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Holtville Loses Its Finance Supervisor, De Facto City Clerk

BY RICHARD MONTENEGRO BROWN

In a small city where department heads often wear multiple hats, Holtville City Manager Nick Wells has again returned to one of his initial roles with the city as its finance supervisor, only this time with duties of city clerk added in for good measure.

Sept. 22 was the final day on the job for finance supervisor Kariza Preciado, who started a new position at the Imperial County Office of Education on Sept. 24, Wells said.

After two and half years with the city, Preciado had also fallen into the job of acting as the city clerk. All of those positions will now fall to Wells as he looks to find Preciado's replacement.

"In Holtville, we're lower on the salary scale than most (cities). When we get really good people, we know they're going to move on at one point," he said.

Although Wells considers his No. 2 to be Holtville Fire Chief Alex Silva, he often looked to Preciado to "ride herd over things in the administrative office" when he was gone.

In her most recent report to the Holtville City Council dated Sept. 10, Preciado bade the city farewell.

"After careful consideration I have decided to continue on my career journey with the Imperial County Office of Education beginning Sept. 24. ... I would like to thank each and every one of you for the experience to serve Holtville. Thank you for the support, guidance, and encouragement you have provided to me during my time here at the city of Holtville. It has been my honor and will miss you all dearly. Thanks again for everything. I wish you all the best. Fight on!"

Wells said that although she was a "Spartan" (or a graduate of Central Union High School in El Centro), Preciado was considered an honorary Viking.

The city manager advertised for her replacement and had already received about a dozen resumes as of application deadline Sept. 18. Rate of pay for the position was listed as \$22.23 an hour. Wells said a panel will be set up in the next two weeks to

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Holtville M.D.: Getting to Know Dr. Vincent Soun



Dr. Vincent Soun (standing, right) examines Olga Gutierrez while her husband, Carlos, looks on recently at Sarin & Tao Family Medical Clinic Inc., 529 Pine Ave. in Holtville. ELIZABETH VILLA PHOTO

BY ELIZABETH VILLA

A close-knit community like Holtville is fortunate to have a local physician among its ranks, especially one with a pedigree

like that of Dr. Vincent V. Soun.

What he brings in big-time accomplishments and experience, though, is made more impressive by some of his small-town touches, like being able to visit his office without an appointment or

the fact that he makes house calls.

"My daughter was very ill," said Rosie Allegranza, Holtville Chamber of Commerce manager. "We just walked in and didn't have an appointment. He was really nice and welcomed us and took us right in. (He) did lab work and put (my daughter) on an I.V., and she is feeling so much better now."

Allegranza said her husband also went into Soun's office for a COVID-19 test.

Soun even offers home visits for Medicare patients, which is unheard of these days.

"I have interacted (on a) one-on-one level with Dr. Soun, and I can say that he genuinely cares for the patient's health," Anuj Shukla, owner and pharmacist at Parkers Pharmacy, said of the physician. "From my point of view, he is very friendly, very helpful all the time and so is his staff."

Located at 529 Pine Ave., Soun speaks English and Cambodian fluently. His Spanish is not as fluent, so his Spanish-speaking staff assists as necessary. He sees patients from age 5 on up. The doctor has offered his

medical services at the clinic for more than two years, offering diverse services such as comprehensive medical exams, lab work, wound care, sports physicals and beyond. In addition, the clinic is also a COVID-19 testing center.

"My current clinic is called Sarin & Tao Family Medical Clinic Inc.," Soun said. "It is a private solo clinic that I started

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DR. VINCENT SOUN

Homeless, Formerly Homeless IVC Students Share Their Plight

BY CELESTE SILVA ALVAREZ

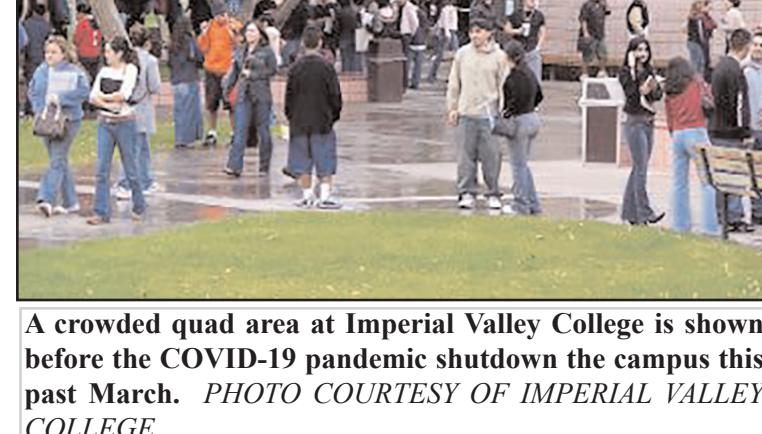
Homeless with no financial support expected from his parents, one Imperial Valley College student has had to stay on top of online courses all while in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic that has subsequently shut down most public spaces.

"I struggle daily to find safe places to sleep, and even the places that I can find are still terrifying because they are out in the open where anyone can walk by or approach me at any time," said the IVC student who asked that his name not be used in this story.

Most public restrooms have become nearly nonexistent during the pandemic due to the potential and fear of contracting the coronavirus. Other spaces students once flocked to have also stopped permitting guests from sitting inside, like coffee shops and public libraries.

"There are no more public restrooms or port-a-potties open at all anymore and it's very difficult to find a business or establishment that is open or willing to let me into their restrooms at all, not even for a couple of minutes," the student said of his daily struggle. "I fear that one day I am going to

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A crowded quad area at Imperial Valley College is shown before the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown the campus this past March. PHOTO COURTESY OF IMPERIAL VALLEY COLLEGE

Imperial County Passes 'Hemorrhaging' Budget on Split Vote

BY ELIZABETH VARIN

From a "slight shortage of funds" to a "hemorrhaging wound," Imperial County supervisors had a variety of ways to describe the county's budget.

After a 3-2 vote, the Board of

Supervisors passed a final budget balanced by transferring realignment funds, reducing out-of-county travel, and freezing vacant positions.

However, two supervisors called on the county and board to come up with a long-term plan to fix what both have called an

ongoing problem.

Supervisors Luis Plancarte, Raymond Castillo and Michael Kelley voted to approve the budget, while Supervisors Jesus Escobar and Ryan Kelley voted against the budget as presented Sept. 22.

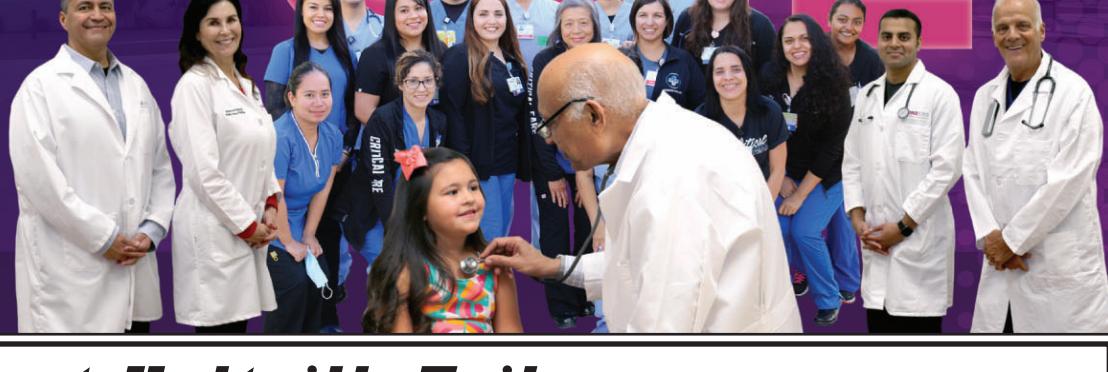
"A year ago, at this time, we

passed a budget, and I made it known that I would not vote for another budget that did not have a balance between revenue and expenses," District 4 Supervisor Ryan Kelley said. "I do ask that this board consider that this

Continued on page 7

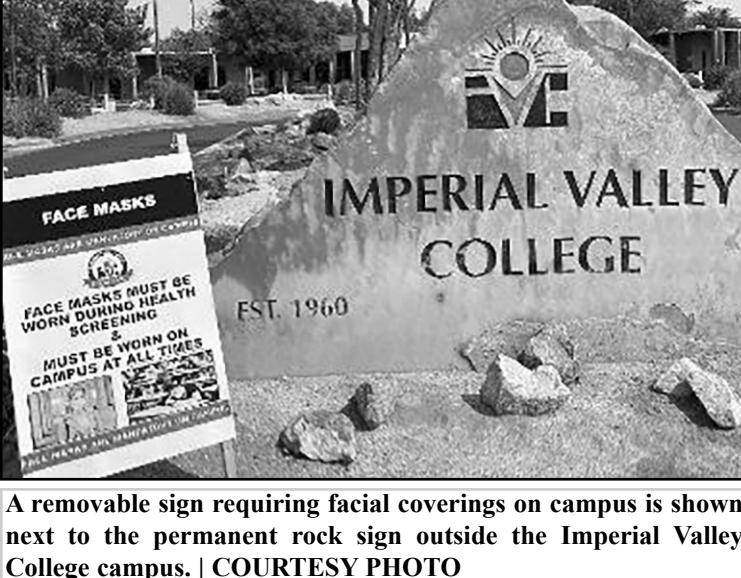


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Imperial Valley College Remains Online for Winter/Spring 2021



A removable sign requiring facial coverings on campus is shown next to the permanent rock sign outside the Imperial Valley College campus. | COURTESY PHOTO

STAFF REPORT

After careful consideration, Imperial Valley College leadership determined to continue to offer instruction online for winter and spring 2021. This decision is made in alignment with the recommendations from the California Community College Chancellor's Office.

The announcement was made through an IVC press release sent out Sept. 22.

The operational needs of the college are critical to continue its service to students; therefore, the college will continue to operate in a "Modified Campus Closure, Level 2" to ensure the safety of all faculty and staff. This continues to mean the campus being closed to the public, most employees, and the majority of students, according to the release.

At this time, industrial technology courses will be offered in a hybrid fashion, while programs in public safety, nursing, and allied health will meet face-to-face either in on-campus labs or at clinical sites using strict protocols approved by the county Public Health Department, according to the release.

In addition, student services continue to be offered remotely, including Zoom room support

located at the website main page. The Student Equity & Achievement Program serves as a hub for matriculation, achievement, and services that target disproportionately impacted students. The college will continue to assist any student facing a barrier to their academic success, such as lack of access to a computer, internet, housing, food, hygiene items, textbooks, and/or school supplies.

The decision to remain offering instruction and services primarily online is designed to limit exposure to COVID-19 by preventing large groups from assembling on campus, which reflects the college's commitment to help combat the spread of coronavirus.

"Our number one priority is the health and safety of our students, employees and community. This is a rapidly changing situation and we appreciate everyone's patience. The College Leadership expresses tremendous gratitude to the employees of IVC for their commitment to teach and support students through this difficult situation. Please stay healthy and safe, remember that the decisions being made are ultimately aiming at saving lives," stated IVC Superintendent and President Martha Garcia.

Woman's Club Of Holtville Community Birthdays

SEPT. 24: Rhiannon Isabella Bingham, Tom Angulo, Cerrita Freeman, Jim O'Malley, Adam Evans, Sam Stacey†

SEPT. 25: Justin Garewal, Sam Rubin, Mallorie Jane Kellum, Jim Bryant†

SEPT. 26: Addyson Rubin, Derek Johnston, Olivia Byram, Margie Stacey, Michelle Lyon, Molly Johnson, Avery Chazen

SEPT. 27: Abundio Castro†, Leanna Goodsell-Babb, Roger Rodahl, Ryder Merten

SEPT. 29: Mary Cazares, Sophia Rae Valenzuela

SEPT. 30: Barrett John Strahm, Betsy Iten, Cameron Vessey

Anniversaries

SEPT. 25: Mr & Mrs. Eric Fjeldsted, Mr. & Mrs. Greg Strahm, Mr. & Mrs. Walter Britschgi, Mr. & Mrs. Butch Vogel

SEPT. 27: Mr. & Mrs. Dick Immel, Mr. & Mrs. Dion Ashurst, Mr. & Mrs. AJ Bornrt

SEPT. 28: Mr. & Mrs. Alan Fjeldsted, Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Green

SEPT. 30: Mr. & Mrs. Pepe Larios, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Layton

Happy Birthday To All!!

HOLTVILLE TRIBUNE
1239 W. Main St.
El Centro, CA
92243

Publisher:
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Corissa Ibarra
Online Services:
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Holtville Tribune (USPS 247-880) is published weekly on Thursdays for \$42 per year by Holtville Tribune/ Imperial Valley Weekly/ Calexico Chronicle at 1239 W. Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243. Periodical postage paid at Holtville, California.

Postmaster: send address changes to Holtville Tribune, 1239 W. Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243.



IID Directors Approve Disbanding Dive Team

STAFF REPORT

The Imperial Irrigation District Board of Directors voted unanimously Sept. 22 to disband the IID dive team, according to a district press release.

The vote was taken during closed session and reported during the public portion of the meeting.

The board also directed staff to inventory the dive team's equipment and appropriately dispose of it following established district policies (public sale, exchange to public agencies for in-kind services, etc.), according to a district press release.

"After the unfortunate incident in which a member of the IID dive team perished, the activities of the dive team have been suspended, the incident investigated and activities of the team evaluated," said Frank Oswalt, IID general counsel. "Today, the board's action officially disbands the dive team."

The team's activities were suspended in late October 2018 following the tragic death of one of its members. IID will continue to provide personnel who will respond to emergency events involving district infrastructure and work with first responders as appropriate.

IID Regulatory and Emergency Planning Coordinator Jonathan Burnworth, who was a member of the dive team, died after being removed from life support Oct. 27, 2018, in University of California San Diego Medical Center after he was pulled from a Holtville-area canal by fellow IID divers on Oct. 26, 2018, according to a report from the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Burnworth, an Imperial resident, died at the age of 32, according to his obituary on Legacy.com

The IID diver was recovered



JOHNATHON BURNWORTH

from the waters of the Ash Canal unresponsive as he attempted to recover a body in a submerged vehicle. Fellow divers performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation on Burnworth but he never woke up, according to the Cal/OSHA report.

COLAB to Hold Two IID Candidate Forums, Oct. 1 and 8

STAFF REPORT

Coalition of Labor, Agriculture, and Business of Imperial County (COLAB) will stage two Imperial Irrigation District candidate forums, one for the Division 2 runoff on Oct. 1 and one for the Division 4 runoff on Oct. 8.

"The purpose of these forums is to educate the public of the some of the issues and the candidates' position on these issues in order to provide the public with the best possible information with which to make their personal decision in this election process," according to a Sept. 22 COLAB press release.

Due to COVID-19, the forums will not be open to public, but the public is encouraged to submit questions on the form available on the COLAB webpage, colabimperial.com, and email to COLAB at forum@colabimperial.com

"The forums will be recorded and posted on the COLAB website within three days of the forum. They will also be available

on podcast by KXO. While we regret this limitation, public safety is of the highest priority," the press release states.

The Division 2 runoff between Ryan Childers and J.B. Hamby will be from 4 to 5 p.m. Oct. 1, while the Division 4 runoff between incumbent Erik Ortega and challenger H=Javier Gonzalez will be from 4 to 5:15 p.m. Oct. 8.

"We thank each of the candidates for their interest in public service as an elected official. We

encourage all citizens of Imperial Valley to vote either by the mail-in ballot or at the polls on Nov. 3. As a reminder, all registered voters in California will receive a mail-in ballot this year. This mail-in ballot can be completed, signed, and returned without postage as long as postmarked by Nov. 3. It can also be returned to the polls on Nov. 3, as well at various locations as advised by the Imperial County Election Department," the release stated.

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Week of September 21st

Anorexia and Bulimia-Signs, Symptoms & Treatment

(Originally aired on January 2018)

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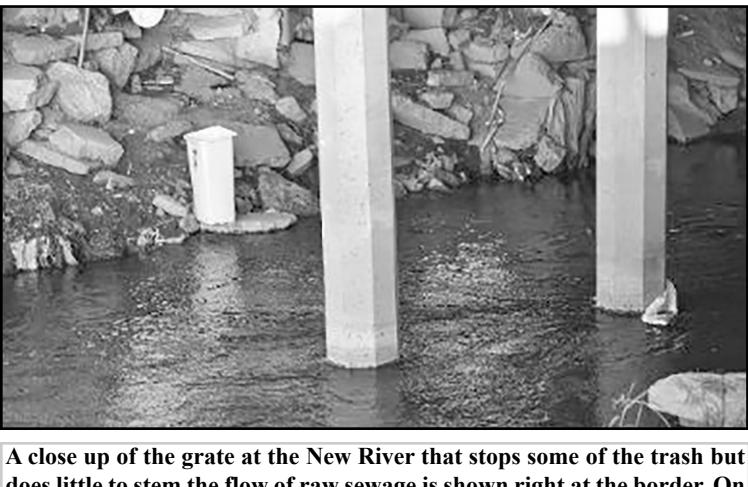
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Frustrated Imperial County Board Floats Renaming New River After Rep. Vargas



A close up of the grate at the New River that stops some of the trash but does little to stem the flow of raw sewage is shown right at the border. On Sept. 18, raw sewage was dumped into the river during a bypass of Mexicali water treatment facilities. The Imperial County Board of Supervisors on Sept. 22 suggested renaming the polluted river the "Juan Vargas" and the bridge that spans it the "Dianne Feinstein" bridge in honor of their inaction to exert federal pressure to clean up the international waterway. CORISSA IBARRA PHOTO

BY ELIZABETH VARIN

Frustration over years of federal inaction at the New River bubbled over during a recent local meeting when the idea surfaced of renaming the historically polluted New River after Congressman Juan Vargas, D-Chula Vista, and the bridge spanning the toxic waterway after Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-California.

Two recent events sparked the conversation at the end of the Sept. 22 Imperial County Board of Supervisors meeting: the recent raw sewage spill into the New River and a "60 Minutes" special earlier this month about raw sewage flowing into the Tijuana River water shed, bringing pollution from Mexico into California.

Imperial County officials were notified by the International Boundary and Water Commission on the morning of Sept. 17 that Mexicali had issued a notice that it planned to bypass untreated wastewater into the New River during the morning of Sept. 18, according to a press release from the county.

The reason provided was rehabilitation work that was being performed on pumping plant No. 2 in Mexicali. The Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Mexicali (State Commission for Public Services, CESPM in Spanish) reported that all alternative options were considered before making the decision and that a bypass into the New River was unavoidable at that time.

It was the second time this year that a major bypass of untreated sewage had occurred due to infrastructure problems. The last one was reported June 10, according to

the county.

Aside from environmental impacts, the bypass of untreated sewage into the New River poses a threat to anyone who could potentially come in contact with the New River and personnel that work in the area.

For decades, the New River has been the site of raw-sewage discharges and the dumping of industrial chemicals into the Mexican-born waterway, bringing dangerous bacteria like E. coli and known carcinogens northward into the United States. An aging and ailing water-treatment system in Mexicali has done little clean up the putrid waters, and years of promises and federal inaction has done even less to demand permanent fixes on the Mexican side of the border, where the problems originate.

Farther west, toward more well-heeled and influential San Diego County, the "60 Minutes" segment, published online Sept. 13, focused on beaches being polluted, and communities getting sick from the same kinds of waste and conditions, only to a much-lesser concentration.

District 4 county Supervisor Ryan Kelley pointed out the focus was on what's happening in Tijuana when just across the mountains are conditions with "30 times the exposure levels," he said.

"I guess we're not doing enough, or maybe it's just easier to fly in and out of San Diego, but we need to bring that attention back to '60 Minutes."

County officials didn't mince words at the Sept. 22 meeting.

"I think our federal representatives are letting us down," said Vice Chairman Michael Kelley, who represents District 3. "I cannot tell you

how many times I've been at the state level talking about the New River or the Salton Sea, and we're at the same first step we were 12 years ago. It's almost disgusting.

"I think we as a board have got to do something to bring attention to what's going on here," he continued. "I don't know. Maybe we ought to all get in an open coffin and lay down where the New River comes in and say, 'Hey. We need help down here.'

"Nobody's done a damn thing. Nobody's ever done a damn thing," Michael Kelley said.

"It just gets frustrating and disgusting to keep fighting this battle, and the fingers keep getting pointed to us. 'You guys aren't doing anything' and we have been fighting this battle and working very hard to do something, yet nothing has changed," said one of the longest-tenured supervisors on the board at eight years.

District 1 Supervisor Jesus Escobar, whose district includes the border where the river flows into the United States through Calexico, suggested drafting a letter to federal representatives calling on them to take action on the New River, something the current board has done on several previous occasions and for decades before that.

"This is not a state issue, this is a federal issue," Escobar said. "We need to push our federal government, our representatives to do something. If not, it's never going to get resolved."

Ryan Kelley went further, suggesting the Imperial County Executive Officer and public works department create signage changing the name of the New River to the Juan Vargas River.

"Let's put it out there," he said. "Post it and let him react to it."

He was quickly told by fellow board members that the county couldn't change the name of the New River, to which he responded, "In our own minds we can change the name. Let's put a street crossing at Second that says, 'Juan Vargas River' and 'Dianne Feinstein Bridge.'"

Michael Kelley replied, "Well, that's thinking outside the box. I like that. That's a thing we've got to do."

Vargas' Imperial County representative, Tomas Oliva, who also sits on the El Centro City Council, was contacted for comment regarding the county's tongue-in-cheek plan. Oliva referred any comment to the Congressman's spokespeople farther up the chain.

Sec. of State Padilla: Vote by Mail, Vote Early; Ballots to be Counted Up to 17 Days

BY PILAR MARRERO

All registered voters in California will soon receive a mail-in ballot even if they haven't asked for one, and there will be plenty of options to register, re-register, vote by mail, vote in person or vote curbside up until Nov. 3, Secretary of State Alex Padilla said in a briefing with ethnic media.

"We have to start thinking of Nov. 3 as the last day of voting, not simply as 'Election Day,'" Padilla noted recently.

Imperial County voters will begin to get their ballots shortly after the first mail ballots are sent out Oct. 5, according to county Registrar Debbie Porter.

California has 21 million registered voters, more than the population of every other state except Florida and Texas, and the largest number of voters anywhere.

"According to the law you need to postmark the ballot by Nov. 3, but we are extending the deadline for that ballot to arrive in county offices from three days to 17 days," Padilla said. "This is just in case there are delays by the postal service."

It wasn't immediately available how that will affect the length of the count in Imperial County, which historically has been up until the final week of the state-mandated certification of the ballot, which is 30 days after the election.

The most current registration data for Imperial County shows 79,067 eligible voters as of July 3, or 79.55 percent of eligible county residents. There were 77,390 voters registered for the March 3 primary.

Voting by mail has been growing in popularity, Padilla said. In the last statewide election - the March primary - up to 70 percent of registered voters voted by mail.

"That's a great start, but in California 30 percent of voters is still a large number. We want to make sure those who are not familiar with this way of voting are comfortable with it and know they can still vote in person if they need or want to," Padilla said.

Voters should vote by mail and vote early, Padilla urged, and they should take advantage of tools that improve the transparency and security of voting such as ballot tracking (Where's My Ballot?) which tells them when their ballot has been sent, when it was received by the county, and when it was counted.

Voters can sign up for ballot tracking and receive notices via text, email, or voice call, he added.

"This will be great for transparency, accountability and confidence, which have come under attack in recent weeks," Padilla noted. He called the timing of the

Presidential elections in the midst of the pandemic and heightened political polarization "an unprecedented situation."

Padilla encouraged voters to register, re-register if they need to change their voter file information, or check their registration status by going online at VoterStatus.sos.ca.gov

If any of their information has changed, including their address, they can register or re-register at https://registertovote.ca.gov/

Mail-in ballots will go to voters the first week of October (and mid-September for overseas voters).

The deadline to register to vote is Oct. 19, but in 15 counties that participate in conditional voter registration, including San Francisco, people can complete a Voter Registration Application at their local Department of Elections on the day of the election and receive a provisional ballot which will be counted after it has been verified.

Imperial County is one of the 15 counties featuring conditional voter registration. Usually, one must register 15 days before Election Day, but there is late registration through Nov. 3 by going

to the Imperial County Elections Office, 940 W. Main St., suite 206, El Centro.

"There are several reasons why some people need to vote in person - such as accessibility, or to receive language assistance, or to replace a ballot that was lost, or if you made a mistake," Padilla noted.

Voting in person will happen in bigger and safer locations than in the past, such as the Golden One Center in Sacramento, an NBA arena, Dodger Stadium and the Staples Center in L.A., the Chase Center in San Francisco, and Oakland Coliseum.

Counties are working to identify voting locations where authorities can guarantee that health precautions are followed, including social distancing, mandatory use of masks and availability of sanitizers.

As for the security of mail-in voting which President Trump has repeatedly questioned, Padilla pointed out that ballots are printed on paper that has specific watermarks, are printed by certified printers made in the USA only, use official envelopes with barcodes that can be tracked, and require the voter's signature on the outside of the envelope.

Referring to President Trump's recent suggestion that voters in North Carolina vote by mail and then show up in person "to test if the first ballot was counted," Padilla said that the state has a number of features to prevent any kind of "double voting."

In California, every ballot has a unique barcode and as a ballot

Continued on page 6

Mental Health in Older Adults

Mental Health disorders that appear in older adults can look different from the issues in adults and children.

Older adults can become withdrawn, depressed and may not know how to communicate their feelings or needs.

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Imperial County voters cast their ballots at a mobile voting unit on Nov. 6, 2018. | FILE PHOTO

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The Business Buzz

Dining In Imperial Valley Means Going Outdoors For The Time Being

BY ANDY VELEZ

Dining out in Imperial County isn't easy. Today, it's an earned experience.

After six months of fast food, takeout or delivery, many people are ready to put up with the added hassles of eating outdoors in the heat and humidity, or whatever demands are being made of them, just to enjoy a meal out and help a local business come back to life.

As more businesses open up

under the state's new color-coded tier system and more restaurants come back online by allowing patrons to dine outdoors under tents and patios in socially-distanced settings, restaurants are finding ways to serve their faithful customers.

From Brownie's Diner in Brawley to Denny's locations in El Centro, more eateries are setting up temporary tents and tarps in their parking lots to accommodate customers who are ready to venture outdoors and get some sense of pre-COVID-19 normalcy.

La Fonda in El Centro, always a busy spot in the city, is one of those businesses that recently made the transition to open up outdoors.

"It's funny, because this year we had plans to expand our restaurant, but we did not plan to expand outdoors," La Fonda co-owner Antonio Camacho said.

"Everything is looking really good right now. I am going to buy two more tents to further expand, and we are really just appreciative

Continued on page 6



The front of La Fonda restaurant in El Centro is shown on Sept. 14. As all restaurants in the Imperial Valley are, La Fonda is adjusting to re-opening to dine-in patrons in an all-outdoors format. La Fonda opened to dining on its patio and under this tent on Sept. 10. CORISSA IBARRA PHOTO

California Families Grow Healthy With WIC

WIC is a nutrition program for Women Infants and Children.

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- Vive en California

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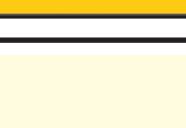
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SAN DIEGO AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES
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Dr. Soun.....from page one

about two years ago in Holtville in honor of my beloved parents, mother, Sarin Hang and father, Tao Soun. Both of my parents passed away two years ago in 2018," he said.

Soun's mother died at age 69 from lung cancer and his father, who was 79, died two months later.

Additionally, Soun said he works closely with doctors in areas from cancer management, post-stroke management and a variety of services.

"I work with a lot of specialists in the Valley as well as Yuma, San Diego, and Palm Springs," he said.

A patient of Soun for several years now, Irma Gutierrez was involved in a car accident in 2014.

"I was referred to Dr. Soun in Brawley, and from there on I loved his demeanor, his bedside manner, how he explained everything, and his follow-up," she said.

"He did everything so thoroughly. Now a days, doctors are in and out like a drive-through thing. With Dr. Soun, he shows you that he cares and wants to know your

concerns," Gutierrez said.

"My husband, Karlo, also visited him," she explained. "Dr. Soun told my husband that his tumor was probably cancerous. Had he not seen it, reacted quickly, and ordered x-rays and referred him to a San Diego specialist, my husband may not have been here today."

Soun's Migration to the United States

Soun was born in Battambang, Cambodia, to a family of eight children, where he was the middle fourth child.

"At about 4 years old, our family escaped the Khmer Rouge (a communist political group) killing fields in Cambodia to live in a refugee camp along the Thailand-Cambodian border from 1979 to 1984," he said.

"At that time, I was first exposed to medicine through the works of Western volunteer medical doctors treating the refugees there," Soun explained. "They helped treat me and my family with many medical ailments while living as a refugee. It inspired me."

"In 1984, after five years living in a refugee camp, our entire

family got sponsored by a Mormon family through their church organization in Utah," he said, explaining he was 9 years old when he came to the United States.

"Around 1987, we left Utah for California to pursue our education," Soun noted. "It is Orange County, California, where I began my long-term education from grade school, junior high, high school and then college."

"At that time, I did not know that medicine was going to be my calling," he said.

Soun attended California State University Fullerton for about six years, from 1992 to 1996, studying and majoring in different fields, including science/chemistry, music, computer science, math, and physical education.

"I only realized that medicine was my true calling when I was a junior at CSUF studying biochemistry. That is what inspired me to pursue medicine officially. Through biochemistry, I realized the direct connection between science and medicine, how it impacts the human body."

After college and before starting medical school, Soun attended State University of New York at Albany School of Public Health, majoring in epidemiology from 2002-2003.

"After I received my epidemiology degree," Soun said, "I worked with the New York State Public Health (Department) as one of their medical investigators in their zoonotic program, focusing on West Nile disease outbreaks. I worked there from 2003-2005 before attending medical school in 2005."

"I applied for medical school and got accepted to several medical schools. Eventually I decided on Ross University School of Medicine," he said.

All of his clinical training was done in New York City and Chicago, two of the main epicenters of medical training in the United States, he said. After medical school, he underwent advanced residency training in Chicago with the Adventist Hinsdale Family Medicine



Vanessa Ramirez (left), certified medical assistant and certified phlebotomist, and Dr. Vincent V. Soun speak at Soun's Sarin & Tao Family Medical Clinic Inc., 529 Pine Ave., Holtville. | ELIZABETH VILLA PHOTO

Residency Program from July 2011 to June 2014.

"I was completely focused and consumed on becoming a family doctor," Soun said. "I liked diversity in family medicine - not limited to one aspect of medicine - the whole family."

"I was recruited by Pioneer Memorial Health(care) District while I was still in residency. After completion of my residency, I relocated to Imperial County to begin my family medicine work. Eventually, I began my solo practice in Holtville in January 2018," he said. "I was looking for a rural-type program where I can make more significant impact on serving the underserved/underprivileged population. I love the 'slowness and the quietness' of this rural setting as well."

Things to Know About Soun

... One private thing that not many people know about Soun is that he has been a martial artist for more than 20 years.

"I was a martial artist before I was a physician," he said. "I currently hold a third-degree black belt in Shotokan karate, and I am a practitioner of Jeet Kune Do martial art (the style founded by Bruce Lee)."

While pursuing his medical residency, Soun was recruited to the Army and served his country

and continues to serve through the U.S. Army Reserve.

"I am a military officer with a rank of a major in United States Army Reserve. I am also a soldier and also serve as a medical doctor," he explained.

Every month Soun goes to his reserve unit in San Diego, training and serving alongside other soldiers. "I was recently stationed at Fort Hunter Liggett (in Jolon), and before that, I was stationed at Fort Bliss (Texas)," he said.

Soun has volunteered his time in the past as a team doctor for the Holtville High School football team. He also offered scholarships to the high schools of Imperial County.

"I have always been interested in family medicine because of diversity of medical diseases and being able to treat the whole family members. I love this challenging work of being a family physician."

Among his medical services and many accomplishments, he is an officially designated "civil surgeon" by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Center.

Additionally, Soun is a medical examiner for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and also for the Department of Transportation.



To honor his mother and father who died in 2018, Dr. Vincent V. Soun dedicated his private clinic to Sarin & Tao Family Medical Clinic Inc. at 529 Pine Ave., Holtville, in their names. | ELIZABETH VILLA

Projects are coming to the Salton Sea!

Join us and provide your input at one of our virtual workshops:

Tuesday, September 22
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 23
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 24
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

The California Natural Resources Agency is identifying habitat restoration and dust suppression projects around the Salton Sea to revitalize the environment and protect public health. Community members are invited to attend one of a series of virtual public workshops to provide input on the sizes, locations and types of projects being proposed. Your input will help inform the development of a range of alternatives to be included in a forthcoming draft 10-Year Plan Environmental Assessment.

Please join us for one of these virtual public workshops and help us shape the future of the Salton Sea!

Spanish translation will be provided.

In addition to the public workshops, written comments will be accepted through September 30, 2020, at cnra-saltonsea@resources.ca.gov.



For more information, meeting materials and instructions on using Zoom, visit
www.saltonsea.ca.gov/ssmp-draft-description-project/
Send specific questions regarding this meeting to
cnra-saltonsea@resources.ca.gov



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CALIFORNIA
FISH & WILDLIFE

Brawley Man Killed, Second Victim Airlifted Outside County in 'Gang'-Linked

Staff report

A 26-year-old Brawley man was shot and killed and a second 26-year-old, also of Brawley, was transported to a "regional trauma center" following a shooting early Sept. 20, according to Brawley police.

Police received the 911 call reporting multiple gunshots in the area of the 1100 block of Leonard Street around 1 a.m., according to a press release written by police Cmdr. Brett Houser and sent to media outlets around 5:30 p.m. Sept. 20.

While police were still at the scene, Pioneers Memorial Hospital staff reported to police that two gunshot victims arrived

at the hospital. One was pronounced dead at the hospital, according to the press release, and the second was stabilized and flown from Brawley via air ambulance to a "regional trauma center," although the release did not say to what city or county the victim was sent.

The shooting is believed to have been related to criminal gang activity, Houser's release states. Brawley Police Department's Investigation Division is probing the shootings as a murder and attempted murder, the release states.

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact Detective Sgt. Rotner at 760-351-7777.

Voting.....from page three

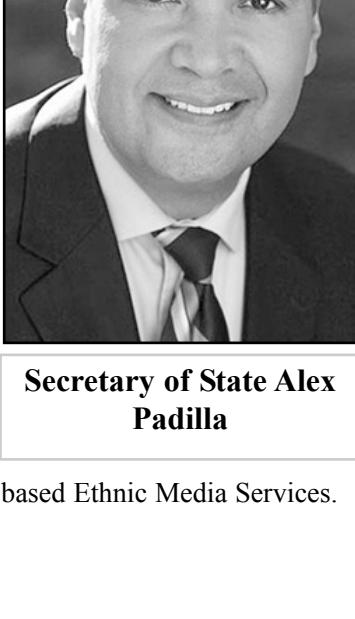
comes in or the person votes, the record is "immediately updated." If someone sends a mail-in ballot and then presents themselves as the ballot box, they will be shown to have voted and be turned away, he said.

He also said any kind of "electioneering," or harassment at the polls, is "illegal." He encouraged anyone with questions, comments, or complaints to call the SOS hotline at 800-345-VOTE, or their local county registrar at 442-265-1060.

Padilla warned that for close races it will take weeks for counties to finish processing and auditing the results. "If that's the case, it's not a time to panic but to be patient and confident," Padilla said, adding that he is concerned that President Trump will claim victory "prematurely."

"Results aren't final until the

work is done," Padilla said. Pilar Marrero is a contributing editor with San Francisco-



Secretary of State Alex Padilla

based Ethnic Media Services.

1. ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

City of Holtville
121 West Fifth Street
Holtville, California 92250

Separate sealed BIDS for the construction of the **City of Holtville - Water Treatment Plant Improvements Project** will be received by the **City of Holtville at 121 West Fifth Street, Holtville, California 92250 until 2:00 pm** (prevailing local time) on **Thursday, November 5, 2020**, and then at said office will be publicly opened and read aloud.

Project Description: The City of Holtville's Water Treatment Plant Improvements include the following: Install a shade structure over the clarifier/mix media filters; Replacement of Finish Water Pump Station Motors; Install a baffling system in the 1.5 MG Water Storage Tank; Finish water piping alignment to allow the water storage tanks to operate in series; Rehabilitate the 2.4 MG Water Storage Tank with the addition of a Cathodic Protection System, TTHM System, and recoat of the tank; Replacement of two emergency standby generators; and Electrical and Controls for Automation.

The work is located in the County of Imperial, State of California. Proposals shall conform to the requirements of this Advertisement for Bids, Bidding documents and any addenda thereto issued in advance of the proposal opening date.

The CONTRACT DOCUMENTS, SPECIFICATIONS, AND PLANS may be examined at the following locations:

City of Holtville
121 West Fifth Street
Holtville, CA 92250
Phone: (760) 356-2912
Fax: (760) 356-1863

The Holt Group, Inc.
1601 North Imperial Avenue
El Centro, CA 92243
Phone: (760) 337-3883
Fax: (760) 337-5997

Copies of the CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be obtained at the office of **The Holt Group located at 1601 North Imperial Avenue, El Centro, CA 92243** upon the non-refundable payment of **\$100.00** for each set. This includes shipping charges. Technical questions shall be addressed to The Holt Group - El Centro Office.

A Mandatory Pre-bid Conference for prospective BIDDERS will be held at **Water Treatment Plant**, located at **180 E Fourth Street, Holtville, California 92250 at 10:00 am** (prevailing local time), on **Thursday, October 1, 2020**. To become a qualified Bidder, all contract documents shall be attained from **The Holt Group**, and a representative of the Bidder shall be required to attend and sign the official attendance sheet at the **Mandatory** Pre-bid Conference. Due to COVID-19 safety concerns only General Contractors can attend the Pre-bid conference, and only one (1) representative for each General Contractor can attend the Pre-bid meeting. All others are to contact The Holt Group to schedule a site visit at a separate time.

Prospective Bidders shall be licensed Contractors in the State of California and shall be skilled and regularly engaged in the general class or type of work called for under the Contract. Each Bidder shall have a Class A California Contractor's license.

Bid Security: Each Bid must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the Instruction to Bidders and must be accompanied by a bid bond in the amount of 10% of the bid value.

Disadvantage Business Enterprise: This project is subject to Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program requirements in accordance with State of California Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) requirements of this Advertisement for Bids and other documents listed herein. All EPA funded or assisted projects performed in the United States, must comply with the "Good Faith Efforts" described in 40 CFR Part §33.301, and §33.211; whether by a recipient, sub-recipient, contractor, and/or sub-contractor; for design, construction, equipment, services and supplies. The Contractor is cautioned that whenever possible, posting solicitations for DBE bids or proposals for a minimum of 30 calendar days before the bid or proposal closing date is required. The Contractor shall carry out applicable requirements of 40 CFR part 33 in the award and administration of contracts awarded under EPA financial assistance agreements. Failure by the Contractor to carry out these requirements is a material breach of this contract which may result in termination of this contract or other legally available remedies.

Dining.....from page four

of our local customers for coming out to support us during such times," he added.

For the Rebollar family, owners of Brownie's Dinner in Brawley and the Original Town Pump in Westmorland, it's presented a new business opportunity with changes to the hours of operation of their businesses while combining the two.

"Since we started (outdoor dining) there has been about a 30 percent increase in sales," said Gabriel Rebollar.

As temperatures begin to drop, he expects to further expand to meet the new demand.

In the past, his diner operated only for breakfast and some lunch, but with so much going on he decided to change hours to provide more service to his customers.

"Town Pump is closed, so I brought my menu here (Brownie's) and with that I do two menus at one restaurant," Rebollar said. "It has been really tough for us out here, we have now been closed for six months, having operated for over 50 years we have never been closed that long."

He added that having been closed for so long has taught them the importance of abiding by regulations in an effort to remain open and not undergo yet another closure.

The official California state government website updated its guidelines Sept. 10 with new rules to allow for the accommodation of outdoor dining, when the whole system for businesses to operate under changed from stages of operation to the color-coded, four-tiered system.

Imperial County remains in the purple first tier: "widespread risk" category, the worst in the state. Any dining in at restaurants must be done outdoors only. Restaurant owners must abide by set guidelines including proper worker training for logging exposure risk, public screening, disinfectant protocols, and social-dis-

tancing measures. That includes a mandate to wear facial coverings in Imperial County.

While La Fonda, like many local eateries, survived and limped along on carryout dining and some on delivery, it was also time to try to open back up and increase sales.

"It's hard to juggle operating a restaurant at the moment with all the uncertainty," Camacho said.

He explained that during the takeout-only, La Fonda was only doing about 40 percent of its normal sales.

Yet "bills keep coming, the lease is due, and people need to get paid," he said. "Sales are important to us, like any other restaurant owner."

Camacho said La Fonda is considering outdoor entertainment options as well.

As COVID-19 conditions improve in Imperial County, the region gets ever closer to being able to move into the red tier: "substantial risk," which for a restaurant owner would mean allowing indoor dining at 25-percent capacity. For now, that might be a ways off.

With the updated guidelines, Camacho, like many others, simply opted to move outdoors. With this, he is preparing to operate at a normal capacity, just in his parking lot and on his patio area. In doing so, he ensures to provide a safe and enjoyable space to his loyal customers.

County Public Health officials have been on hand throughout to guide restaurants in getting back open.

One thing that all owners are asking for is safety reassurance in an effort to get open and then stay open. To do so, everyone must abide by set rules like requiring facial coverings, said Jeff Lamoure, environmental health deputy director for the Imperial County Public Health Department.

"If an outbreak associated with COVID-19 or any food-

borne disease were to occur at a restaurant, Environmental Health along with the Public health Department's epidemiology staff would conduct a joint assessment of the facility and all individuals that were affected," Lamoure said recently.

"Currently our testing positivity rate is at 4.63 percent, which is .67 percent below the statewide rate. Imperial County's case rate per 100,000 has also continued to improve and is currently at 10.29 percent. The case rate must be at seven cases (per) 100,000, or less, for 14 consecutive days in order to advance to Tier 2 (red, which allow for indoor dining)," said Lamoure, who was quoting data from the time of the interview, which occurred late last week.

"For any county to move into a different, lower-risk tier and thus be allowed to phase in some reopening features like limited dine-in restaurant service, that county would need to meet the below thresholds and remain at that level or below for at least three weeks," Lamoure added. "Once each county has moved into a new color-coded tier, the clock resets. Meet the new data threshold, stay there for three weeks, move into a newer reopening tier and then repeat."

Need to publish your Fictitious Name Statement, Order To Show Cause For Name Change, Summons or Probates? Give Us A Call (760) 339-4899

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Contractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex in the performance of the contract.

The Contractor acknowledges to and for the benefit of the Purchaser (City of Holtville) and the State of California that it understands the goods and services under this Agreement are being funded with monies made available by the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and/or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund that have statutory requirements commonly known as "American Iron and Steel;" that requires all of the iron and steel products used in the project to be produced in the United States ("American Iron and Steel Requirement") including iron and steel products provided by the Contractor pursuant to this Agreement. The Contractor hereby represents and warrants to and for the benefit of the Purchaser and the State that (a) the Contractor has reviewed and understands the American Iron and Steel Requirement, (b) all of the iron and steel products used in the project will be and/or have been produced in the United States in a manner that complies with the American Iron and Steel Requirement, unless a waiver of the requirement is approved, and (c) the Contractor will provide any further verified information, certification or assurance of compliance with this paragraph, or information necessary to support a waiver of the American Iron and Steel Requirement, as may be requested by the Purchaser or the State. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Agreement, any failure to comply with this paragraph by the Contractor shall permit the Purchaser or State to recover as damages against the Contractor any loss, expense, or cost (including without limitation attorney's fees) incurred by the Purchaser or State resulting from any such failure (including without limitation any impairment or loss of funding, whether in whole or in part, from the State or any damages owed to the State by the Purchaser). While the Contractor has no direct contractual privity with the State, as a lender to the Purchaser for the funding of its project, the Purchaser and the Contractor agree that the State is a third-party beneficiary and neither this paragraph (nor any other provision of this Agreement necessary to give this paragraph force or effect) shall be amended or waived without the prior written consent of the State.

Davis-Bacon and Related Acts: This project requires compliance with the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts and adherence to the current U.S. Department of Labor Wage Decision. The Contractor and subcontractors must comply with the minimum rates for wages for laborers and mechanics as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with the provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act (DBA) CA140002, dated 08/08/2014, as specified in 29 CFR Parts 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7, and Related Acts. The Contract provisions and related matters set forth in 29 CFR Part 5- Section 5.5 is hereby made a part of this Contract. Attention is called to the fact that not less than the minimum salaries and wages set forth in the Contract Documents must be paid on this project. The Wage Decision, including modification, must be posted by the Contractor on the job site.

This is a Public Works Project subject to the rate of prevailing wages as established by the California Department of Industrial Relations. Bidders are notified that the higher of either the Davis-Bacon or the State prevailing wage rate shall apply. All contractors and subcontractors who bid or work on a public works project must register and pay an annual fee to the State of California, Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) per SB 854. No contractor or subcontractor may be listed on a bid proposal for a public works project unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5 [with limited exceptions from this requirement for bid purposes only under Labor Code section 1771.1(a)]. No contractor or subcontractor may be awarded a contract for public work on a public works project unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5. This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations. All contractors and subcontractors must furnish electronic certified payroll records directly to the Labor Commissioner (aka California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement).

The awarding body must post or require the prime contractor to post job site notices prescribed by regulation. (See 8 Calif. Code Reg. §16451(d) for the notice that previously was required for projects monitored by the CMU.)

September 11, 2020

(Date)

Legal 8985
Publish: September 17, 24, 2020

(Owner's Signature)

Holtville.....from page one

present him with the top-three candidates for the job.

Wells, who came to work for the city in 2011, started out as finance supervisor, a position he held until he became permanent city manager in October 2014. Since then, he said a few finance supervisors have come and gone, and Wells regularly rotates back into the position. Most recently, he filled in for Preciado last year when she was on maternity leave.

What will add to Wells' workload this time around will be the fact that Preciado had been pulling double duty of late as city clerk. With a municipal election coming up Nov. 3, one of the city clerk's chief duties will be to certify the election.

Wells said the council will have to officially act to designate him in that role at an upcoming council meeting.

Fortunately, he said, some of Preciado's duties can be spread around. Some of her finance supervisor duties, including overseeing accounts payable and billing func-

tions, have longtime, experienced employees in place.

And some of the city clerk functions, such as taking notes at meetings or processing public records requests, can be handled by other employees, Wells said.

In her most recent council report, Preciado reported as of Aug. 20, that the general fund budget had a \$602,427 revenue deficit.

"This is in part due to regular business activity. Revenues from other agencies trend to come in around October for the current fiscal year. (Firefighting) strike team has been called out a few times in the past two months and is currently at a strike team fire in Southern California. The payments for strike team usually take the state months to reimburse," she wrote.

Wells said that is the normal course of business in California, where payments and reimbursements for things like sales tax and vehicle license fees start to come in later, and he said COVID will likely delay payments to cities even further.

PUBLIC NOTICE

SECOND AMENDED NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF:

Alvie Lee Winters

CASE NUMBER: EPR000767

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of: **Alvie Lee Winters aka Alvie Winters**

A Petition for Probate has been filed by: **Karen Gonzales** in the Superior Court of California, County of: **IMPERIAL**

The Petition for Probate requests that **Karen Gonzales** be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent.

The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority.

A hearing on the petition will be held in this court as follows:

Date: October 8, 2020

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Dept. 7

Address of court:

Superior Court of California,

County of Imperial

939 West Main Street

El Centro, CA 92243

If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objection.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice

Imperial County Department of Public Works Re-Release of the Request for Proposal (RFP) for Resident Engineer and Material Testing Services for:

Winterhaven Drive Over California Wasteway, Bridge No. 58C-0094, Seismic Retrofit Project in Imperial County; Federal Aid Project No. BHLSZD-5958(014); County Project No. 58C-0094

The County of Imperial Department of Public Works is requesting responses from qualified consulting firms to provide the following services for the subject Federally Funded Project:

1. Resident Engineer and Construction Inspection Services.
2. Material Testing Services - Acceptance Testing.
3. Material Testing Services - Independent Assurance Testing.

The Request for Proposal is available for review and download at the County of Imperial Department of Public Works Web site at <https://publicworks.imperialcounty.org/> under the section titled "Projects Out to Bid".

Qualified entities along with Disadvantaged Business Enterprise entities are invited to submit written responses for consideration in accordance with this Request. These services will be conducted under a contract with the County of Imperial. All proposals should be submitted before the due date of 4:00 p. m. October 2, 2020 to:

John A. Gay, P. E.
Director of Public Works

c/o **Lorena Alvarez, Engineering Technician**

County of Imperial

155 South 11th Street

El Centro, CA 92243

For additional information regarding this Notice please email Jose Castaneda, Administrative Analyst III of the County of Imperial Department of Public Works at josecastaneda@co.imperial.ca.us.

Legal 8984

Publish: Sept. 17, 24, Oct. 1, 2020

Budget.....from page one

board consider that this become the policy of this board going forward that we will not go and approve another budget that exceeds our revenue. We must get this under control."

It has been a tough year, and the board will have to look at the budget month by month to make sure it stays balanced, said District 5 Supervisor Castillo, who motioned to approve the budget. However, it is not as bad as some have made it out to seem, he said.

"Someone here always says we're broke. But no, we're not broke. We just have a slight shortage of funds, and somehow you guys made it happen by taking the moneys from other departments, other programs, to patch up the deficit," Castillo said. "It's amazing how the recommended budget is \$540 million. When I first got on the board, it was a little over \$400 million. So, in the past 10 years I've served on the board, it's

gone up over \$140 million."

He thanked budget staff for making it work every year.

Not all were so impressed by the increase in budget numbers.

"I disagree with Supervisor Castillo, respectfully disagree," District 1 Supervisor Escobar said. "We are going through significant financial challenges."

Looking year over year, Escobar said, the county is going downhill, and it's a steep slope.

"If year over year we're struggling on a consistent basis, why is every bar increasing for fiscal year '20-21?" he asked. "We have a dollar and we're spending \$1.25. We have \$2 and we're spending \$3. The rubber will meet the road. It may not be this year. It may not be next year, but eventually the rubber will meet the road and we will suffer the consequences."

He commended staff on taking some measures to reduce the budget, like reducing out-of-coun-

ty travel and extra-help expenses, but Escobar said he was concerned that close to \$4 million of funds used to balance the budget came from freezing vacant positions.

"That's putting a bandage on a hemorrhaging wound," he said. "That's not going to solve the problem in the long term."

He said he's lived this problem in Calexico, where he was a member of the City Council, and nobody wants to reduce wages through furloughs. He urged the county executive officer and board to look at a five-year plan to "get us out of this rut," Escobar said.

Chairman of the Board and District 2 Supervisor Plancarte said the board will be re-evaluating the budget on a month-to-month basis, but he knows the county needs a budget, and he is willing to endorse the budget as presented because it's a balanced budget.

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IVC.....from page one

get caught by a police officer for going to the restroom in public."

Without even an ice chest to store cold meals, the student has had to choose meals wisely.

"Everything I buy must be ready to go at that moment," the student said. "I can't even buy fast food because I don't have a car to go through the drive-through windows in and most places won't let me inside to order."

In a recent IVC student survey, about 210 students self-identified as being homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Recently, the college and the city of El Centro moved forward with plans to partner to provide grant-funded tiny homes off campus for such students.

"Many college students are living with friends, in their car, or even in trailers that do not have electricity or plumbing," a formerly homeless IVC student said. "There are many unforeseen obstacles IVC students must face."

The 23-year-old sociology and social work major spent her freshman year homeless with her brother.

"At the time, we did not know we were homeless ... we were staying at a friend's house," she said. "By our definition, we had a place to sleep. Therefore, we were not homeless."

Although no longer homeless, the 23-year-old explained how she and her brother pushed forward in their education despite concerns about where they might sleep or eat each day.

"Most people are unaware that there are students who have no permanent home and move around finding a place to stay," she said. "All this, in order to continue their education."

The struggle to maintain college courses while surviving on their own was no easy feat, but she did find comfort not only in friends, but in the resources IVC staff members were able to provide her and her brother during their most difficult times.

"When you are struggling it is hard to ask for help, it is also hard to admit that you need it," she said. "I want students to feel like they have a chance at success because they're destined for so much more than they know."

Thankfully, the dream of providing a safe living area for IVC students suffering from homelessness will soon be a reality by the start of the spring semester following the city of El Centro's grant funding award.

"That makes me really proud to be able to provide this service to our students that have experienced tremendous barriers," Imperial Valley College President and Superintendent Martha Garcia said during an Imperial Community College District Board of Trustees meeting Sept. 16.

Gov. Gavin Newsom awarded the city of El Centro some \$3,024,114 in Homekey grant funds to assist in the construction costs of 13 tiny home duplexes. The new homes would provide two years of permanent housing

and supportive services for 26 homeless IVC students, according to an El Centro City Council agenda report on the project.

"This tiny home community will primarily house homeless youth who are pursuing higher education at IVC because they believe that through education their lives will change," Garcia said. "Collectively in Imperial County, we are committed to helping those that have the greatest barriers in life."

The city of El Centro requested the grant funds in collaboration with the local college and the Imperial Valley College Foundation to develop the project on vacant city-owned property at 1998 N. 12th St. on the corner of 12th Street and Bradshaw Avenue, south of Lowe's retail store, according to the agenda report.

Lotus Living, Rise Above Resilient Community will be the title of the tiny homes project located less than five miles from the IVC campus and in close proximity to local stores including Target, Aldi, Costco, Walmart, and Food 4 Less.

"The combination of unemployment in the Valley and affordable housing impacted us tremendously and our educational journey at IVC was hard to achieve," the 23-year-old formerly homeless student said. "But through programs like the Lotus Living, many students with similar stories can now have a place to live that empowers and encourages them to continue their educational journey."

The grant will pay for the construction of the project and fund its operational costs for the first two years. The installation of 13 tiny home duplex units in the community will make up 26 homes each about 340 square feet and will include a kitchen, restroom, bed, desk, closet, patio and washer and dryer stacked units, according to the project report.

A conceptual site plan of the project also shows a pedestrian pathway for each unit, a parking lot with 27 parking spaces, lighting, and the installation of generous landscaping throughout the project site. Additional improvements involve the installation of the tiny home modular units and the proper connection to utilities such as electricity as well as water and sewer onsite, the agenda report notes.

Construction on the project has tentatively been scheduled for Oct. 6 through Dec. 31. As per grant guidelines, the state will advance a check to the city in the amount requested and the city's goal will be to expend the funds and provide the deliverables to the state by Dec. 30.

"Homekey is the first effort of its kind in the nation and is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect the most vulnerable people in our state," Newsom said in a press release regarding the Homekey grant awards on Sept. 16.

Homekey is a newly created \$600 million program by the state to purchase and rehabilitate housing in an effort to rapidly sustain and expand

housing for people impacted by COVID-19 and experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness, according to the release.

The city of Calexico is also building out a Homekey project at the former Hollie's Hotel on Imperial Avenue, where it will partner with a developer to provide senior and homeless housing.

With such a sizable number of students self-identified as homeless attending IVC, the project would serve students with extremely low levels of income and would prioritize serving former foster youth, according to the project details.

"These new homes will provide a safe and encouraging atmosphere, where students can surpass their hardship," the former homeless IVC student said. "I hope this will alleviate all the stigma associated with homelessness."

As part of the lease agreement between the city and the IVC Foundation, the foundation will be accountable for the long-term maintenance and operation of the housing site for 55 years. During this time the city will continue to own the land and housing units, while the college will be responsible for providing onsite and offsite case management and wrap-around services for the students who will be residing at the facility, according to the project's agenda report.

To rent out a tiny home, students

will have to pay an estimated \$200 per month and be required to complete 10 hours of community service maintenance work on the premises each month as part of their rental agreement, according to the report.

"I'm extremely grateful to the city of El Centro for applying for Homekey funds to create this dream," Garcia said.

The Homekey grant, administered through the California Department of Housing and Community Development, will award the city of El Centro with \$3.2 million, including a 24-month operating subsidy in the amount of \$199,557 for operational costs, according to reports.

California's new Homekey grant gathered its \$600 million in funds by deriving \$550 million of it from the state's direct allocation of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, the \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill, and \$50 million is derived from the state's general fund, according to agenda reports.

In response to the grant award, the El Centro City Council approved two items in relation to the Lotus Living project on Sept. 15. The first was a resolution providing the city manager authorization to sign the standard agreement and any other necessary contracts related to the tiny home project. The second allowed the city to advance \$460,000 from its general fund to start purchasing the project's tiny home duplexes, which will be refunded back into the city once the grant award is received.

Given that the grant required the project to be completed by Dec. 31, the city's cash advance was necessary to pay a 50 percent deposit, which was due by Sept. 30 to ensure construction meets scheduled deadlines, according to agenda reports.

"A house is a basic need that unfortunately not everyone has," said one 18-year-old IVC student, an El Centro native experiencing homelessness who also asked to remain nameless. "Not knowing where you will sleep the following day was a huge stress that took over your mind."

Like several other IVC students, the 18-year-old has also been impacted by the lack of affordable housing available in the Valley, recalling how she spent her first semester often thinking about where she was going to sleep the next day, finding money to pay for a motel and trying to figure out how she was going to be able to make it back to class without a car. These stresses were only increased with her studies.

"Having those stressful thoughts made me feel really down," she said. "While going through that and working to have an education, it was a tremendous struggle and it really set me back on my first college year."

Today, the 18-year-old is looking forward to the new housing project and hopes other self-identified homeless students at IVC will be able to focus on their education without having to worry about where they will stay the night.

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