

# Olympic Gold Medalist April Ross recognized by City of Costa Mesa and County

Mayor of Costa Mesa John Stephens, along with Council Members Manuel Chavez and Jeff Harlan, took part in a parade and ceremony on Sunday Sept. 12, honoring Orange County Olympians, including Costa Mesa Olympic Gold Medalist April Ross.

The ceremony, which was held at the American Legion Post 291 at Memorial Park in Newport Beach was organized by OC Supervisor, District 2, Katrina Foley's office.

Mayor Stephens, who emceed the event, and Council Members Chavez and Harlan presented Ross with a Costa Mesa street sign in her name and the coveted key to the city, an honor rarely bestowed on a resident.



"We are so proud of what April and her teammate Alix Klineman were able to accomplish at the Tokyo Olympics," Stephens said.

“April is a Costa Mesa volleyball legend, and it was an honor to celebrate her gold medal victory. Her skill and dedication are an inspiration.”

Ross, who was a volleyball star at Newport Harbor High School, posted to her Instagram that she was thrilled to be honored.

“So fun celebrating with the Costa Mesa/Newport Beach cities that raised me,” she wrote. “I was also extremely honored to receive from my home town (Costa Mesa) a KEY TO THE CITY, that I was told gets me into any and all donut shops whenever I want, AND my very own street sign (not actually a street but I plan to put it up in front of my driveway).”

Nine local Olympians attended the event. In addition to Ross, Costa Mesa resident Charlie Buckingham, who competed in sailing at the Tokyo Olympics was also recognized.

Also attending Sunday’s event were Congresswoman Michelle Steel, Assembly Member Cottie Petrie-Norris and State Senator Tom Umberg. Newport Beach Council Members Joy Brenner and Diane Dixon, Seal Beach Mayor Joe Kalmick, Los Alamitos Mayor Mark Chirco and Westminster Mayor Tri Ta, Newport-Mesa Unified School District trustees Ashley Anderson and Michelle Barto were also in attendance.

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## **Ninth Circuit affirms Costa Mesa’s sober living home ordinances**

On Wednesday Sept. 8, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the City of Costa Mesa’s sober living home ordinances are

not discriminatory and do not violate the Fair Housing Act, validating a federal jury decision in December of 2018 that upheld the City's laws.

The Ninth Circuit decision effectively ends the case by Yellowstone Women's First Step House, Inc. and California Women's Recovery, Inc. and the Sober Living Network against the City and means the City can continue to enforce its ordinance, which regulates sober living home operators, including limiting the number of residents to six or fewer and maintaining a 650-foot buffer between non-licensed sober living homes.

"I'm pleased that the Ninth Circuit affirmed the jury's verdict," Mayor John Stephens said. "This is the culmination of years of effective advocacy by our outside counsel Keller Anderle and Buchalter and our City Attorney's office. They have successfully defended our reasonable regulations designed to preserve the character of our neighborhoods. We will continue to invest in this effort by enforcing and defending these important protections."

The City implemented the laws in 2014, and revised and strengthened them in 2017, to protect the entire community from operators of unlicensed facilities, which exposed residents to dangerous conditions and created public nuisance concerns that affect the quality of life. By doing this, Costa Mesa has led the way to hold these operators accountable, setting the precedent for other cities to do the same.

The laws also regulate sober living home operators in multi-family zones, requiring a separation requirement to prevent neighborhoods from being converted into institution-like settings.

"The City's efforts to protect vulnerable individuals seeking a sober living environment while protecting surrounding residents have been vindicated," said City Attorney Kimberly

Hall Barlow.

This latest ruling is one in a series of favorable court cases Costa Mesa has won following the first victory in December of 2018, when the jury unanimously rejected claims by Yellowstone, et. al., that the city's ordinances are discriminatory and violate the Fair Housing Act.

"The case is important because it affirms the authority of local governments to thoughtfully regulate sober living homes for the benefit of both local residents and those in recovery," said the City's lead appellate counsel Mary-Christine Sungaila, chair of the appellate practice at Buchalter.

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## **Statement from Fire Chief Dan Stefano and Police Chief Ron Lawrence on 9/11 remembrance**

As we prepare for the 20th year remembrance of 9/11, we reflect on a day that has left an unforgettable impression on us and has impacted us all, where nearly 3,000 lives were lost, including 343 FDNY firefighters, 23 members of NYPD and 37 members of the Port Authority Police who died in the Line of Duty.

The City had originally begun planning for a large community event for this 20th remembrance of 9/11, but due to the ongoing pandemic, we will be paying tribute through much smaller community-based recognitions to ensure the health and safety of our first responders and the community remains the priority.

On Saturday, Sept. 11, Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue and the Costa Mesa Police Department, led by Fire Chief Dan Stefano, our new Police Chief Ron Lawrence in collaboration with City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, would like to invite the community to join us in remembrance of the victims of Sept. 11.

As in years past, there will be a brief ceremony of remembrance and reflection in their honor. A number of local, regional, statewide, and worldwide ceremonies will be taking place throughout the day and we will be conducting ours as part of a countywide remembrance in the morning.

Specifically, the community is welcomed to join us at any one of the city's six fire stations or via livestream on Sept. 11 at 8:45 a.m. Please be mindful if you plan to attend that strict health and safety protocols will be in place and access will be limited to the exterior of the fire stations.

Additionally, if attending in person, please arrive no later than 8:45 am, as the countywide broadcast is brief, beginning just after 9:00 am and concluding at approximately 9:10 am.

There will not be any formal presentations or speakers, other than the countywide broadcast, as the purpose of this ceremony is for us to reflect, remember, and honor all of those lost at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. This remembrance service provides an opportunity for us to pay tribute to all who lost their lives that day while giving a salute to the members of the following uniformed services:

- 343 fallen members of FDNY
- 23 fallen members of NYPD
- 37 fallen members of Port Authority Police

We would like to thank you in advance for your understanding of our smaller in-person gathering this year, and most importantly, thank you for taking any time throughout the day on Sept. 11 to pay tribute to all of those we lost during

these tragic events and their families.

Please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers, as we come together to reflect and remember as we mark the 20 years since Sept. 11, 2001.

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## **City Manager Leadership Award goes to Senior Planner Nancy Huynh**

The City Manager Leadership Award Winner for the month of August is Senior Planner Nancy Huynh.

“Nancy works on some of the City’s most high-profile projects and because of that I’ve been witness to her skills, innovation and creativity,” City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison said. “She is a valued member of our planning team, a trusted colleague and a rising star in the organization. I congratulate her on this well-earned honor.”

Huynh is a valued member of the Economic and Development Services Department. She joined the City of Costa Mesa as an Associate Planner in 2018 and was promoted to Senior Planner earlier this year.

She established herself as a leader in the Department early on by assisting some of the most challenging customers at the public counter with professionalism and a smile, while eagerly accepting several very difficult projects. Huynh is the project planner for One Metro West, a mixed-use project that includes office, retail, and over 1,000 housing units proposed next to SoCo.

After two years, an Environmental Impact Report, hundreds of public comments, and several public hearings, the City Council approved the project in June of this year. One Metro West is the first project headed to a vote of the people under the voter-approved initiative, Measure Y.

As if that wasn't enough, Huynh was instrumental in the preparation of Measure Q and the City's retail cannabis sales ordinance, which was a result of the passage of Measure Q last November by over 65% of Costa Mesa voters.

Following meetings with the Council's Cannabis Ad Hoc Committee and the local cannabis business industry and after several iterations of the new regulations, the City's retail cannabis permitting program successfully launched earlier this month with nearly 20 applications received on the first day.

Through it all, she always has a positive attitude. Huynh is perpetually smiling and enthusiastically helping her fellow staff members or customers at the counter or on the phones. Despite an intense workload, Huynh has also taken on the role of "social coordinator" for the Department, always taking the time to celebrate her colleagues, organizing office decorations, food, and gifts for birthdays, retirements, new babies and more.

Prior to joining Costa Mesa, Huynh worked a variety of jobs reflecting her interest in planning and sustainability and food, including working as a tour guide at Tanaka Farms, working on a food truck and working as an Associate Planner in the private sector for over four years.

Huynh received her bachelor's degree in Urban Studies with a minor in Global Sustainability and her master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from UCI.

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# No street sweeping the week of Sept. 6 through Sept. 10 due to Labor Day holiday

Due to the observation of the Labor Day holiday on Monday, there will be no residential street sweeping Sept. 6 – Sept. 10 2021.

This coincides with the Costa Mesa Sanitary District, which also observes this holiday by pushing trash collection back one day.

This results in residential gutter lines being cluttered with trash cans making it impossible for street sweeper operators to do an efficient job. There should be no parking citations issued during this time.

Street sweeping will resume back to normal schedule the week of Sept. 14.

In lieu of sweeping streets, the following are a list of task that clean streets operators will be conducting next week.

- City wide alley street sweeping
- Sweeping of park parking lots and other city owned facilities
- Accident call outs and special request
- Night route sweeping on all arterial streets

For more information, residents can call the city's street sweeping hotline at (714) 327-7471, which has been updated with this information.



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# Citrus Heights Police Chief Ron Lawrence to lead Costa Mesa's Police Department

After an extensive national executive recruitment, Citrus Heights Police Chief, Ron Lawrence, has been selected to lead Costa Mesa's highly regarded Police Department.

Chief Lawrence is a distinguished leader with 31 years of experience in law enforcement, including 10 years as the top law enforcement official in two California cities. He was appointed Chief of Police for the Northern California City of Citrus Heights on Oct. 31, 2016, overseeing a department of 157 employees and serving a population of nearly 90,000.

Chief Lawrence has held many assignments throughout his 30-plus year career, including being a court bailiff, jail deputy, patrol officer, field training officer, motorcycle officer, traffic officer, street crimes and vice officer, internal affairs investigator, personnel and training, watch-commander, division-commander as well as serving as a sergeant and lieutenant.

"Chief Lawrence will be tasked with leading one of the top-performing and innovative law enforcement agencies in the state," said City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, who selected Chief Lawrence from a talented pool of candidates. "Costa Mesa's Police Department is well respected in our community, and I have full confidence that our new Chief will carry on the legacy of law enforcement excellence that Chief Glass and his team and prior Chiefs have worked so hard to achieve."

Elected unanimously by his Police Chief colleagues to serve as the 54th President of the California Police Chief's Association (CPCA), Chief Lawrence is respected throughout the state, and for the 2019/2020 term he represented all 334 municipal Police Chiefs in the state of California.

"I want to thank City Manager, Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, for her confidence in me to serve as Costa Mesa's next Police Chief," Chief Lawrence said. "She and her staff are doing amazing work, and I look forward to joining such a successful team. I am excited to lead the Costa Mesa Police Department and build upon the legacy of Chief Bryan Glass and so many other chiefs who have shaped the organization's culture. The men and women of the police department are well-respected, highly skilled professionals, and I am fortunate to be a part of creating a bright future alongside them. My wife, Jennifer, and I are very excited about the next chapter in our lives working with the City Council and community, and we look forward to becoming active members of the Costa Mesa community."

Mayor John Stephens expressed his confidence in the new Chief.

"Through a nationwide search, we have identified a strong leader for our Police Department for years to come," Mayor Stephens said. "Chief Lawrence has distinguished himself among his fellow chiefs, and will now serve Costa Mesa well.

I'm pleased to welcome Chief Lawrence and to support him in his efforts to keep our community safe."

Current Chief of Police Bryan Glass also welcomed Chief Lawrence to Costa Mesa.

"I congratulate Chief Lawrence for being selected as the next Chief of Police for the Costa Mesa Police Department," Chief Glass said. "He is an experienced law enforcement professional and seasoned chief, who can ensure the department continues to progress and provide quality police services to the Costa Mesa

community.”

Chief Lawrence has experience building diverse police departments through recruitment, promotions, and succession planning. He knows how to collaborate with the community to ensure community goals are achieved, including reducing crime and traffic collisions, while building community trust.

In his early years, he grew up on a rice farm in Northern California. In 1989, he graduated from the Sacramento Sheriff’s Academy beginning his long career in law enforcement. Prior to being named Chief in Citrus Heights, Lawrence served as both the Police Chief and Captain of the City of Rocklin.

As President of the California Police Chiefs Association, he served as media spokesperson, represented CPCA with the Governor and State Attorney General, and worked closely with legislators at the State Capitol on critical public safety legislation.

He served on the CPCA Board of Directors for nine years from 2012 to 2021, chairing several crucial committees. Chief Lawrence was selected by the CPCA Board to represent the State of California as its sole representative to the State Association of Chiefs of Police (SACOP), which grants each state one delegate as a liaison to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). Chief Lawrence has held this prestigious appointment for many years.

Chief Lawrence currently serves on the California Office of Emergency Services’ Homeland Security Advisory Committee, the Governor’s *“Creating Safer Communities Statewide Taskforce,”* and the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee with the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC); a non-partisan, non-profit think-tank dedicated to informing and improving California public policy. He also sits on the Board of Directors for the Western States Information Network (WISN),

one of six U.S. regions within the national Regional Information Sharing System (RISS), a law enforcement information complex funded by the U.S. Congress.

In 2013, Chief Lawrence was invited to teach at William Jessup University as an Adjunct Professor in the Public Policy Division, where he has taught Introduction to Criminal Justice, as well as Criminology.

Chief Lawrence has received extensive specialized police training throughout his career in a variety of specialized topics, and his formal education includes a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's Degree in Leadership. He also attended the FBI National Academy and the POST Command College for law enforcement executives.

Chief Lawrence is a dedicated public servant with a passion for serving the community. He is a firm believer in community policing, one of the many reasons he and his wife, Jennifer, a retired Police Officer, look forward to moving to Costa Mesa to serve in this honorable role and immerse themselves into the fabric of this great community. They both look forward to being closer to their adult children living in Southern California and will enjoy all the diversity Costa Mesa has to offer.

Chief Lawrence will be officially sworn in as the Chief of Police at the Regular City Council Meeting of Sept. 7, 2021.

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## **Parks and Community Services**

# is offering on-the-spot interviews

The Parks and Community Services Department is providing on-the-spot interviews for part-time positions to contribute in the areas of Aquatics, Facilities, Field Ambassadors, Senior Center, and Youth Programs.

Program positions include Community Services Leader II/III, Lifeguard, Instructor Guard, and Senior Guard. Applicants can simply drop in at the Balearic Community Center (1975 Balearic Drive) anytime during one of the available dates and times below:

- Tuesday, August 24: 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, August 25: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- Thursday, August 26: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Please bring your résumé and face mask with you.

All employment offers are contingent to successfully passing all components of the pre-employment process. To view job descriptions and qualifications, please visit [www.costamesaca.gov/jobs](http://www.costamesaca.gov/jobs) and for questions, contact the Parks and Community Services Department at (714) 754-5300.



## DETAILS

DROP IN ANYTIME DURING ONE OF THE AVAILABLE DATES AND TIMES BELOW:

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 24**

- 1 PM - 3 PM

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25**

- 2 PM - 4 PM

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 26**

- 3 PM - 5 PM

**BALEARIC COMMUNITY CENTER**  
1975 BALEARIC DRIVE  
COSTA MESA, CA 92626

## PART-TIME POSITIONS

- COMMUNITY SERVICES LEADER II
- COMMUNITY SERVICES LEADER III
- LIFEGUARD
- SENIOR GUARD
- INSTRUCTOR GUARD

## PROGRAMS

- AQUATICS
- FIELD AMBASSADOR
- FACILITIES
- SENIOR CENTER
- YOUTH PROGRAMS

FOR QUESTIONS, CONTACT (714) 754-5300

TO VIEW JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS, PLEASE VISIT [WWW.COSTAMESACA.GOV](http://WWW.COSTAMESACA.GOV) AND CLICK ON "EMPLOYMENT"

# Costa Mesa residents sought to serve on city committees and commissions

The Costa Mesa City Council is currently seeking residents to serve on the following City Committees/Commissions:

**Parks, Arts and Community Services Commission:** This Commission meets monthly and assists with issues relating to parks,

parkways, recreation programs and community services. The Commission also actively encourages programs for the cultural enrichment of the community and solicits partnerships with senior organizations which share the common goal to serve Costa Mesa's senior population. The City is recruiting for one (1) member from District 3, one (1) member from District 4, and one (1) member from District 5 terms expiring Jan. 2023. Applicants must be a resident in Districts 3, 4, and 5, respectively. For further information, contact Parks and Community Services at (714) 754-5300.

**Planning Commission:** The Commission meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month and advises on planning, land use, and development matters. The Commission is the final decision-making body for certain discretionary land use approvals such as design review and conditional use permits. The Commission also functions as an advisory body to the City Council for Zoning and General Plan amendments. The City is recruiting for one (1) member, term expiring Jan. 2023, and for one (1) member, term expiring Jan. 2025. For further information, contact Executive Secretary Julie Colgan at (714) 754-5270.

**Finance and Pension Advisory Committee:** This committee meets monthly and provides advice to the City Council regarding issues which may affect the financial status of the City and it also evaluates financial impacts. The City is recruiting for one (1) regular member, expiring April 2022. Applicants shall have pension knowledge or shall be residents or individuals that conduct business within the City and have a background that includes experience in securities, financial planning, banking, accounting, or a closely related field. For further information, contact Executive Secretary Dina Wild at (714) 754-5243.

**Housing & Public Service Grants Committee:** This committee meets twice a year with further meetings scheduled on an as-needed basis and helps to promote community understanding of the activities funded by the U.S. Housing and Urban

Development Department (HUD) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) with a focus on social service grants. The City is recruiting for one (1) regular member, expiring April 2023. For further information, contact Executive Secretary Julie Colgan at (714) 754-5270.

**Application Process** – Residents who are interested in getting involved in local government are encouraged to complete a Committee/Commission Application Form from the City Clerk's Office or from the City's website ([www.costamesaca.gov/apply](http://www.costamesaca.gov/apply)). The completed application may be submitted online; mailed to Costa Mesa City Clerk at Post Office Box 1200, Costa Mesa, California, 92628-1200; emailed to [cityclerk@costamesaca.gov](mailto:cityclerk@costamesaca.gov); or hand-delivered to the City Clerk's Office at City Hall, 77 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa. The deadline is **5 p.m., Thursday, September 2, 2021**. Appointments are tentatively scheduled for the September 21, 2021 City Council meeting.

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## **Recreation Supervisor Kevin Stoddart receives City Manager Leadership Award**

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison has given the City Manager Leadership Award for July to Recreation Supervisor Kevin Stoddart.

"Kevin's passion for providing creative recreational opportunities to the residents of Costa Mesa is much appreciated," Farrell Harrison said. "His effort and diligence in all of his tasks make him truly deserving of the Leadership Award. I'm thankful he is part of our team."



Stoddart currently supervises the Downtown Recreation and Aquatic Center, and oversees the Senior Citizen programs, the Aquatic Center, the Downtown Recreation Center, the Teen Center, and now the Norma Hertzog Community Center.

During the last 12 months, Stoddart has been instrumental in reopening the Aquatic Center, the first official recreational program to reopen after Covid Closures. This required new policies and procedures that helped pave the way for other programs to reopen.

The Aquatic Center is in full swing, with lessons, aerobics, and lap swimming currently in operation. In addition, Stoddart worked with the Fire Department to develop a plan for the opening of a Cooling Center at the Costa Mesa Senior Center during last year's heat wave.

This coordinated effort provided shelter for numerous Costa Mesa residents.

Stoddart led staff in bringing COVID testing clinics and Vaccination Pods to the community, both at the Costa Mesa Senior Center and offsite at Hoag Hospital. He coordinated with Public Services on training and understanding all of the components of the Norma Hertzog Community Center and helped facilitate the Movies in the Park at IKEA and on the Event Lawn at Lions Park.

Stoddart took over SMART Camp this summer, and worked with Newport-Mesa school district officials and staff to bring that program back to glory.

Even with all these projects Stoddart led his staff in handling his regular duties, including the OCTA Grants and Agreements, the hiring of two new Program Coordinators, and the training of multiple Aquatics staff.

Stoddart first joined the City of Costa Mesa in 2011 as a part time lifeguard. He climbed the ranks promoting first to

Recreation Leader in 2013, Recreation Coordinator in 2015 and Recreation Supervisor in 2020.

Stoddart holds a bachelor's degree in criminology, law and society from UC Irvine.

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## **City to host Concert in the Park on Saturday July 31**

After more than a year of shutdowns, the City of Costa Mesa will host a Concert in the Park on Saturday July 31 featuring live music from three amazing bands, gourmet food trucks, a beer and wine garden, kids' activities and fun for the entire family.

The event will begin at 1 p.m. at Fairview Park and at 5 p.m., the headliner band Tijuana Dogs will take the stage.

"Saturday's event will have something for everyone, three bands with the Tijuana Dogs headlining, activities and giveaways for kids, great food, beer and wine for adults. and even a rib eating contest," said Mayor John Stephens, who spearheaded the event. "An event like this has been a long time coming in Costa Mesa. That time is Saturday!"

Additionally, the City has made it easier than ever to walk, bike, scoot or skate to the Concert by installing a temporary two-way cycle track on the west side of Placentia Avenue from Fairview Park to Victoria Street and placing delineators in the bicycle lane buffers on both sides of Placentia Avenue

from Adams Avenue to Fairview Park.

Temporary bike racks will be provided by the Costa Mesa Foundation.

Fairview Park is located at 2525 Placentia Ave. For more, visit [costamesaca.gov/citp](http://costamesaca.gov/citp)

### **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:**

1 p.m. Pre Show Activities

1:30 p.m. Mariachi Juvenil Herencia Michoacana (Mexican Folk)

3 p.m. Jasmine Fields (New Country)

5:00 p.m. Tijuana Dogs (Rock)

See below for sponsors:



## THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 SPONSORS!

### PLATINUM



**KATRINA FOLEY**  
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT

### GOLD

**ONE | METRO | WEST**  
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### BRONZE



### GENERAL



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**CMTV sweeps STAR awards with  
a record seven first place**

# finishes

Costa Mesa Television (CMTV 3) won seven first place awards, including Overall Excellence in Government Programming at the 24th Annual STAR Awards that were presented in a virtual ceremony last month.

“This affirms what I’ve known for some time that we have a super-talented video team, that does a great job spotlighting our Costa Mesa community,” City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison said. “I want to thank them for their hard work and congratulate them for these well-earned first place awards.”

The programming awards are traditionally presented annually by SCAN/NATOA, which is the States of California and Nevada chapter of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.

The event was paused in 2020 due to the global pandemic, but resumed with this year’s competition featuring over 30 public agencies submitting 273 entries produced from mid-2019 to 2021.

CMTV 3 scored the most first place wins in the competition, earning top honors in seven video production categories including: Animal Rescue/Pet Related Video; Documentary – Profile (Under 400K); Military; Performing Arts; Senior Citizen Audience; Special Audience and the coveted Overall Excellence in Government Programming (Under \$400,000 Operating Budget).

The STAR Awards recognize excellence in government programming by agencies serving California and Nevada communities. Entries are judged on the basis of creativity in achieving stated objectives, technical proficiency and diversity of programming.

Costa Mesa Television has now been recognized by SCAN/NATOA

for excellence in local programming with 27 first place STAR Awards since its creation in 1997. Additionally, CMTV 3 has earned numerous second and third place honors in a variety of categories over the years.

A complete list of this year's STAR Award winners can be found at: [www.scannatoa.org](http://www.scannatoa.org)

Click the link below to watch the STAR Award Presentation Ceremony:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F6HVJM5XLM>

All of CMTV 3's winning entries along with a wide variety of Costa Mesa programming can be seen on the City of Costa Mesa's YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CostaMesaTV>

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## **City officially opens Norma Hertzog Community Center and Lions Park Playground**

On Saturday July 17, the City of Costa Mesa unveiled to the community the new Norma Hertzog Community Center and the reinvigorated Lions Park Playground (Airplane Park), marking the final chapter on a \$36.5 million, world-class campus that has quickly become the jewel of Costa Mesa's Westside.

"On Saturday, we officially opened the Norma Hertzog Community Center and the Lions Park Playground," Mayor John Stephens said. "This completes the Lions Park Project, which is the largest capital improvement project in Costa Mesa's history. It is wonderful to see so many residents and visitors enjoying

these new community assets as they will for generations to come.”

The ribbon-cutting ceremony began at 10 a.m. at the Norma Hertzog Community Center, named in honor of Costa Mesa’s first woman council member and mayor, and concluded at the Lions Park Playground, where city officials welcomed visitors to the see the newly engineered Korean War-era Panther Jet.



Photos courtesy of Ashley Fisher

In a special moment, attendees heard from former Mayor Hertzog, who had pre-taped a video greeting and then appeared briefly on the center’s two new big screens to greet the crowd virtually via Zoom.

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison emceed the event and gave special thanks to Public Services Director Raja Sethuraman, who led the project construction. Other city officials attending were Assistant City Manager Susan Price, Police Chief Bryan Glass, IT Director Steve Ely, Finance Director Carol Molina and Parks & Community Services Director Jason Minter.

Council Member Arlis Reynolds, who represents District 5 where



the park is located, celebrated both the park opening and coincidentally her birthday that day.

“It was such a joy, and the best birthday gift I could ask for, to see our downtown Lions Park campus – including the library, the new community center, Airplane Park, and all the open spaces thriving with so many smiling Costa Mesa faces,” Council Member Reynolds said. “Many of my favorite childhood memories are from this campus, and so many generations of Costa Mesans have stories here. The Lions Park campus will be home again to many more happy memories!”

Several hundred members of the community attended the event as well as VIPs that included four former Costa Mesa mayors Arlene Scheafer, Mary Hornbuckle, now County Supervisor Katrina Foley and Ed McFarland.







Photos courtesy of Ashley Fisher

“I couldn’t be happier with the outcome,” Supervisor Foley said. “It was so important to me to name the beautiful community center after Costa Mesa’s first female mayor, Norma Hertzog, as there were no buildings in Costa Mesa named after a woman. I loved seeing the Lions Park playground transformed from a site that families avoided to one filled with kids playing joyfully this weekend. Costa Mesa is better because of this project.”

Also in attendance were dignitaries and community leaders, including Assembly Member Cottie Petrie Norris, who helped secure \$1 million in state funding for the park improvements.

“I’m so proud to have secured \$1 million for the revitalization of Lions Park,” said Assemblywoman Petrie-Norris. “The new playground is an incredible interactive experience for kids and Lions Park is now the jewel of Costa Mesa. I can’t wait to see families come and gather together in community.”

The new Community Center features a 330-person capacity main assembly room and 100 person-capacity conference room, upgraded restrooms and a catering kitchen. It also features

state of the art technology for special events.

The Lions Park Playground features a new airplane-themed play area with swing sets, a zip line, double-duo see saws and most importantly the refurbished historic Panther Jet that has been a fixture of the park for decades.

The Panther Jet was refurbished by Capt. Vic Bakkila and several volunteers including Pete “the pirate” Carolin, Cindy Brenneman, Sue Lester and Beth Refakes.



Photos courtesy of Ashley Fisher

The improvements include new restrooms and open lawn areas, modern playground equipment and rubberized surface and sand play areas. Other park infrastructure upgrades include storm drain and irrigation improvements, new site lighting, landscaping and concrete pathways.

The opening of the Community Center and Playground marked the completion of Phase 2 of the City's Capital Improvement Project that began in June of 2017. Phase 1 included the new 23,615-square-foot Donald Dungan Library that was opened to the public in May of 2019.

The design of both the library and community center, which was formerly the Donald Dungan Library, was completed by the Southern California-based architectural firm Johnson Favaro and the construction was managed by Costa Mesa's Public Services Department and the Tovey/Shultz construction firm.

Along with the new Donald Dungan Library, Phase 1 of the project included a one-acre park with 25,000-square-feet of programmable grass area. The facility is owned by the City and library services are provided by Orange County Public Libraries.

A total of 225 new trees have been planted in Lions Park, which is the city's oldest park, as part of this project. Both the Donald Dungan Library and Norma Hertzog Community Center are LEED Gold Certified. Costa Mesa is the only city in Orange County and fourth in the state that is LEED Gold Certified.