

# City Manager Leadership Award for January is a Banner achievement

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly presented the City Manager Leadership Award for January to Andrew Banner, the Network Systems Administrator for the IT Department.

“Andrew’s contributions have strengthened departments across the City, and his leadership has made a lasting difference,” Gallardo-Daly said. “He embodies what it means to serve with integrity, professionalism, and heart. I am thrilled to present him with this well-deserved award.”

His dedication, commitment, and passion are consistently acknowledged by his peers and by the leaders of the City of Costa Mesa.

Banner joined the City of Costa Mesa in 2022 and made an immediate and meaningful impact. In his very first assignment with the Police Department, he not only mastered a new system with impressive speed, but also brought forward fresh ideas and a thoughtful perspective that elevated the work of the entire team. He improved processes, strengthened communication, and helped create a more efficient and supportive environment.

His helpful nature and positive attitude have become defining traits. He approaches every challenge with a calm, solutions-oriented mindset, and he consistently goes above and beyond to support his colleagues.

Whether he’s troubleshooting a complex issue, guiding someone through a new process, or simply offering a steady presence during a busy day, he makes people feel supported and valued.

It's no surprise that so many staff members trust him and request him personally to help with their IT needs.

Banner holds a master's degree in information technology management from Western Governor's University and a bachelor's degree in computer engineering from Cal Poly Pomona.

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## **Finance Buyer Mike Fuentes presented with City Manager Leadership Award**

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly presented the City Manager Leadership Award for December to Finance Department Buyer, Mike Fuentes.

"Mike is a dedicated and valued team member in the Finance Department," Gallardo-Daly said. "He is one of those rare employees whose blend of dedication, skill, humor, and humility makes a genuine difference across the organization. I'm proud to present him with this award."

Fuentes is an important member of the Purchasing Division responsible for contract management, bid development, and day-to-day purchasing needs. He approaches each task with professionalism and careful attention to detail, ensuring the City maintains transparency, compliance, and consistency in all procurement activities.

Whether it's preparing solicitations, assisting with vendor questions, or tracking down urgent requests. he handles it all with reliability and a positive attitude.

Fuentes first joined the City in August 2014 as a part-time

Permit Process Specialist, quickly proving himself to be reliable, and committed to public service. His performance led to his promotion to full-time Permit Process Specialist in January 2016.

Continuing to expand his skills and responsibilities, Fuentes joined the Finance Department as a Buyer in February 2017, where he has been an essential part of the Purchasing Division ever since.

Throughout his time with the city, Fuentes has taken on a variety of procurement responsibilities and has consistently demonstrated growth in his role.

His ability to navigate complex purchasing processes, support departments with their procurement needs, and keeps moving forward reflects his commitment to high-quality work and exceptional customer service.

Fuentes holds a bachelor's degree in political science, with an emphasis on policy, from Cal State Fullerton.

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## **City Manager Gallardo-Daly appoints Alma Reyes to Assistant City Manager**

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly has promoted Alma Reyes to Assistant City Manager, where she will continue to assist with and supervise the day-to-day management of city operations.

“In the role of Deputy City Manager, Alma has demonstrated exceptional leadership, strategic thinking, and a strong commitment to serving the community,” Gallardo-Daly said. “Her

work has been instrumental in advancing key city initiatives, strengthening interdepartmental collaboration, and improving the quality of services delivered to our residents. Her partnership, insight and commitment made a significant difference as I filled the role of interim City Manager, and I truly appreciated her willingness to step in, collaborate, and help ensure our work continued smoothly.”

As Assistant City Manager, Reyes will take on an expanded leadership role, providing oversight for specific areas, guiding long-term planning efforts, and supporting the City Manager’s Office in implementing the City Council’s priorities and vision, Gallardo-Daly said.

Mayor John Stephens congratulated Reyes on her appointment.

“I really applaud this move to make Alma the Assistant City Manager,” Mayor Stephens said. “She has cemented her reputation as a problem solver, and we look to her for guidance on some of the more complicated issues we face. Alma will be an outstanding Assistant City Manager, and we are very fortunate to have her in that position.”

Reyes has been the Deputy City Manager since April of 2023, managing Constituent Services, Community Outreach, Government Affairs, Costa Mesa TV, as well as key Citywide projects and City special events. Prior to that, she held the role of Assistant to the City Manager.

She began her career with the City of Costa Mesa in January of 2011, where she began her first job as a Management Analyst for the Public Services Department. In April of 2013, she transferred to the Parks and Community Services Department to serve as both the Management Analyst and Recreation Supervisor. In November of 2015, Reyes moved into the Fire & Rescue Department to serve as a Management Analyst, and Chief Dan Stefano praised her passion for public service, team value orientation, and engaged professionalism.

“I am honored to step into the role of Assistant City Manager and remain deeply committed to fostering collaboration, strengthening community partnerships, and advancing initiatives that enhance the quality of life for all our residents,” Reyes said. “I also look forward to supporting our organization with integrity, empowering our teams, and helping guide the innovative work that moves our city forward.”

Prior to working in Costa Mesa, Reyes worked for 10 years for the City of Hawaiian Gardens in various areas of local government including: Administration, Public Relations, Public Safety, Public Works, Recreation, Code Enforcement and Finance.

Reyes holds a Master’s Degree in Public Administration and Public Policy from California State University, Long Beach, and a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice and Public Administration from California State University, Fullerton.

She begins her role effective immediately.

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## **Costa Mesa Fire and City leaders unveil new state-of- the-art Regional Training Center**

Costa Mesa Fire, City and State leaders held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, Dec. 9 to celebrate the new state-of-the-art Regional Training Center and tower that replaced the aging infrastructure at Fire Station No. 4.

“Our new Training Center is a promise to our Costa Mesa Community,” Fire Chief Dan Stefano said. “A promise that we will never stop moving the needle. Never stop improving. Never stop learning. Never stop leading. And never stop preparing for the moments in time our community and those we serve need us most. The new Training Center is part of our collective Costa Mesa Fire Family Legacy, honoring Our Past, driving Our Present and thoughtfully planting the sustaining seeds of success for Our Future.”

The dynamic new Regional Training Facility was made possible first through seed money from Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine), who secured \$2.5 million in state funding and later from the Costa Mesa City Council, which approved \$2.2 million toward the project.

“I am honored to stand with Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue as we dedicate this new regional training tower and demonstrate our shared commitment to public safety,” said Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine). “By giving our firefighters access to the best training and resources, we are ensuring they can continue to protect our families and keep our neighborhoods safe.”



The new building and training grounds will also be used by neighboring cities and agencies, hence improving the region's preparedness to address fire emergencies and natural disasters while leading to a more resilient and collaborative fire service. The new facility bridges the gap between fire dynamics knowledge and the use of the training building and props for hands-on training.

Mayor John Stephens thanked City leadership for bringing this project to fruition.

"This new state-of-the-art training facility will help to keep our fire fighters and the public safe into the future. There is nothing more important than that." said Mayor John Stephens. "I'm extremely grateful to Assembly Woman Cottie Petrie-Norris for providing the majority of the funding for this project and my council colleagues for funding the balance. Thank you to our contractors and city leadership for

the great work on this facility, especially Fire Chief Dan Stefano and Public Works Director Raja Sethuraman. We rely on our firefighters every day to keep us safe. Now they will do so with greater training and preparation than ever before.”

Also attending the event was District 1 Council Member Mike Buley and District 4 Council Member Manual Chavez.

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly also welcomed the addition of this new facility.

“Because of the increasing dangers of wildfires, we need our fire crews to be properly trained and ready for this new reality,” Gallardo-Daly said. “This facility will help us and our regional partners stay prepared. I’m proud of Costa Mesa Fire and our Public Works teams for their dedication to this project and providing us with a facility that we can all be proud of.”

Public Works Director Sethuraman thanked his team of engineers for their hard work and dedication to this project.

“We can all be proud of this state-of-the-art facility, which will serve as a regional training home for not only our own firefighters but throughout Orange County. This project includes a five-story prefabricated training tower equipped with multiple features and the latest, most advanced training props available today. The design provides realistic high-rise, residential, and industrial training scenarios that will prepare our firefighters for the complex emergencies they face daily.”

City leaders in attendance included Assistant City Manager Alma Reyes, Police Chief Joyce LaPointe, Finance Director Carol Molina, Economic and Development Services Director Carrie Tai, IT Director Steve Ely, Parks & Community Services Director Brian Gruner and Assistant Fire Chiefs Jason Pyle and Ryan Bohr.



The project used locally sourced and environmentally friendly products and materials.

One of the facets includes water reclamation elements that will also be added to enhance the recovery of water that is used as part of training exercises. The reclamation elements significantly reduce water waste and provide a sustainable training option during times of drought and water conservation.

The building and training grounds includes upgrades to the existing lighting to include energy-efficient fixtures (LEDs) and will include natural light levels. Upgrades will incorporate elements of solar-powered backup energy to be used in case of a power outage. Additionally, low-flow faucets and other features were installed to promote water efficiency and conservation and will include native and drought-resistant landscapes.

Climate change and the drought conditions continue to worsen,

and extreme heat incidents become more frequent and severe.

More than 40 percent of Orange County is designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone as assessed by CalFire. The City of Costa Mesa and Orange County will greatly benefit from these upgraded facilities to manage increased demand and mitigate wildfire risk during these events.

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## **City Manager appoints veteran Police Department leader Joyce LaPointe to be the next Chief of Police**

**COSTA MESA** – City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly announced Costa Mesa Police Department veteran Joyce LaPointe will be the new chief of police, making her the first woman to hold that role in the city's history.

LaPointe has been the interim chief of police since June, after the retirement of former Chief Ron Lawrence.

“Chief LaPointe is a trusted member of our city leadership team and a longtime member of the Costa Mesa community, and I know she is grateful to continue serving the community she loves,” City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly said. “Her years of experience and dedication to Costa Mesa made this an easy decision to name her as our new police chief, and I am looking forward to working together with her for the betterment of the city.”

Mayor John Stephens expressed his confidence in Chief

LaPointe.

“Chief LaPointe is the perfect choice to lead our police department into the future,” said Mayor John Stephens. “She is a seasoned veteran who has risen through the ranks. She has been instrumental in growing our police department to its highest number of sworn officers in the past 15 years and reducing crime in our town. Chief LaPointe has been a valuable member of the command staff that embraced technology and transformed the culture of the department. She’s also a Costa Mesa resident who is extremely accessible to the community. We are very fortunate that Joyce LaPointe is our new police chief. The Costa Mesa Police Department has never been stronger.”

Chief LaPointe said she is grateful for this opportunity.

“I am incredibly honored to be appointed as the permanent chief of police for Costa Mesa,” said Chief LaPointe. “I want to thank the City Council for their continued support, City Manager Gallardo-Daly for entrusting me to lead the police department, and my CMPD family for their ongoing support and faith in me. As the police department continues to build on the positive momentum from June, my focus will remain on taking care of our personnel, strengthening our culture, staying innovative in policing, and ensuring we lead with purpose, accountability, and heart. Our community depends on us to protect and serve, and I know CMPD will always rise to that responsibility.”

LaPointe was named to the position of deputy chief, the first to hold that role in Department history, in April of 2023.

Chief LaPointe began her career in 1997 as a police officer. LaPointe promoted to sergeant in 2007, and held various supervisory roles including patrol sergeant, jail sergeant, FT0 sergeant, force tactics team supervisor, and emergency management coordinator.

In 2015, LaPointe promoted to police lieutenant of the Executive Staff and was initially assigned as an area commander providing management oversight to a variety of special units and teams, as well as performing one of our department's most crucial and key roles of watch commander.

In 2018, LaPointe served as the telecommunications manager, where she oversaw the Police and Fire Dispatch Center, Technical Services, and special projects.

In 2020, LaPointe was promoted to police captain to serve on the department's Command Staff and has been the division commander for both the Support Services Division as well as the Field Operations Division. She is an associate member of the California Police Chiefs Association, and a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

LaPointe earned her bachelor's degree in physical education & kinesiology from Vanguard University in Costa Mesa. She is recognized by some in the community as a past sports coach at Costa Mesa High School before starting at CMPD.

Throughout her long and distinguished career in policing, she has completed several advanced law enforcement training courses including the Sherman Block Supervisory Leadership Institute, Force Science Institute Certificate Course, the Executive Development Courses for both California POST and the California Police Chiefs Association.

LaPointe is a long-time resident of Costa Mesa, where she lives with her spouse Linzi and their three dogs.

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# City Council unanimously chooses Cecilia Gallardo-Daly to be Costa Mesa's new City Manager

The Costa Mesa City Council voted unanimously at the Tuesday, Dec. 2 meeting to name Cecilia Gallardo-Daly, a 30-year veteran of local government and urban planning, as the new City Manager.

Gallardo-Daly has served as the interim City Manager since June.

"This appointment is a testament to the steady leadership Cecilia has provided the city these past five months," Mayor John Stephens said. "Cecilia is respected by the council and city staff. She is extremely knowledgeable when it comes to running a city efficiently and smoothly. Cecilia speaks straight and follows through. Costa Mesa's future is bright, and in good hands."

Gallardo-Daly first arrived in Costa Mesa as the Assistant City Manager in December of 2023 and has been instrumental in managing several large city initiatives such as the future of the Fairview Developmental Center and property acquisition in the Shalimar neighborhood for a future park expansion.

"Thank you to the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tem and the City Council for trusting me to be your next City Manager," Gallardo-Daly said. "I look forward to continuing to lead this very talented and capable Costa Mesa team as we continue to problem solve and seek out opportunities to benefit our

residents and businesses in the months and years ahead.”

Prior to her arrival in Costa Mesa, Gallardo-Daly served the City of San Clemente as the Assistant City Manager, and prior to that as the Community Development Director, where she was responsible for implementation of San Clemente’s vision and policy as it relates to land use, economic development, environmental and historic preservation and coastal resiliency. She also worked as a Planning and Environmental Permitting Consultant for local agencies from 2001 to 2013.

She also served in several capacities with the City of San Diego, holding the titles of Deputy and Assistant Director of the Development Services Department, Program Manager for the City Planning and Community Investment Department and Senior Planner. She has also held planning roles for the cities of Austin, Texas and Rancho Cucamonga, Rosemead and Sierra Madre in California.

Gallardo-Daly has a Master of Arts Degree in Urban Planning and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science both from UCLA.

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## **Street sweeping postponed for the Thanksgiving holiday**

Due to the observation of the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no residential street sweeping Thursday, Nov. 27 and Friday Nov. 28.

The street sweeping hiatus coincides with residential trash collection being pushed back one day due to the Thanksgiving holiday. This results in residential gutter lines being

cluttered with trash cans making it impossible for street sweeper operators to do an efficient job.

Street sweeping will resume back to normal schedule the week of Dec. 1.

In lieu of street sweeping, the following is a list of tasks that clean streets operators will be conducting during this time:

- Citywide 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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## **Senior Code Enforcement Officer Brumbaugh honored for second time with City Manager Leadership Award**

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly presented the City Manager Leadership Award for November to Senior Code Enforcement Officer Mike Brumbaugh at the monthly Meet and Greet celebration.

This is Brumbaugh's second time earning this award, as he was previously honored in August of 2016.

“Mike is to be commended for the work he does to help the less fortunate in Costa Mesa as well as keep our streets safe and improve conditions for our local businesses and residents,” Gallardo-Daly said. “I admire his dedication to the city and his job and we are lucky to have him. I am honored to present him this award.”

Brumbaugh starts his day at 4:30 a.m. as part of the Neighborhood Improvement Task Force, partnering with our Community Policing Unit and Community Outreach teams.

He conducts patrols throughout the city, performing welfare checks for those on the streets and evaluating possible needs and forwarding individual to outreach to help get people sheltered and ultimately housed.

Brumbaugh was first hired in December of 2012, along with two other Code Enforcement Officers, to be part of what was then the newly created Community Improvement Task Force, working from the City Manager’s office.

One of Brumbaugh’s signature achievements came in 2014 when we was assigned to “Apartment Stabilization” to perform property inspections for the multi-family housing units located in Mission Mendoza, Coolidge Fillmore, and Baker Street areas.

He then worked with owners/landlords and the residents to repair and bring up to code apartment units that were deteriorating.

Brumbaugh was assigned to the Network for Homeless Solutions and Neighborhood Improvement Task Force in 2015.

This role provided him an opportunity to work with local businesses and residents to deter many negative impacts caused by some on the streets experiencing homelessness.

He has worked with businesses to inspect their properties to provide suggestions to deter camping, trespassing and

vandalism and he has formed many great community partnerships.

During his early morning patrols, he is able to contact individuals who are camping or trespassing on business or residential properties before the business opens or the residents wake up.

This also provides an opportunity to speak with those on the streets to offer them help to leave the streets and hopefully get into shelter.

With the recent Fentanyl crisis, Brumbaugh has encountered many individuals overdosing and has been able to get them the needed help so that they may survive.

Brumbaugh lives in Costa Mesa's Halecrest neighborhood with his wife Linda, and he has a deep love and interest in keeping this the best city ever.

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## **Costa Mesa City Hall to be a Vote Center starting Saturday, Nov. 1**

Beginning Saturday, Nov. 1, Costa Mesa City Hall will become the second Vote Center in the city for the Nov. 4 Special Election. The Vote Centers will remain open until the polls close at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 4.

Residents can drop off their ballots in the City Hall parking lot or vote in person in the Community Room. City Hall's address is 77 Fair Drive.

The first Vote Center opened Oct. 25 at the Costa Mesa Senior Center, located at 695 W 19th St. That Vote Center will also remain open until the polls close of Tuesday, Nov. 4.

Voters have four options for voting in the Special Election:

1. Mail your ballot by Election Day (no postage needed)
2. Use a secure ballot drop box
3. Drop off your ballot at any OC Vote Center
4. Vote in person at any OC Vote Center

For additional information or questions visit [ocvote.gov](http://ocvote.gov) or call 888-OCVOTES (888-628-6837).

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## **Fire Chief appoints a new Battalion Chief and Fire Marshal/Assistant Chief**

Fire Chief Dan Stefano announced the promotion of Andrew Harris as the new Battalion Chief for the Fire & Rescue Department as well as Chief Building Inspector Ryan Bohr to Fire Marshal and Assistant Chief of the Fire & Rescue Department.

“Chief Stefano continues to build a stellar Fire & Rescue team with a deep bench of talented staff and these promotions just solidify that,” City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly said. “I’m proud and happy for both Ryan and Andrew and look forward to working with them to enhance the public safety of the Costa Mesa community.”

Battalion Chief Harris joined the Costa Mesa team in 2009 and quickly rose through the ranks promoting to Fire Captain in

2018. Prior to his tenure with Costa Mesa, he served as an Ambulance Operator for the Huntington Beach Fire Department.

In his tenure at Costa Mesa, Harris has been as a member of several committees, the Probationary Firefighter Academy Cadre Lead, Paramedic Preceptor, a lead with the Annual Fire Service Open House Expo, took part in the Mobile Data Management Program and most recently led the Tablet Command Program development and implementation.

“Andrew’s contributions to our organization are extensive, and his noteworthy ability to effectively communicate both internal and external to the organization remains a highly valued skill set,” Chief Stefano said. “In addition, his notable competency in leading others will serve him well in his new role, and he will be an exceptional and highly valued addition to our Chief Officer team.”

Harris welcomed the challenge.

“This promotion represents more than a rank, it’s a responsibility to lead with purpose, support our people, and continue building a department that sets the standard for excellence and care in Costa Mesa,” Harris said.

Harris earned an associate of science degree in fire technology from Santa Ana College, a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies from Arizona State University and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in public safety leadership, on track for completion in 2026.

Bohr joined the City of Costa Mesa in 2017 and served as Chief of Inspection for the past four years. He was presented with the City Manager Leadership Award in July of 2021.

Throughout his tenure, Bohr focused on improving community safety through timely inspections, consistent code enforcement and being a collaborative partner with internal and external stakeholders.

“This promotion is noteworthy on many levels and is a highly valued one for the city, the department, and the Community Risk Reduction Division,” shared Fire Chief Dan Stefano. “I have worked with Ryan and have also personally been witness to Ryan consistently answering the call for both the Fire and Police Departments as the on-call inspector during emergencies and beyond, doing so with exceptional professionalism and representing the best of Costa Mesa. There is no question that he will do an outstanding job in his new role serving as our new Fire Marshal.”

As Fire Marshal, Bohr will oversee the Department’s Community Risk Reduction Division and his many duties will include enforcing local and state fire, life safety, property, and environmental protection standards and safety codes, reviewing building construction plans and assisting with professional trades with technical fire code requirements and department public education efforts.

“It’s an honor to serve as Costa Mesa’s next Fire Marshal,” Bohr said. “I’m excited to join the accomplished Community Risk Reduction Division to advance our shared mission: a safer community through responsiveness, transparency, and continuous improvement—delivered with a genuine customer service mindset. I’m grateful to Chief Stefano, our City Council, and my new team for their trust and support.”

Bohr has an associate’s degree in construction technology and a bachelor’s degree in economics and psychology from UC Santa Barbara.

Fire & Rescue will host a community badge pinning and swearing in ceremony at CMFR’s annual year end Fire Family Breakfast, for all promotions, including Bohr’s and Harris’s. The event will be open to the community.

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# Chief Stefano announces he will be stepping down from his position after a 30-year career in the Fire Service

After a distinguished 30-year fire service career, Chief Dan Stefano announced he would be leaving his position with the City of Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Department at the end of December 2025.

Stefano's 18-year career with Laguna Beach Fire and 12 with Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue culminated in him being elected as the president of the California Fire Chiefs Association and also inducted into the inaugural class of the California Fire Chiefs Hall of Fame in 2023.

"It has been my absolute honor and a true career highlight to serve the Costa Mesa community, the City, and the Costa Mesa Fire Family, start to finish," Chief Stefano said. "Throughout these past 12 years, I have been blessed and will always remain grateful for the many opportunities I was afforded to work alongside such incredible and dedicated professionals, partners, and stakeholders, and to be part of an organization that embodies excellence, community, and compassion in public service."

Stefano began serving as the Fire Chief for the City of Costa Mesa in 2013, arriving from the Laguna Beach Fire Department where he held a wide range of positions and roles as he worked his way up the ranks from Reserve Firefighter through Fire Division Chief, Training and EMS Chief, and Fire Marshal.

“Chief Stefano is a true leader who is highly regarded not only as part of our leadership team, but both in Orange County and throughout the State for his experience, leadership and courage,” City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly said. “I’m both proud and honored with the Chief’s service to our community and his leadership in the city, and also his friendship. Congratulations to Chief Stefano on this incredible career.”

Mayor John Stephens also commended Chief Stefano for his service.

“I’m very grateful for Chief Stefano’s service to Costa Mesa these many years,” Mayor Stephens said. “He is deservedly in the California Fire Chief Hall of Fame. Under his leadership, the Fire and Rescue Department has become a destination department attracting the best and brightest firefighters and paramedics who save lives every day. Chief Stefano has led our community through tragedy and extreme public health and safety crises with skill and compassion. He is our rock, our Papa Bear. We will miss Chief Stefano terribly, but we wish him well in his retirement. Costa Mesa is a better, safer place because of Chief Dan Stefano.”

Capt. Steve Cathey, who is the president of the Costa Mesa Firefighters Local 1465, had this to say about Chief Stefano.

“It has been an honor to stand beside Chief Stefano, as the Costa Mesa Firefighters President, tackling the tough issues together,” Cathey said. “His unwavering dedication to his team reflects what it truly means to be a Fire Chief. His dedication and leadership have made a lasting impact on our organization. I wish Chief Stefano a fulfilling and wonderful retirement and enjoy all the adventures that await him. Thank you for your strong leadership and friendship.”

Chief Stefano is proud of the collective team efforts and accomplishments during his tenure with the City of Costa Mesa, which include the following team highlights:

- Infrastructure improvements such as keeping Fire Station No. 6 open and the rebuild of Fire Station No. 1 completed and soon to be rebuilt Station No. 2 that is preparing for construction in 2026, a regional Fire & Rescue training facility currently under construction, a completed fleet replacement plan and a technology plan.
- Jointly established a joint Emergency Communications Center (ECC) and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) between CMFR & CMPD, in collaboration with the City Manager's Office
- Development and implementation of a new ambulance transportation program that now brings in over \$7 million in cost recovery revenue annually
- Initiated and negotiated the separate assignments of three Cal OES fire engines (Type 1, III, & VI), establishing Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue as a highly respected regional and statewide wildland and "all hazard" resource
- Departmental programs focused on firefighter health and safety – peer support, fire chaplain, and health and wellness programs.
- Established active leadership, succession planning and professional development as an organizational priorities.
- Enhanced the Community Risk Reduction, Community Outreach, and Volunteer Programs, including CERT, Fire Cadets, Citizen's Fire Academy, Fire Corps, and Fire Interns.

Stefano also played a major role in Costa Mesa during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading City teams, as well as the countywide and statewide efforts in providing information on public safety and best practices to combat the spread of the virus and increase vaccination efforts..

Beyond his professional experience, training and education, Chief Stefano holds the distinction of being the 32nd

Certified Fire Chief in California history through the Governor's Office of the State Fire Marshal and holds the designation of Chief Fire Officer (CFO) through the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Chief Stefano is an engaged fire service leader including noteworthy service as a Past President for the California Fire Chiefs Association and separately, serving as an appointed member on the League of California Cities (Cal Cities) Board of Directors, representing the Cal Cities Fire Chiefs throughout California.

He also served as the President for the Cal Cities Fire Chiefs Department and the Orange County Fire Chiefs Association, respectively.

He has also served or currently serves on a number of regional, state and national organizations, including as a member of the Board of Directors for the California's Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HASC), the California Fire Service Task Force on Behavioral Health, the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC), the Public Safety Policy Committee for Cal Cities, the Orange County Commission to End Homelessness, the Santa Ana College Foundation, the Orange Coast College Foundation, and he is a graduate of the Orange County Leadership Tomorrow Program.

Stefano is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. He earned his bachelor's of arts degree from Cal State Long Beach and went on to get a master's degree in Public Policy and Administration from California State University, Long Beach and a second master's degree in the Executive Leadership program at the University of Southern California. He is also a graduate of Orange Coast College and Santa Ana College, the latter of which he was an adjunct instructor for over two decades.

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# **Building Technician Sheila Larsen is latest City Manager Leadership Awardee**

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly awarded the City Manager Leadership Award for October to Building Technician II Sheila Larsen.

“When I first arrived here, I did a short stint in Economic and Development Services and quickly learned that Sheila was someone I could count on to answer my questions,” Gallardo-Daly said. “She embodies the City’s core values through her outstanding customer service, reliability, and unwavering commitment to excellence. She is well deserving of this award.”

Larsen has been with the City of Costa Mesa since 2017, when she started as a Permit Technician II. Since then, she has built a reputation as one of the most approachable and dependable members of the team.

She consistently goes above and beyond to assist customers in navigating the permitting process—whether it is answering complex questions at the counter, helping applicants resolve issues in real-time, or coordinating with internal departments to ensure timely approvals.

Her responsiveness and professionalism leave a lasting positive impression on residents, contractors, and design professionals alike.

With many years of experience issuing building permits and handling over-the-counter reviews and customer interactions,

Larsen brings a wealth of institutional knowledge to the division.

She leverages this experience to serve customers efficiently. Her work ethic and positive attitude make her an indispensable part of her department. She approaches every interaction with courtesy, patience, and a solutions-oriented mindset.

Larsen has her associate's degree in paralegal studies from Cerritos Community College.