



The Desert Sun

COACHELLA VALLEY

Warrant issued for octogenarian jewel thief Doris Payne

A6

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Retail building to get 2nd story

Palm Springs council pleased with new design for downtown redevelopment

By Skip Descant
The Desert Sun

A new design for the retail-shops building in the downtown Palm Springs redevelopment has gone from one floor to two stories.

And the ground-breaking for the new Kimpton brand hotel — to function as a key anchor for the \$150 million development — is set for Oct. 16.

The building, known as Block B — which fronts Palm Canyon Drive and was originally designed as a one-story retail structure — is now two stories, with office space on the top floor. The building design, which takes a few pages from The Alley store and the soon-to-open Palm Springs Architecture and Design Center with its “floating plane roof” and wide overhangs, next will be reviewed by the Palm Springs Architectural Advisory Committee.

“It speaks, I think, to the his-

tory of Palm Springs and the future of modern architecture, in general,” Chris Pardo, a member of the project’s design team, told the Palm Springs City Council on Wednesday during a project update.

“We had a single-story building, which is really hard to get a lot of definition on, to make a special-looking building, when you’ve got a five-story building on one side, and three-story building on the other side, and then a six-story hotel and it looked a little out of place,” remarked John Wessman, the project’s developer.

Block B has been approved by the city’s planning commission, even though commissioners found it largely uninspiring and asked developers to improve upon it. The redesigned building maintains the same building footprint, but it has gained in stature.

“I think that the project is getting much closer to what I had envisioned in the first place



IMAGE COURTESY OF WESSMAN DEVELOPMENT CO.

An architect’s sketch of the redesigned building in Block B, fronting Palm Canyon Drive, in the redevelopment of downtown Palm Springs.

where we have some different types of buildings,” said Wessman.

The building which will go up on the north side of Block B — known as Block A — also has been redesigned with an improved relationship to pedestrians and brighter sea-foam

green highlights.

“I’m really impressed with the changes of Block A,” said Paul Lewin, a Palm Springs City Councilman. “I really did not like what had come before and the new look — I’m totally impressed.

“I think you did a great job of

listening, and I encourage you to continue to listen to the planning commission and (Architectural Advisory Committee,)” Lewin continued. “We all have the same goal, which is to have a really, really good project.”

Block A is on course to be completed by autumn 2015.



Department Inspector General with AMVETS Philip Watts looks over information available during a session explaining veterans benefits to mostly veteran-care providers at the UCR Palm Desert campus on Thursday.

JAY CALDERON/THE DESERT SUN

Veterans getting informed

Group travels to tell vets of all their benefits

By Sherry Barkas
The Desert Sun

Shirley Powell of Cathedral City is a Vietnam War veteran who served for 38 years in the United States Air Force, and like many veterans — young and old — she wasn’t fully aware of the benefits available to her.

Now she is among the representatives of veterans’ organizations throughout eastern Riverside County participating in a new Veterans University whose mission is to get all eligible veterans their due benefits.

It’s not just about medical benefits, Powell said, but schooling, housing and jobs as well.

“This group is trying to pull all the resources together and make them as vis-

Please see VETS, A5

Manager gets foot stuck in car wash

By Denise Goolsby
The Desert Sun

The manager of Desert Express Carwash, 43-632 Washington St., in La Quinta was seriously injured and taken to the hospital Thursday after getting her foot stuck in the wash machinery, according to an employee and Cal Fire.

The incident was reported at 9:15 a.m. By 10 a.m., the woman had been removed from the machinery.

The manager was putting a car through the wash when she stepped into the gap in the tracks, said assistant manager Maribel Diaz.

Diaz was walking through the office and happened to look at the security camera.

“I saw the manager — that she was stuck,” Diaz said.

The tracks were rolling.

“I ran to turn off the machine and called 911,” Diaz said.

The car wash was temporarily closed.

Eighteen firefighters and two engines responded.

Tesla official to speak at energy event

Regional summit in Palm Springs also to address the future of the Salton Sea

By Sammy Roth
The Desert Sun

Tesla co-founder J.B. Straubel will headline this year’s Southern California Energy Summit, which will focus on Salton Sea restoration and the future of the state’s renewable-energy mandate.

The annual gathering of business leaders, regulators and politicians — of which The Desert Sun is a sponsor — will take place Oct. 9-10 in Palm Springs. Speakers will include Rep. Raul Ruiz, D-Palm Desert, state Senate leader Kevin de León, D-Los Angeles, California Public Utilities Commission president Michael Peevey and Microsoft executive Darrell Smith.

“This year, we tried to put a little bit more emphasis on private industry, and how they’re utilizing renewable energy in the consumer marketplace,” said Brian Rix of Burke Rix Communications, which produces the conference. “There’s clearly no better indication of it than Tesla.”

Straubel’s planned appearance will come a month after Tesla decided not to build a



CRYSTAL CHATHAM/THE DESERT SUN

Tesla Motors co-founder J.B. Straubel, right, chats with clean-tech investor Ira Ehrenpreis at the ninth-annual Clean-Tech Investor Summit on Feb. 6, 2013, in Indian Wells.

massive battery factory by the Salton Sea. The electric automaker instead chose Reno, Nev.

“He really loves what we’re doing out here, and I think what we’ve always tried to do at the conference is promote the region and establish the region as an epicenter for renewable energy,” said Josh Zipperman, also of Burke Rix Communica-

tions. “I think that’s really starting to resonate with a lot of folks, and I think that’s part of the draw.”

Straubel also made an appearance in the Coachella Valley last year, when he spoke at the ninth annual Clean-Tech Investor Summit. He currently serves as Tesla’s chief technical officer.

De León will make his first

official trip to the Coachella Valley since he was elected president pro tem of the state Senate, the legislative body’s highest position. Smith will discuss his work to remake Microsoft’s Redmond headquarters as a cutting-edge, energy-efficient smart campus.

Of the 40 summit speakers confirmed so far, eight are women. The clean-technology sector has a well-known gender imbalance, an issue the summit’s organizers worked to address at last year’s conference by ensuring that 20 percent of the speakers would be women — no small accomplishment.

While recruiting female speakers “hasn’t been as much of a focus this year,” Zipperman said, 20 percent of the confirmed speakers are still women.

“There are not as many women in renewables as there are men,” he said. “This is just sort of how the pieces fell together this year.”

Summit organizers are billing this year’s event as, “The

Please see ENERGY, A5

Sting outside court nabs 3 illegal drivers

By Dave Nyczepir
The Desert Sun

Deputies arrested three people suspected of driving without a valid license between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m. Thursday outside Indio's Larson Justice Center in an undercover court sting, according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

Nine suspected DUI offenders, who were told not to drive

by a judge Thursday, were secretly followed to their cars by deputies to ensure they had alternate means of transportation, authorities said.

The three suspects that drove off on their own had their vehicles impounded, officials said, and all suspects either lacked licenses or had them suspended or revoked.

Those arrested potentially face increased jail time and longer license suspensions.



MICHAEL SNYDER/THE DESERT SUN

A customer gets his order at the "Eat'em Up Truck" during Modernism Week's Prefab Showcase and Modern Living Expo in Palm Springs.

Palm Springs delays food truck ordinance

By Skip Descant
The Desert Sun

The Palm Springs City Council delayed taking any action on a proposed food truck ordinance until council members' suggestions and comments are included into the draft ordinance.

The ban on food trucks in Palm Springs has been extended until Dec. 4. The current ban on mobile vending vehicles was set to expire in Sept. 18.

The City Council did not take

public comments on the item at its Wednesday meeting.

The proposed ordinance, as it is currently written, would restrict food trucks from Palm Canyon Drive between Alejo and Ramon roads. However, trucks could park on the east side of Indian Canyon Drive and the west side of Belardo Road.

Also, the proposed hours of operation would be 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., which provoked outcry on social media, with residents saying 9 p.m. is far too early to shut down food trucks.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Learn about Cathedral City history at event

The Cathedral City Historical Society will host "Meet and Greet II" from 4 to 7 p.m. on Saturday at the Cathedral Center, 37-171 Buddy Rogers Ave., Cathedral City.

Cost is \$10 and includes light refreshments.

Guest speakers will share stories about the history of Cathedral City.

Videos of Meet and Greet I, a 20-minute video showcasing historic photos, and a four-minute introduction to Cathedral City will be showing on screens at the center.

The historical society, incorporated as a nonprofit in 2000, is focused on collecting, cataloging and preserving items relevant to Cathedral City.

The group is looking for a permanent location to house its collection.

Information: (760) 861-3751
Denise Goolsby

Date fest soliciting applicants for court

The 2015 Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival is accepting applications for the Queen Scheherazade Scholarship Pageant until 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 8.

The chosen queen and her court will preside over the festival from Friday, Feb. 13, to Sunday, Feb. 22.

Applications are available at Riverside County high schools, the Riverside County Fairgrounds administrative office and the Riverside Coun-

ty Fair & National Date Festival website.

Pageant applicants need at least a 3.0 GPA, reside in the county, be age 17 by Nov. 22, and not have reached age 22 by Feb. 15, 2015.

The queen wins a \$3,500 scholarship and her two princesses \$3,000 scholarships.

For more information on the pageant call (760) 863-8247 or visit www.datefest.org.

City News Service

Reward offered for stolen piece of sculpture

A metal dog sculpture at the Village Park Animal Hospital in La Quinta lost its head on Aug. 29 after the entire art piece was ripped from its base and dragged by a vehicle, according to hospital officials.

A \$250 reward is being offered Dr. Kathryn Carlson for the return of the missing head — no questions asked.

The sculpture of the dog with a fire hydrant, was originally located in the dog relief area. It was found in the park adjacent to the facility at 51-230 Eisenhower Drive with the head missing.

People with information to share can call Village Park at (760) 564-3833 or the La Quinta Police Department at (760) 771-3220.

Xochitl Peña

College of the Desert to host education fair

College of the Desert will host a free education fair on Sept. 11 in the multi-purpose room on the first floor of the

Cravens Student Services Center.

The job fair — named "Which Education, What Career?" — showcases academic and training programs from across the desert, according to a news release. The fair is the result of a partnership with GirlFriend Factor, a nonprofit that works to help women pursue education.

According to a news release, the job fair will include information about programs from College of the Desert, Cal State University San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus, California Desert Trial Academy, Ameritas College, Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, Kaplan College, International School of Beauty, and Center for Employment Training.

Brett Kelman

Stand Up To Cancer viewing party set

Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C), the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life, will host a viewing party for the prime-time special at Wet 'n' Wild Palm Springs, 7 p.m. Friday.

The hour-long telecast will highlight the work of Stand Up To Cancer's Dream Teams of cancer researchers, and acknowledge SU2C's corporate supporters and nonprofit collaborators, including the American Cancer Society. The televised event will also feature celebrity ambassadors and exciting musical performances.

Skip Descant

Driver in fatal crash to be arraigned

City News Service

A man accused of drunken driving and causing a crash that killed two people in Palm Springs is expected to be arraigned Friday.

Jonathan Eduardo Garcia-Avila, 21, of Cathedral City, was arrested Wednesday at a hospital where he was treated for injuries suffered in the crash that killed Osvaldo Ramirez, 21, of Cathedral City, and 18-year-old Tierra Reagins of Palm Springs.

A third passenger, whose identity was withheld, suffered minor injuries, according to Palm Springs police.

Garcia-Avila lost control of a 2005 Cadillac CTS while driving north on Gene Autry Trail around 3:15 a.m. Sunday, police said. The car slammed into a traffic pole at the intersection of Gene Autry and Tachevah Drive, and the impact sheared the car in two, according to police.

One passenger was partially ejected and the other was

flung from the car. Both were pronounced dead at the scene.

Garcia-Avila was booked on suspicion of gross vehicular manslaughter and driving under the influence of alcohol causing injury. He also had a warrant for an unrelated misdemeanor case involving sex with a minor that was filed in March, according to police and court records.

He is being held in lieu of \$75,000 bail at the Robert Presley Detention Center in Riverside.

Energy

Continued from A3

Great Energy Debate: Beyond 33% and the Future of the Salton Sea." The 33 percent figure refers to California's renewables portfolio standard (RPS), which requires electricity providers to buy one-third of their power from renewable sources by 2020. As the state's major utilities get closer to meeting that standard, discussion is turning toward ways to continue de-carbonizing California's economy after 2020.

The fact the major utilities have already signed most of the contracts they need to reach the 33-percent mandate, Zipperman noted, is "putting a stranglehold" on large-scale renewable energy development.

"There's a huge, huge debate going on about whether we're going to raise the RPS to 50 percent. I think it's going to happen, but there's a big question about

what that's going to look like," he said.

The second day of the conference will start with a panel discussion on the future of the RPS program, featuring representatives from the three major utilities as well as the California Public Utilities Commission and the California Independent System Operator. Other sessions will focus on rooftop solar, energy storage, clean transportation, and the state's clean energy workforce.

The future of the Salton Sea — the largest lake in California — is a separate but not unrelated theme. The body of water was created in its current form just over a century ago, when an irrigation channel burst and flooded the Salton Basin with Colorado River water. But it has been gradually shrinking, with water evaporating from the sea faster than runoff from Imperial Valley farms can replenish it.

The sea will start shrinking more quickly after 2017, when water deliveries will be reduced dramatically under the 2003 Quantification Settlement

Agreement, the nation's largest agricultural-to-urban water transfer deal. The sea's decline has sparked a host of environmental concerns, including wafting dust, loss of critical habitat for fish and birds, and ecosystems threatened by rising salinity.

Several proposals have been floated to finance the sea's restoration, which could cost anywhere between \$3 billion and \$9 billion.

Most of those proposals involve money stemming from geothermal energy and other green technology development around the sea, which the Imperial Irrigation District has estimated could generate more than \$4 billion over the next 30 years.

"There's so much going on right now with the Salton Sea," Zipperman said. "I think we're on the verge of having a breakthrough year with the sea, in terms of what's going to be the plan for restoration, and renewables being able to come online."

The first day of the summit will fea-

ture a series of events focused specifically on restoring the Salton Sea, hosted in part by the Clinton Foundation. Day one of the conference will also include a bus tour of energy-efficient buildings and other sustainable infrastructure across the Coachella Valley, with space for up to 90 participants across three buses.

The bus tour will be hosted by the Coachella Valley Association of Governments. Representatives from Ygrene Energy Fund, which administers CVAG's energy loan program, will be on the tour.

"It's sort of going to be one-stop shopping for folks to learn about the design principles — if they ever want to remodel their home or build a new home, how they can make it green," Zipperman said.

The conference first took place in 2009, when it was known as the Coachella Valley Energy Summit.

Energy Reporter Sammy Roth can be reached at Sammy.Roth@desertsun.com, (760) 778-4622, and @Sammy_Roth.

Vets

Continued from A3

ible as possible to veterans," said Powell, a member of the Air Force Association and Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit's Veterans Advisory Committee.

Servicemen and women go through lengthy debriefings when they are leaving the military. In those debriefings, they are told of their benefits. But they don't always hear what is being said.

"They don't really listen. They just want to go home," Powell said.

Plus, benefits are always changing. Representatives of local VFW and American Legion chapters were among the 30 volunteers in attendance at Thursday morning's kickoff meeting of Veterans University, a pilot program born from a series of town hall meetings held by U.S. Rep. Raul Ruiz, D-Palm Desert.

Improved health-care access and more specialists available to cut wait times; improving access to benefits; more mental health services and more job opportunities were the key needs veterans expressed during the town hall sessions, Ruiz said.

"We also talked about solutions and how we can implement those solutions as a community. This is the implementation of those solutions..." Ruiz said.

"We do not have to wait for an act of Congress; we can take care of each other right here at home," Ruiz said.

The idea is for the volunteer members to be trained on what benefits and resources are available to veterans and

pass along the information.

While currently focused in Ruiz's 36th Congressional District, it's hoped that as the information spreads, more of the "universities" will be formed nationwide.

No government funds have been spent to form the program, Ruiz said.

Thursday's inaugural lecture, held on the UC Riverside Palm Desert campus, was led by representatives from Loma Linda VA Medical Center who outlined the various services — from medical to travel and homeless-outreach programs — and took input for improvement of those services.

Transportation for homeless to the Loma Linda facilities is one thing Pete Piltitter, commander of the American Legion Post 519 in Palm Springs, requested.

"We see a lot of homeless veterans come in," he said. The post is authorized to give each \$20 and it does feed them, but it doesn't have the funds to transport the homeless out to Loma Linda.

"I'm not sure we could hold them for an hour to an hour-and-a-half for Loma Linda to send transportation," he said. "I wish there was a way to get them help."

A training session will be set up for volunteers to learn how to use and train others on the My HealtheVet website which allows vets to access medical records, request appointments, order prescription refills and more.

Most involved, especially the older vets, feel the Veterans University is on the right track, said Powell.

"They're feeling like they're part of a solution to the problem," she said.



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