bones plant. But the federal government grants only \$5 million dollars with the promise of only \$27 million more to come.

Late 1984: As Mexico's application for the \$46.4 million International Development Bank loan approaches fruition, various American officials see this as a great opportunity to pressure the Mexicans into doing something about sewage treatment.

April 1985: Lowry and Associates releases yet another study, this one of possible defensive measures, from which San Diego officials approve two ideas. The first \$3.8 million project would rig a system to catch the renegade flows that come through the five border basins and canyons and then pump this sewage to Point Loma for treatment, until the second \$31.6 million phase could be completed.

August 1985: The IBWC builds scaled-down “surface interceptors” for about \$350,000,

Jan. 28, 1987: With enormous fanfare, Mexico “inaugurates” the first phase of the coastal treatment plant at Punta Bandera.

Oct. 26, 1987: The Punta Bandera plant breaks down, as two of three large holding ponds develop leaks.

March 8, 1988: The San Diego City Council gives “conceptual approval” to revised plans for the so-called Big Pipe. The concept for the pipe has now ballooned to a 12-foot-wide conduit that could carry more than 600 million gallons per day.

May 1988: Treatment at Punta Bandera returns to full operations.

1990s

July 8, 1990: U.S. and Mexico International Boundary and Water Commission authorize construction of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant. The total cost was \$256 million, with the U.S. paying nearly the entire bill.

1994: Construction begins on the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant in San Ysidro.

April 16, 1997: U.S. and Mexico International Boundary and Water Commission agree to the distribution of construction, operation and maintenance costs for the international wastewater treatment plant.

January 1999: The South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plan, which on average can handle 25 million gallons per day of sewage, completes a 4.5 mile long, 11-foot diameter pipe that discharges treated waste into the Pacific Ocean.

2000s

Oct. 5, 2015: U.S. and Mexico International Boundary and Water Commission agree to a general framework for binational cooperation on transboundary issues in the Tijuana River Basin.

Feb. 6-23, 2017: More than 143 million gallons of raw sewage was discharged into the Tijuana River upstream in Tijuana, polluting the Pacific Ocean and affecting southern San Diego County coastlines in Imperial Beach and Coronado.

2018: Imperial Beach, Chula Vista, and the Port of San Diego filed the first lawsuit against the International Boundary and Water Commission, with subsequent suits filed by San Diego, Surfrider Foundation and others regarding sewage and chemicals polluting San Diego area communities and beaches.

January 2020: Congress enacts the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement Implementation Act, which appropriated \$300 million for the construction of infrastructure to reduce the amount of polluted water flowing to U.S. sections of the Tijuana River Valley. The EPA is responsible for spending the money.

April 12, 2022: Imperial Beach, other cities and government agencies announce a settlement has been reached with the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission to mitigate raw sewage and chemicals polluting San Diego area communities and beaches.

July 2022: U.S. and Mexico agree to “reduce transboundary wastewater in the Tijuana River watershed and Pacific Ocean through a suite of infrastructure projects on both sides of the border.” The agreement calls for expanding the South Bay International Treatment Plant so it can double the capacity of sewage treatment.

December 2022: Congress authorizes \$300 million transfer from EPA to IBWC to allow construction of expanding the wastewater treatment plant at the border.

Sources: Records from municipal, county and federal governments. Steve Schoenherr of the South Bay Historical Society. The Coronado News research.

Bill Pavlacka: Coronado's Sandcastle Man

» Continued From Page 1

His cheeks, red from the biting wind, were round with a smile with every passerby that admired or exclaimed in whispered tones about his sand sculpture.

"I actually dream of building, sometimes. I get messages in my dreams," Pavlacka says.

He doesn't always build with a purpose, but to clear and unclutter his mind – content with coming out to Coronado just by himself, he says.

His inspiration

Pavlacka walks to the beach, his children by his side.

It's fifteen years ago, but as much as times change, he's doing the same thing he does today: build sandcastles. He used to spend his weekdays plastering and building houses, and his weekends at the beach honing a skill he didn't know he'd ever use.

This artistic ability of his was a secret to everybody, including himself.

Pavlacka didn't like to draw or to paint, and he truly wasn't that interested in art as a young boy, he says.

But now, his art is his job.

His children continue to be his inspiration and his support.

Sandcastle building endeavors

Apart from being a local legend, Pavlacka participates in competitions for sandcastle building, and he's not alone.

"[My children and I] have won quite a few competitions, so we work well together," he says.

As well as providing art to the community, Pavlacka uses his talent to make meaningful pieces with strong statements.

A recent competition in Imperial Beach had a theme of “Under the Sea” and contestants used their creativity to come up with what that meant to them.

Pavlacka and his family decided on a sand sculpture that depicted the polluted waters and the trash in the oceans.

They won first place.



Bill Pavlacka with Robert Pavlacka, Julie Pavlacka and Ryan Ulch for their sand building competition

Photo courtesy of Bill Pavlacka



Pavlacka writing a request for a couple on Valentines Day

Staff photo by Madeline Yang

A happy life

“It’s definitely a passion. I have a lot of good outlets in my life. I like to garden...I have this beach...and so I have an enjoyable life,” Pavlacka says, his tone quiets and lightens near the end.

Another couple approaches, this time with a request.

They want their names written in the sand for Valentine's Day.

Pavlacka gets on his hands and knees, scraping away at the sand.

Every once in a while he picks up a straw hanging on his neck to blow away the sand, revealing his perfectly written letters.

"Pretty happy, pretty happy with my life," Pavlacka says, his lips slightly turned up in a small smile.

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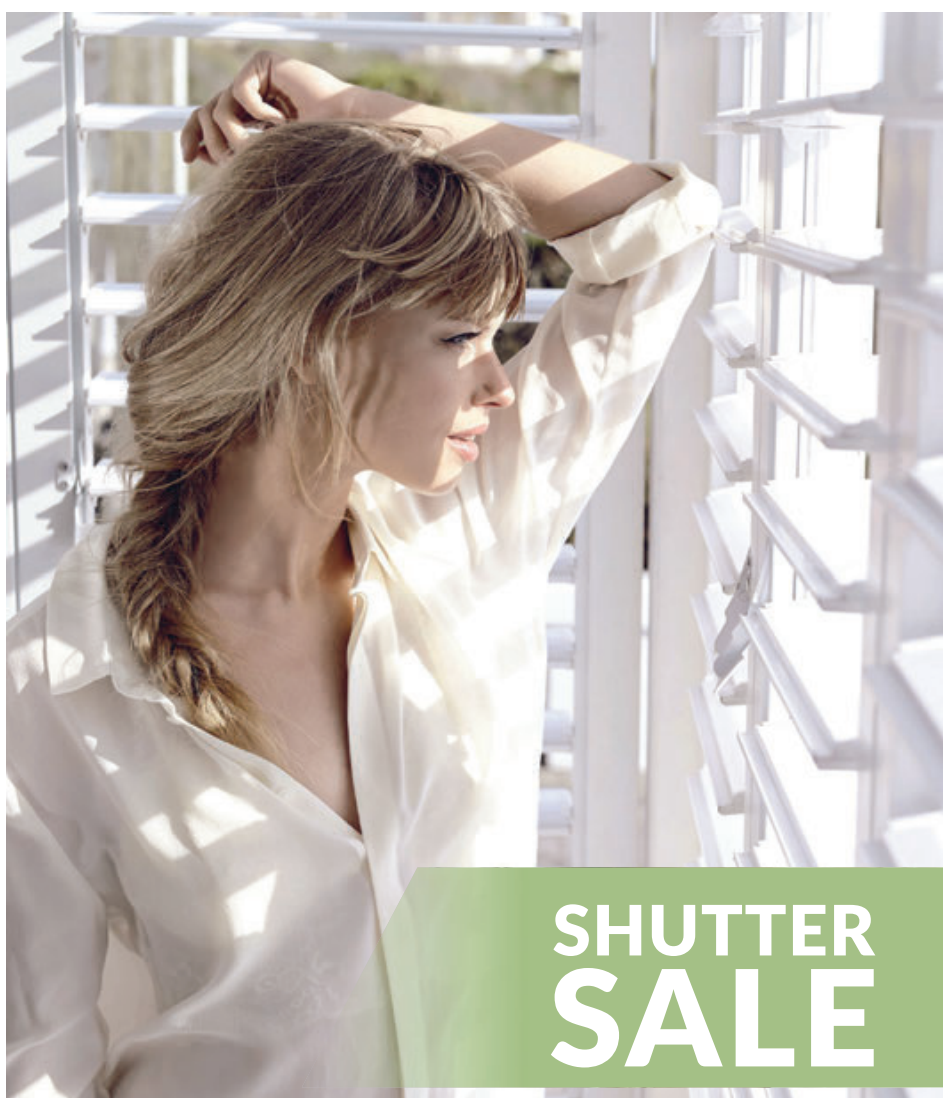
Mueller: Public engagement “valuable”

“Our trustees have one evening per month to conduct the business of the district, to hear reports and consider items for action which are necessary for staff to run the organization,” he said. “It is the Governing Board’s meeting; how they choose to structure the agenda in order to adhere to their responsibilities is at their discretion.”

Rogerson questioned the \$11,250 spent to send 25 people to the conference, saying she believed the money could have been better used for school safety or air conditioning. And Rogerson believes not every person who attended the conference was a teacher or administrator.

Coronado resident Jim Fabiszak works in business

"Let's stop with the confidentiality agreements of committees and let's open it to parent participation, full parent participation," he said.



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NAVY

Prince of Brunei visits Naval Special Warfare Units in Coronado

His Royal Highness Prince ‘Abdul Mateen of Brunei visited Naval Special Warfare West Coast-based commands in Coronado for an immersive tour on March 13-14.

During the visit, Mateen, who is also a Brunei Royal Air Force Major, spent time with Rear Admiral Keith B. Davids, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, and NSW personnel to discuss future areas for collaboration.

“One of my top priorities is to strengthen our relationships with like-minded maritime nations, deepening interoperability and strategic cooperation,” said Davids. “Prince Mateen’s visit highlights the importance of our nations’ special operations capabilities to meet the challenges we face together particularly in the Indo-Pacific.”

Overview of human performance program

Mateen also received an overview of NSWG-1’s human performance program.

Comprised of strength and conditioning training, sports medicine, performance psychology, performance nutrition, and research and technology as it relates to human performance, the program uses a holistic approach to align resources for optimal performance and recovery.

With the U.S. Special Operations Command’s mantra of “humans are more important than hardware,” advanced programs like these increase NSW’s operational readiness and capability.

“We were honored to have His Royal Highness Prince Mateen visit our command and meet our Sailors,” said Capt. David Abernathy, commodore, NSWG 1. “The exchange of knowledge and expertise strengthens our partnership with Brunei and enables us to work more effectively together in the future.”

The tour also included a visit to the NSWG-1 combat training tank where naval commandos train to conduct high-risk aquatic evolutions.

The force is placing a renewed emphasis on missions that only NSW can do on, and high-risk aquatic evolutions equips and prepares NSW Sailors to carry out highly complex undersea missions.

“Maintaining and strengthening partnerships is critical to achieving the objectives laid out in the U.S.



His Royal Highness Prince Abdul Ma-teen of Brunei, left, speaks with a Naval Special Warfare Sailor while view- ing Naval Special Warfare Group 1’s combat training tank in Coronado on March 13. U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chelsea D. Meiller

“Prince Mateen’s visit highlights the importance of our na- tions’ special operations capabilities to meet the challenges we face together particularly in the Indo-Pacific.”

Rear Admiral Keith B. Davids, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command

National Defense Strategy,” said Abernathy. “Our partnership with Brunei enhances our ability to oper- ate in the Indo-Pacific region and supports our shared commitment to regional stability and security.”

Relationship with Brunei

On the second day of the tour, Mateen visited NSW Center, where he observed the training of NSW candidates. The prince’s next stop was an underway aboard a combatant craft in San Diego Harbor. Later that day, he toured a West Coast-based NSW unit headquarters.

The visit also builds upon Mateen’s visit along- side His Majesty the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah to Washington, D.C., to meet with President Biden last year during the U.S. Association of Southeast Asian Nations Special Summit and continues a long tradi- tion of security cooperation and people-to-people

exchanges between the United States and Brunei.

Since signing the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce and Navigation over 170 years ago, the Navy has focused on strengthening and maintain- ing relationships with Brunei and throughout South and Southeast Asia and invigorating the Navy’s commitment to key ASEAN partners.

Brunei’s armed forces engage in joint exercises, training programs, and other military cooperation with the United States, with the annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercise at the core of the bilateral defense relationship.

Naval Special Warfare is the nation’s elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to ex- tend the Fleet’s reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict.

Story by Petty Officer 1st Class Chelsea Meiller, Navy Special Warfare Group ONE

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Story by Grady Fontana, Naval Medical Forces Pacific

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SPORTS

Aztecs roar into Sweet 16



San Diego State guard Matt Bradley (20) grabs a rebound away from Furman forward Garrett Hien (13), guard Mike Bothwell (3) and guard Marcus Foster (5) during the first half of a second-round college basketball game in the NCAA Tournament, March 18, 2023, in Orlando, Fla. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

San Diego State dominates Furman for first Sweet 16 berth since 2004

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — San Diego State had little trouble ending the run of March Madness darling Furman, getting 16 points from Micah Parrish to pace a balanced scoring attack and pulling away for a 75-52 win on Saturday in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Aztecs will play at 3:30 p.m. on Friday against No. 1 seed Alabama, with the winner going to the Elite Eight.

Darrion Trammell had 13 points, Lamont Butler added 12 and leading scorer Matt Bradley finished with 10 for San Diego State (29-6), which is heading

to its first Sweet 16 since 2004.

The Aztecs have won 11 of their past 13 games.

San Diego State is the first Mountain West Conference team to reach the Sweet 16 since Nevada in 2018. It'll be the third regional semifinal appearance for the Aztecs and the seventh for the Mountain West overall.

Two days after shrugging off cold shooting and overcoming a 12-point, second-half deficit to shock No. 4 seed Virginia 68-67 on JP Pegues' bracket-busting 3-pointer, Furman was outmuscled and gradually worn down by the much more physical

Aztecs.

Southern Conference player and the year Jalen Slawson picked up his fourth foul with 16:27 remaining and fouled out shortly after returning midway through the second half.

The super senior stomped the floor in protest, drawing a technical foul that gave San Diego State a pair of free throws that put the Aztecs up 60-37.

Mike Bothwell led the 13th-seeded Paladins (28-8) with 15 points. Alex Williams had 11 and Pegues finished with 11 as Furman shot 32%, including 6 of 26 from 3-point range.

VOLLEYBALL SEASON UNDERWAY



Coronado High School boys volleyball team has a 5-10 record as of March 18, according to MaxPreps. Sophomore Greyson Glorieux is seen here serving in a match earlier this season. Staff photo by Willem Quigley.

The Islanders are 5-10 as of March 18, with wins over Christian (twice), Olympian and Montgomery (twice), according to MaxPreps.

SPORTS

Padres flirting with 6-man pitching rotation

The San Diego Padres are flirting with the idea of beginning the season with a six-man pitching rotation.

Settling on an opening day starter, though, may not be as easy a decision for manager Bob Melvin.

With Joe Musgrove sidelined by a toe injury and Yu Darvish pitching for Japan in the World Baseball Classic, Melvin is exploring options that could include Blake Snell or Michael Wacha.

Musgrove has been on the mend after dropping a weight on his left big toe.

And while he has made progress in his recovery since having the nail taken off the toe, there's no guarantee he'll ready for the March 30 opener against the Colorado Rockies at Petco Park.

If Musgrove doesn't suffer a setback, though, there's a chance he could be inserted at the rear of the proposed six-man rotation the Padres are considering because they are scheduled to begin the season with a stretch of 24 games in 25 days.

"It is pretty amazing to me, but since he got the nail taken off the pain has subsided," Melvin said. "We don't want to go too far and get a setback. If you are talking to him or talking to us, it's a little different story. He'd be pushing the envelope for opening day."

Darvish figures to be worked into the back end of the rotation, too, because he has been pitching for Japan in the WBC.

"We're not sure what his timetable will be. It would have been one or the other (for opening day)," Melvin said.

"Everything has been fine with his workload. We have no problem with that. Once you embrace the fact that they are there pitching for their country, there are some issues that you can't control."



San Diego Padres starting pitcher Joe Musgrove works against a San Francisco Giants batter during the first inning of a baseball game Monday, Oct. 3, 2022, in San Diego. (AP Photo/Gregory Bull)

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The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the *Zinger* to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your *Zinger* almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

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LIFE ON THE ISLAND



“Company,” a musical comedy, has been extended through April 2, at the Coronado Playhouse.

Lonely? Let Coronado Playhouse Keep You “Company”

By **ANTHONY Le CALVEZ**
The Coronado News

Should I get married? Or is that too complicated? I mean, with good friends, who needs anybody else? These questions, and more, are being asked by the troupe of “Company,” the latest musical comedy in residence at the Coronado Playhouse.

Based on a book by George Furth, this is a contemporary adaptation of the Tony Award winning 1970 musical by Stephen Sondheim.

Set either, “yesterday, today, or tomorrow,” the play follows a young bachelor, Robert, on his 35th birthday.

Composed of a series of non-linear vignettes, Robert spends several nights with each of his friends, all married couples, and questions the future of his romantic life, unsure whether to find love and enter a committed relationship, or continue to satisfy his need for interpersonal intimacy through socializing with friends.

Nathan Wetter star of the show

The star of the show is Nathan Wetter, who plays Robert with a Raymond Carver-like dreariness and an ardor for alcohol. While Robert has less to say than his counterparts among each of the vignettes, he says the most by saying nothing, propelling an undercurrent through each musical number that dominates the ambiance.

When a song or a story is being told by some outlandish friend of Robert’s, Wetter slips into the background to avoid detracting from the moment, but seamlessly creeps Robert’s reactions and sentiments through the holes and cracks, so as if to narrate all of the numbers through the lens of his con-

flicting emotions. Every musical piece has a tone and tempo of its own, but the culminating mood of each piece is directed by Robert’s reaction to it.

Wetter gives a phenomenal performance as Robert, but that is strongly facilitated by the general chemistry of the cast.

Among the interactions of the couples, and the interactions of the cast in ensemble numbers, they all work with each other superbly. There’s a tangible feeling of fondness among the performers on stage, and their interactions flow harmoniously between each other.

Then there’s Cindy St. Clair

Despite their balance, it would be misgiving not to mention the performance of Cindy St. Clair as Jenny, who almost steals the show whenever St. Clair is on stage.

From silly to serious, St. Clair is able to jump freely between both and do it with the singing voice of an operatic angel and the dance moves of a versatile thespian. When paired with the laugh-out-loud funny Richard Dueñez Morrison as David, they certainly steal the spotlight.

And what never appears in the spotlight, but remains the hidden gem of this show are the production elements. The stage design is brilliant, the stage composed only of three wall-frames on wheels and a bar, that, slightly recalibrated in every scene is able to reproduce the entire New York domestic sphere: outdoors, indoors, or both simultaneously, it’s an incredibly effective use of the limited space.

The pallet-like walls can make the theater wider than the stage itself, dragging the audience to hell and back, but it can also confine the audience to

Robert’s cloistered brain, trying to fit the entire cast of characters in a room smaller than a cubicle and translating the pressure and claustrophobia Robert feels in his relationships.

Lighting, sound design are teleportative

In addition, the efficacious and subliminal use of lighting and sound design, are extra teleportative; within the span of a single song, “Another Hundred People,” simple readjustments of the walls and shifts in ambient light and sound takes the story from a bar, to a park, to a subway station within 3 minutes, and it’s seamless.

When Robert’s friends sing him happy birthday to the tune of “Oh Fortuna” and for the 3-second duration, the dramatic, bright crimson lighting teleports everyone straight to hell for an instant; my life flashed before my eyes.

“Company” is a traveling musical, taking its audience across the streets and homes of New York as well in and out of young Robert’s mind. It’s a story that might leave you with a sense of incompleteness by the end, but when you’ve finished sorting through the induced delirium tremens that is the sequence of events, you’re left with a story about incompleteness and questions about your own relationships.

Director Blake McCarty says aptly about the play, “it speaks to our shared human experience and the rupture, repair, and self-reflection that is required to forge authentic relationships with others.”

“Company” has been extended through April 2nd, and showtimes are Thursday through Saturday nights at 8 p.m. and matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Mainly Mozart All-Star Orchestra celebrates 35th anniversary festival June 15-24 in San Diego

Concertmasters and principal players from the nation’s top orchestras will come together in San Diego June 15-24 under the baton of Maestro Michael Francis as the Mainly Mozart All-Star Orchestra Festival celebrates 35 years.

The festival returns to the Del Mar Surf Sports Park and will expand to two new festival venues: the Conrad in La Jolla and UC San Diego’s Epstein Family Amphitheater.

Three-and six-concert subscriptions now on sale. All other tickets go on sale March 29. Early bird pricing ends April 13.

Featuring musicians from top U.S. orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra and more, Mainly Mozart’s All-Star Orchestra is the only orchestra of its kind in the country.

Concertmasters for the 2023 festival include Los Angeles Philharmonic Concertmaster Martin Chalifour (June 15, 18, 20, 22), newly appointed

Cleveland Orchestra Concertmaster David Radzynski (June 17) and Dallas Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Alexander Kerr (June 24).

“Our 35th anniversary festival has a great balance of the familiar, the intriguing and the new. Featuring an incredible group of soloists alongside our amazing orchestra, there will be absolute fireworks throughout,” said Mainly Mozart Music Director Michael Francis.

“Crowning our first major concerts at UC San Diego we have Mozart’s Magic Flute and Marriage of Figaro, Shostakovich, Saint-Sainz and we’ll close out the festival with Beethoven’s 9th Symphony with the San Diego Master Choral.”

Del Mar Week – June 15 -18

The festival opens its ‘Del Mar Week’ on June 15, at the open-air Del Mar Surf Sports Park. The opening night performance features LA Philharmonic Principal Whitney Crockett performing Mozart’s Bassoon Concerto in a program that also

includes works by Gossec and Beethoven.

On June 16, acclaimed Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott joins the All-Star Orchestra to perform Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 25. Works by Beethoven and Michael Abels round out the program. The following night, Father’s Day, on June 18, Violinist Karen Gomyo, hailed by the New York Times as “extraordinary,” performs Brahms’ Violin Concerto in a program also featuring Mozart’s Grande Fantaisie in C minor.

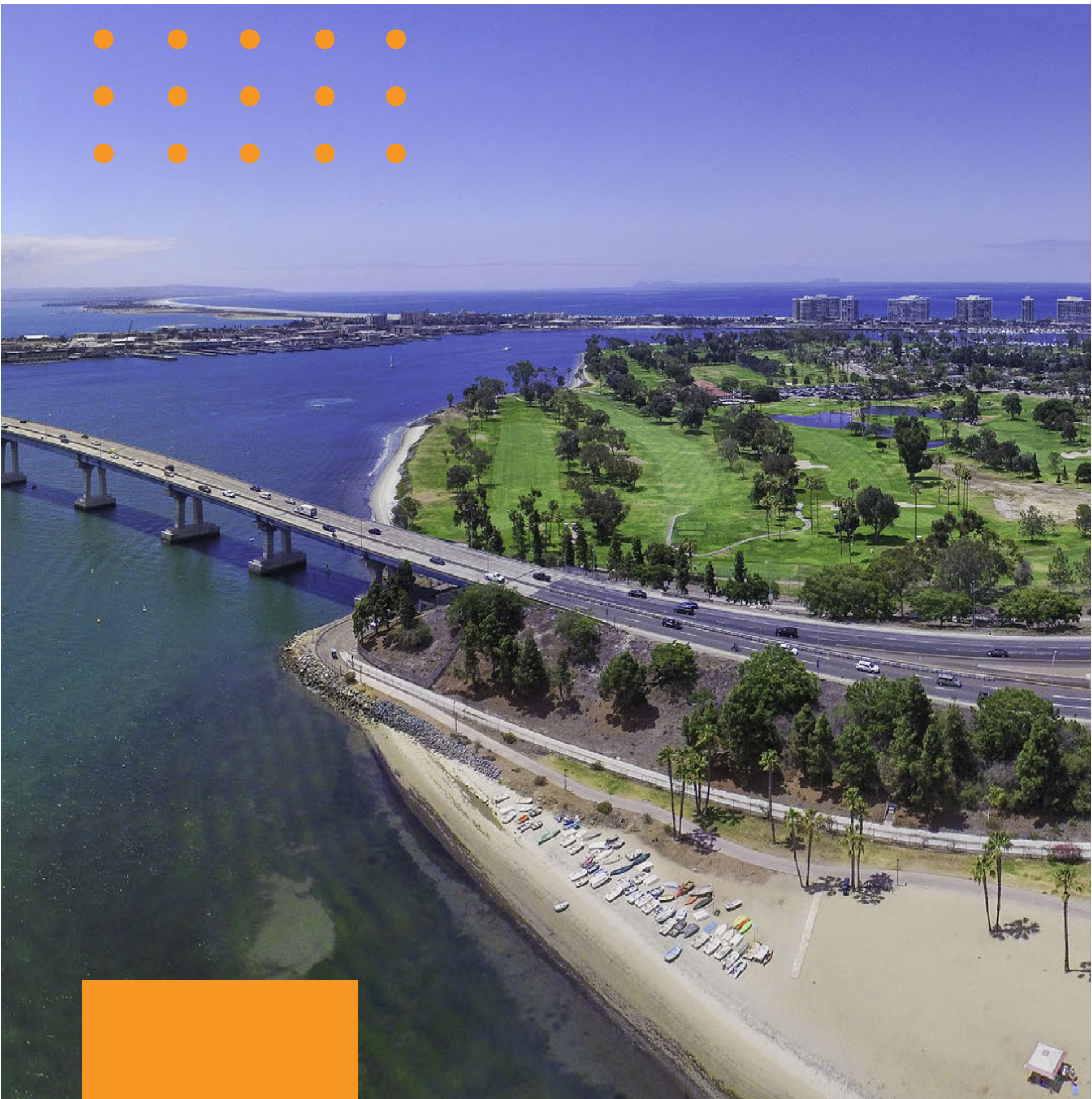
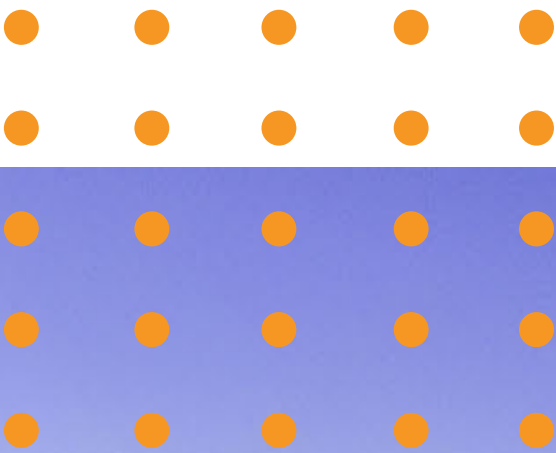
“San Diegans have the unique experience of hearing classical music’s finest scores played by the country’s top orchestral musicians as they come together as the Mainly Mozart All-Star Orchestra for six remarkable concerts this June,” said Mainly Mozart CEO Nancy Laturno. “We invite San Diegans to bring their family and friends to experience the magic of these concerts as we celebrate a very special 35th anniversary.”

Tickets: Three-and six-concert packages start at \$65 and \$150 and are on sale now. Early-bird individual tickets and tables will be on sale March 29. Early bird pricing ends April 13.

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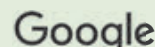
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