

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

3, 11, 31, 35, 37

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 4, 2, 1

Evening picks: 5, 2, 6

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 4, Big Ben

2nd Place: 8, Gorgeous George

3rd Place: 5, California Classic

Race Time: 1:49.40



NEWS OF THE WEIRD
by Chuck Shepard

Police Reports: From The Recorder, Greenfield, Mass., Nov. 13, 2003: "A man reported buying a car and when he went to get into it with the intention of sleeping in it, there were three people, including the prior owner (a)lready sleeping inside the car." From The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville, Tenn., Nov. 6, 2003, reporting the aborted robbery of a convenience store by a man who pulled a knife and demanded money after he had already given the clerk his credit card to pay for a purchase: "The complainant (clerk) looked at the suspect like he was crazy ... the suspect quickly signed the sales receipt and left."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Sex is best in the afternoon after coming out of the shower."
— Ronald Reagan

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John Wood/Daily Press
SMRR marks its 25th year this weekend at The Church in Ocean Park, long a meeting place for local progressives.

SMRR: Hi-yo silver

After 25 years, group isn't just about rent control anymore

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

OCEAN PARK — Local activists will meet in a church on Hill Street Saturday to mark the 25th anniversary of Santa Monica's political ruling party. Santa Monicans for Renters Rights was formed in 1979 out of a coalition of organizations that banded together to sponsor the local rent control law. The powerful, left-leaning group has spearheaded a variety of progressive local measures through

the years.

In 1981, SMRR first gained a majority of seats on the Santa Monica City Council, and has retained control over City Hall every since 1988. Five of the seven current council members were endorsed by SMRR.

Denny Zane, SMRR co-chair and one of its founders, credited the organization with everything from strict environmental and recycling policies to aggressive tenant protections, new affordable housing projects and the success of the Third Street Promenade. Strict building standards put in place by SMRR have helped control growth, he added.

"When people think about the developments they don't like,

they usually are thinking about the Water Gardens or Arboretum Project or some of the hotels," Zane said. "And those were approved between 1984 and 1988, when SMRR adversaries had the majority on the council.

"There were about 5 million square feet (of projects) approved."

SMRR supporters will meet at the Church in Ocean Park at 7 p.m. Saturday for Hors d'oeuvres, drinks, music, dancing and "staged readings from dramatic oral histories documented nearly 25 years ago that recreate the multi-generational struggle that brought rent control to Santa Monica," accord-

See SMRR, page 6

Take the Fifth



John Wood/Daily Press
Above: A construction crew tends to a sewage line under Fourth Street on Tuesday afternoon. Parts of Fourth Street have been closed since Feb. 9 so the city can repave and complete work on water mains, curbs, sidewalks, the median, landscaping, crosswalks and signs. Below: Residents will have to wait longer through the summer, as work is expected to be completed by Sept. 30.

School boosters prep for big push

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

Local school boosters have given themselves 18 days to gather an estimated 3,500 signatures to put a controversial charter amendment on the November ballot.

The leaders from the Community for Excellent Public Schools contend that securing an average of 194 new signatures each day is definitely within their reach.

"I'm confident that we're going to get the signatures required to put this on the ballot," said Shari Davis, CEPS co-chair. "We've employed a variety of strategies to make sure we've covered all our bases."

The charter amendment put forward by CEPS would force City Hall to dedicate at least \$6 million to the local school district each year, with additional funding going to schools when the city's \$150 million general fund budget grows. The city oversees a total budget of \$350 million, including dedicated funds.

A combination of targeted mailings, phone banking, and volunteer and paid signature gatherers have already netted about 7,500 signatures in support of the proposal, said Ralph Mechur, a CEPS member. Though it needs only 8,640 signatures — or 15 percent of Santa Monica's

See SCHOOL, page 7

Off the hook? Alleged madam still free woman

By Daily Press staff

POLICE HEADQUARTERS

— Charges have yet to be filed against a woman arrested earlier this month for allegedly running a

house of prostitution on San Vicente Boulevard.

Patty Kim Louthain, 34, of Los Angeles, was arrested by Santa Monica Police vice detectives on April 2, after an undercover officer

went to an apartment on the 400 block of San Vicente Boulevard asking for a massage, which was advertised on the Internet. When a woman inside solicited him for illegal sex, he signaled for a team

of officers waiting outside to raid the apartment.

Police began the investigation after receiving a tip from a neighbor who had been noticing sever-

See MADAM, page 6

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LOCAL



CEPS puts its popularity to test this month

SCHOOL, from page 1

57,596 registered voters — to qualify its measure for the ballot, CEPS hopes to gather 11,000 signatures.

“To be honest, not every signature we have is a valid signature,” Mechur said.

CEPS workers will launch a major signature gathering effort April 24. The group has set May 1 as an internal deadline to collect the signatures, which must be handed over to the City Clerk’s Office for verification.

While CEPS members said the cutoff date is the first week of May, technically, they have more time. Assistant City Clerk Beth Sanchez on Tuesday said the school boosters actually have until July 20, which is 180 days from when the ballot request was formally recognized on Jan. 21. Once they get the signatures, the City Clerk’s Office must draft a resolution and ask the county to place the item on the November ballot. Because doing that can be time-consuming, the City Clerk’s Office has asked CEPS to turn in their signatures in May, if possible.

Davis declined to say how many paid signature gatherers there are or how much CEPS has paid a consultant hired for their campaign. There are about 200 volunteer signature gatherers, she said.

“Every school has worked hard to get volunteers and they’ve been working hard within their communities,” Davis said.

The April 24 effort will include posting signature gatherers at high-traffic locations like supermarkets, as well as knocking on individual doors in residential neighborhoods throughout Santa Monica. Mechur said so far volunteers have gathered 90 percent of the required signatures, but added paid signature gatherers may be relied upon more heavily as the deadline approaches.

“I’m confident that we’re going to get the signatures required to put this on the ballot.”

— SHARI DAVIS
Co-chair, CEPS

Many city leaders — including several council members — have come out against the proposed measure, saying it’s irresponsible to dedicate money without designating a revenue source. What’s more, they claim amending the city’s charter is too rigid a reaction to the funding crisis, one that will lead to cuts in other impor-

tant areas, as well as a reduced bond rating for the city.

CEPS supporters counter that taking \$6 million from City Hall’s general fund — the equivalent of 4 percent — is a small investment for a key resource. The proposal also calls for “accelerating” that amount by one percentage point each year if the general fund grows by 3.5 percent. As a charter amendment, it would last indefinitely.

The school district had to close a \$13 million shortfall in state funding last year. It did so by cutting programs, laying off workers and receiving \$5.25 million from City Hall, \$2.25 million of which was in “one-time” funds which aren’t guaranteed this year.

Meanwhile, City Hall leaders plan to meet April 28 with officials from the local school board and Santa Monica College to discuss options. In two previous meetings, they discussed possibly providing \$6 million to the schools, but not offering the accelerator.

Davis said CEPS was initially optimistic about the talks, but that the discussions hit a roadblock when officials didn’t offer to include an accelerator similar to the one provided in the proposed charter amendment.

“At first, we were encouraged at some progress being made, but the last meeting was disappointing,” Davis said. “We’ll see what happens on the 28th.”

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