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Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

9 17 21 35 45
Meganumber: 6
Jackpot: \$10 million

FANTASY 5

4 16 28 29 34

DAILY 3

Daytime: 1 0 8
Evening: 5 1 2

DAILY DERBY

1st: 09 Winning Spirit
2nd: 01 Gold Rush
3rd: 06 Whirl Win
RACE TIME: 1:41.54

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Timothy Paul Kootenay, 43, jailed in Aspen, Colo., in November on a California warrant for probation violation, said he would fight extradition on the ground that he is a citizen of the notorious "Republic of Texas" and that, actually, Aspen and Vail are located on a sliver of land that is also part of the Texas nation. Kootenay's separatist colleagues (some of whom have taken up arms) believe that Texas was never legally annexed by the United States and is thus a sovereign nation that should respond only to international law.

TODAY IN HISTORY

ON OCT. 12TH, 1492, Christopher Columbus arrived with his expedition in the present-day Bahamas.

■ **In 1870,** Gen. Robert E. Lee died in Lexington, Va., at age 63.

■ **In 1915,** English nurse Edith Cavell was executed by the Germans in occupied Belgium during World War I.

■ **In 1968,** the summer Games of the 19th Olympiad officially opened in Mexico City.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Matrimony is not a word, it's a sentence."

EDDIE CANTOR

AMERICAN COMEDIAN-SINGER (1892-1964).

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Candidates and their word on street

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of installments posing questions to City Council candidates. Each Tuesday leading up to Election Day, candidates will be asked a question by the Santa Monica Daily Press. Readers are encouraged to submit potential questions for the candidates to sack@smdp.com. Responses from challengers vying for four City Council seats appear first; incumbents appear last. See their responses on pages 8 and 9).

By Daily Press staff

CITY AT LARGE — It's the No. 1 concern of Santa Monica residents for, at least, the past three years, according to numerous surveys.

The number of homeless people appears to be on the upswing here, with estimates falling somewhere between 1,000 and 1,200 individuals living on the streets on any given day in Santa Monica. City leaders, including the four incumbents looking to keep their seats, support social service programs that are designed to help the local homeless population. They have also passed laws designed to

eliminate anti-social behavior, like sleeping in doorways or allowing food lines to assemble in area parks.

But critics of those laws and social service programs say they are ineffective and are attracting more homeless people to Santa Monica, allowing them to capitalize on the city's compassionate and socialistic way of doing things.

Not surprising, many of the candidates running for City Council are using the homeless issue as a leading campaign platform. They say there is a glaring need for tough love and more accountability for social service programs. Incumbents feel it's not that simple, and the issue is of national proportions. At the very least, it's a regional issue and other cities must help share the burden, the incumbents contend.

This week's question: **"How would you define the 'homeless' problem? What do you plan to do about it, and how would you specifically improve the quality of life for residents affected by homelessness?"**

See **HOMELESS**, page 8



John Wood/Daily Press

Concerned neighbor Marion Landau on Monday points out the spot where transients recently entered a vacant house at 126 Pacific St. in Ocean Park. Homeless people have used the house for shelter off and on since 1990, leaving behind their belongings, litter and drug paraphernalia such as crack vials and heroin needles, according to Landau, who was recently invited to a barbecue there by a homeless man.

Nearly \$2M to be spent on increased housing costs

(Editor's note: This is part of an ongoing series that tracks the city's expenditures appearing on the upcoming Santa Monica City Council consent agenda. Consent agenda items are routinely passed by the City Council with little or no discussion from elected officials or the public.)

BY SUSAN TAM

Special to the Daily Press

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — Elected officials here are expected to spend \$1.8 million tonight on everything from affordable housing to an emergency response system.

City Hall will be increasing the amount of money allocated for two

See **HOUSING**, page 5

CEPS nods: Eight is enough

Parents back eight for council; Bauer, Cole, Feinstein, Mann don't make the cut

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

MID-CITY — A powerful group of parents with broad community support weighed in on the local City Council race Monday, throwing their support behind eight candidates.

Leaders from the Community

for Excellent Public Schools said all eight candidates have proven they're fit to serve on a City Council responsible for doling out millions of dollars to local schools. A total of 14 hopefuls are vying for four open council seats in the November election.

The CEPS backing is viewed as important because of the group's

broad base, including ideological opposites like renter rights leader Denny Zane and property rights attorney Chris Harding. CEPS will spend between \$15,000 and \$20,000 this election cycle on direct mail and other campaign efforts, members of the CEPS executive committee said in a

See **CEPS**, page 4

City hauls tow truck companies to court

Special to the Daily Press

CITY HALL — Consumer protection lawyers here have filed criminal charges against three towing companies for illegal business practices.

Socorro Lopez, who owns Classic Towing; Ameer Antoon, owner of Concord Towing; and William Amaya of William's Tow and Impound, will be arraigned

today at the LAX Courthouse. They are accused of various violations ranging from overcharging customers to illegally towing vehicles.

Deputy City Attorney Adam Radinsky, who is prosecuting the cases, said City Hall has recently received several tips from the Santa Monica Police Department of towing violations throughout the city.

"We have seen a sudden rash of these cases," he said. "Certain

towing companies have been taking it upon themselves to make money illegally ...

"We hope these cases send a wake-up call to all towing companies doing business in Santa Monica that the laws will be enforced here."

Lopez faces the most charges with six infractions and one misdemeanor. A misdemeanor and an

See **TOW**, page 4

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LOCAL

CEPS throws its support behind Measures S, N

CEPS, from page 1

Monday interview at the local teacher union offices.

Earning the CEPS backing were a trio of incumbents — Mayor Richard Bloom, City Councilman Ken Genser and Herb Katz — along with challengers Matt Dinolfo, Patricia Hoffman, Maria Loya, Kathryn Morea and Bobby Shriver.

CEPS leaders said there wasn't enough information to evaluate candidates Leticia Anderson and Linda Armstrong. This was not so for City Councilman Mike Feinstein, and challengers Bill Bauer, David Cole and Jon Mann, all of whom CEPS called "not reliable supporters of public education."

Feinstein faced the fiercest criticisms from CEPS leaders, who accused the councilman of being divisive and hypocritical. Feinstein railed against a plan this spring to give schools an additional \$3 million in city funds annually, but claimed

on a recent election mailer that "Michael's voting record speaks for itself ... From 1996 thru today, a 250 percent increase in city funding for our schools."

The measure passed, but returns to the council in two years for adjustment.

"Since it's in good faith, you want to have good people there to represent you," said CEPS leader and local businessman Dr. Mike Gruning. He was accompanied at the meeting by CEPS co-chairs Shari Davis and Louise Jaffe, along with CEPS leaders Lauri Crane, Rochelle Lewis-Fanali and Zane.

Feinstein, who abstained from the funding vote, saying he couldn't bring himself to vote against school children, defended his record on Monday. He pointed out that he supported an alternative arrangement to swap use of school facilities for extra city dollars. That alternative was more fiscally responsible, added Feinstein, who had called the main plan

the result of "slash-and-burn politics."

"It's so ... corrupt, and I'm the one who stuck my neck out, was willing to say this," Feinstein added on Monday. "If we're talking about education, what kind of message will we be sending to the children in the community that someone like me, who simply advanced an alternative vision for achieving our common objective, is to be crushed electorally for doing it?"

Former newspaper columnist Bill Bauer didn't receive the CEPS backing because of his previous opposition to parcel tax measures to fund schools, according to Davis. And Mann, who works as a flight attendant, failed to display a grasp of the intricacies involved in the issues, said Jaffe.

Jaffe declined to discuss Cole's negative CEPS assessment. However, Cole has been criticized before for being more of an outspoken critic than a community consensus builder, and CEPS prides itself on consensus building. Still, CEPS lead-

ers said the lengthiest part of discussions over whom the group should support centered around Cole, former head of the Mid-City neighborhood group.

The CEPS evaluation process took a full month and followed a three-step process, CEPS leaders said. First, the candidates were asked to answer a comprehensive list of questions relating to local schools. Next, they were invited to a Sept. 20 candidate forum. Finally, the 17-member CEPS steering committee analyzed each candidate's background, qualifications and track records on education issues. The group spent hours discussing the candidates before taking near-unanimous votes on each of them.

Along with the candidate assessments, CEPS announced on Monday it will support Measure S, a \$135 million bond for Santa Monica College, and Measure N, a 2 percent hike in the hotel bed tax. City Hall is counting on Measure N proceeds to help fulfill their promises to local schools.

Tow jam: Proprietors must sign off on towings

TOW, from page 1

infraction differ in the amount of the fines. A misdemeanor carries possible jail time while an infraction does not.

Lopez's infractions include three counts of towing a car without a business owner's authorization, two counts of refusing credit card payment and one count of charging a car owner an excessive rate. The misdemeanor is for towing a car without legal grounds, a violation of the California Vehicle Code. Lopez did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Antoon was unaware of the charges against him. Neither he nor his corporate attorney returned phone calls seeking comment. He is charged with two infractions — towing without a business owner's authorization and overcharging for storage.

Amaya also was not available for comment, but a dispatcher at his company, Mike Gomez, said the charges of refusing a credit card and operating without a business license are false.

"We have a business license with the city of Los Angeles and one for Santa Monica, too," he said, adding William's Tow and Impound accepts ATM cards or cash, which is in compliance with the California vehicle code.

California law requires towing companies to accept credit cards. William's Tow and Classic Towing are charged with

breaking that rule, Radinsky said.

It's also illegal for towing companies to charge more than the going rate approved by the local police department — or to charge for two days' storage when a car has been impounded less than 24 hours.

"We see this as serious consumer protection," Radinsky said. "We do see it as an issue when people are being charged exorbitant amounts, they can't use their credit cards in the middle of the night, usually in strange locations, their cars are being towed illegally and people don't even know it's illegal and that there are remedies."

Radinsky said most people don't know about one important part of the California Vehicle Code that Lopez and Antoon allegedly violated.

"It's illegal to tow a car from a business without the written authorization of the business owner or an employee, even when there's a tow-away sign," he said. "That means that during hours when a business is closed, cars can't be towed unless the towing company gets approval from the business right then."

One of those remedies is car owners suing tow companies in small claims court. Though Radinsky doesn't know how many people have taken advantage of that opportunity, he said most people don't know you can get up to four times the amount you paid back.



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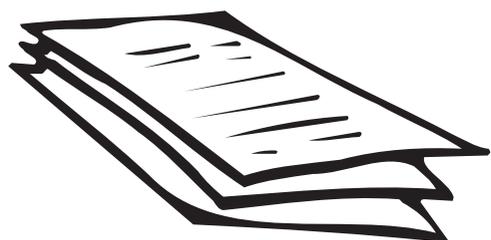
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