

FREE

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTTO

FANTASY 5
2, 14, 23, 24, 35

DAILY 3
Afternoon picks: 3, 9, 4
Evening picks: 7, 1, 9

DAILY DERBY
1st Place: 11, Money Bags
2nd Place: 06, Whirl Win
3rd Place: 12, Lucky Charms
Race Time: 1:46.51



NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

■ Raymond Rodriguez, 25, was found not guilty in the murder of a 77-year-old drinking buddy after he testified to having, at the crime scene, hallucinations of bologna and cheese dancing around in the refrigerator and, in the freezer, a green man who told Rodriguez, "Catch me if you can." (San Antonio, December)

■ Patrick Hutchinson was sent for a mental exam in February after police in Lexington, Ky., accused him of murdering his wife. Hutchinson explained that she had been taken over by aliens and that he (as one of only 735 "true humans" left in Lexington, out of 260,000 population) had to stop her, using a weapon supplied by a cobra that was speaking on behalf of God.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"One good thing about music, when it hits, you feel no pain."
— Bob Marley



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Cell companies move through City Hall static

Better reception is on the horizon

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN — In an effort to get better reception for cell phone users in Santa Monica, wireless companies are getting dialed into a new law that will govern where antennas can be built here.

Wireless representatives and public utility workers met with city officials on Monday to discuss revisions to a proposed law that dictates where, when and how antennas will be erected throughout the city. If the law is passed by the City Council this summer, better reception for most cell phone users could be a reality by

the end of the year.

The proposed law is expected to be reviewed by the City Council in June with final approval in July. A February moratorium banning the construction of wireless telephone facilities on public land will expire in August. Wireless companies will then be able to submit applications to erect antennas in Santa Monica.

Prompted by two lawsuits levied by Verizon and AT&T, City Hall was forced to draft a law that would allow telecommunication companies to install wireless infrastructure on public land. The companies filed the suits in state and federal court last fall after they applied to put up antennas in Santa Monica but City Hall denied them

See CELL, page 5

Watch that crack



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press
Jesse Puente, of Venice, recently showed off his moves on the Venice boardwalk.

Volunteers push CEPS measure over the top

By Daily Press staff

School supporters are crediting hundreds of volunteers stationed at "every corner of the city" on Saturday for gathering the last of more than 8,000 signatures needed to place a controversial and unprecedented charter amendment on the November ballot.

The charter amendment would force City Hall to hand over at least \$6 million to the local school district each year, and more when the city's budget grows. City Hall oversees a \$350 million budget and about half of it is unrestricted, meaning it isn't mandated for one particular project or use.

Local politicians have criticized the proposal, calling it government at its worst because it doesn't identify a new revenue source. Leaders from Community for Excellent Public Schools, the organization pushing the charter amendment, counter the proposal is a modest request for a most valued resource — children.

In a Monday announcement, CEPS co-chair Shari Davis said more than 600 people have volunteered to gather signatures for the proposal in the past 10 weeks.

"The volunteer response

See CEPS, page 6

Beach smoking ban may be lit tonight

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — The ban on lighting up at local beaches and on the Santa Monica Pier will become law in 30 days if it's approved again by City Hall leaders tonight.

Elected officials passed the smoking ban 4-2 last month, citing the health dangers of second-hand smoke, litter problems on the beaches and fire hazards on the pier. Violators

face the same fine as for smoking in Santa Monica parks — \$750.

Every ordinance must be voted on twice before it becomes law. The smoking law has drawn sharp criticisms from members of the business community, who worry where the ban might be expanded to next and question whether it's fair to merchants on the pier.

Though the law allows for designated smoking areas to be set aside on the pier, it prohibits smoking else-

where. Pier officials, who backed the proposal last month, said they didn't realize at the time it extended to outdoor dining areas.

"This was new information to us," said Ben Franz-Knight, executive director of the Pier Restoration Corp., which manages the pier. "And the tenants, understandably so, were very, very concerned about it. And fundamentally it's an issue of fairness — if

See BAN, page 6

City Hall to drop into \$505K skateboard park

(Editor's note: This article is part of an ongoing series on the consent agenda of the Santa Monica City Council. Consent agenda items are routinely passed with little or no discussion or public input, though many items were previously discussed.)

By Daily Press staff

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — A \$505,000 contract to build a new skateboard park in Santa Monica is part of \$3.5 million in expenses local officials are

expected to approve tonight.

Plans for the skate site at Memorial Park were approved by the Architectural Review Board March 1, clearing the way for construction, which is expected to be

See CONSENT, page 6



Rendering courtesy

Officials hope the new skate park will open this fall.

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LOCAL

Public input not allowed at law's second reading

BAN, from page 1

you're going to ban smoking on outdoors area on the pier, you should ban it citywide.

"At this point, you know, hey, let's treat this as a global issue in the whole city," Franz-Knight added. "Let's do it comprehensively. Let's not piecemeal it."

If council members agree smoking should be allowed in outside dining areas on the pier, it's unclear whether the law will have to be redrafted. As written, it calls for designated smoking areas on the pier in locations that have yet to be decided — and it's possible outdoor dining

areas could be grouped into those designated areas.

The council is expected to make a final decision on the exact size and location of the designated areas next month, officials said. Franz-Knight has recommended eight specific areas on the pier be set aside for smoking, plus portions of each outdoor dining area.

Whether council members will agree is unknown. At least one council member on Monday said smoking should be allowed outdoors at restaurants on the pier.

"We allow smoking in restaurants all over the city, and I never thought about it

when I voted for it," said City Councilman Herb Katz. "When we cut it out of the rest of the city, if we ever do, then (we can do it on the pier)."

Katz said if it came before the council he would support a smoking ban in all outdoor dining areas, something several other California cities already have done.

The smoking ban was backed by the Surfrider Foundation, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society and City Hall's own environmental task force, and the Recreation and Parks Commission, among other groups. Along with a recent decision to outlaw smoking on beaches in the city of Los Angeles — including Cabrillo, Dockweiler, Will Rogers and Venice — the ban covers 13 miles of beaches.

"To me personally, it's really a matter of protecting the rights of non-smokers," said Robert Berger, director of Citizens

Organized Against Smoking and its Trash. "Eighty-four percent of us don't smoke — why should we have to move to accommodate smokers? Why should we have to deal with cigarette butts all over the beach?"

Berger said he will attend tonight's meeting, even though no public input is allowed on items that return to the council for second reading. Other residents said they didn't know about the ban until after the last vote, when it became a national news story. They questioned the fairness and importance of outlawing smoking in an open, windy area.

"If the city's got time to put their resources into banning smoking on the beach, who's in charge of the priorities?" asked Ocean Park resident Kurt Heim, 27. "Surely there must be bigger issues than smoking on the beach."

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More than 600 volunteer for charter amendment

CEPS, from page 1

has been amazing," she said. "And we've been very encouraged by the financial contributions to this effort as well ... This is clearly a community that will do what it takes to maintain the excellence of its public education."

Alan Toy, commissioner of the Santa Monica Rent Control Board, and Dr. Mike Gruning, chairman of the local chamber of commerce, were among the volunteers who pitched in to gather signatures over the weekend.

"If we are going to commit government funds to anything, it should be education," Toy said in a prepared statement. "What better way to create a sustainable community than to make sure our schools have the resources they need?"

Though CEPS leaders feel confident

they have the signatures necessary to qualify the charter amendment for the ballot, they likely will continue in their signature drive. That's because all of the signatures have to be from registered Santa Monica voters. Though it needs only 8,640 signatures — or 15 percent of Santa Monica's 57,596 registered voters — to qualify its measure for the ballot, CEPS hoped to gather 11,000 signatures.

Meanwhile, a group of leaders from City Hall, the local school district and Santa Monica College are scheduled to meet Wednesday to discuss possible school funding options. The ongoing talks don't specifically include CEPS, but are widely viewed as the key forum in which a compromise could be reached.

— John Wood

Nine new police cruisers part of \$3.5M consent agenda

CONSENT, from page 1

completed as early as this fall.

Officials said the proposed park reflects Santa Monica's deep skateboarding roots.

"Thirty years ago skateboarding was popularized when skateboarders, in an area between Santa Monica and Venice historically known to skateboarders as 'Dog Town,' demonstrated their aggressive skating skills in pools, stairs, streets and on sidewalks," reads a memo by city staffers to the City Council.

"The final design consists of in-ground concrete bowls and structures that will provide a flowing and challenging experience for skaters and bikers at all levels of expertise," the memo continues. "The skate area is enclosed with decorative fencing and there will be a single point of entry for security and control. The storm-water runoff resulting from the impervious concrete surfaces will be reduced by the installation of new drywells that will percolate storm-water runoff into the groundwater basin."

Also on tonight's agenda is a three-year contract with a transportation company to provide Dial-A-Ride services, which consists of free transportation for disabled people and anyone over 60 years old throughout Santa Monica, seven days a week. Officials estimate that the contract will cost \$1,603,008.

Another \$358,207 is expected to be spent on roadwork being done on Fourth Street between Pico Boulevard and the southern city limit. Crews recently began construction on the curbs, sidewalks, medians and roadways on Fourth Street. They expect to complete the project this fall.

City Hall staffers have recommended spending another \$451,691 on a three-year contract to provide Big Blue Bus advertisement posting services. They've also suggested \$451,691 be spent on nine new gasoline-powered police cruisers and another \$127,809 be spent on a tool and equipment truck.

— John Wood

DID YOU KNOW?: The mean rainfall in Southern California is 12.5 inches.