

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue's Jon Neal promoted to Assistant Fire Marshal

Jon Neal, Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue's Code Enforcement Officer, has been promoted to the position of Assistant Fire Marshal.

He began his formal assignment on Monday, Oct. 30. This new position was approved during the FY 2017-18 budget process, taking the place of the Fire Protection Analyst position, and it is in-line with the goals and objectives established within the department's Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

"We look forward to Jon's leadership role increasing as our Assistant Fire Marshal," Chief Dan Stefano said. "The range and depth of Jon's skill sets and experience that he has demonstrated serving our country, in different industry sectors, and within the City of Costa Mesa are tremendous assets for our organization. We have an incredibly talented and hardworking team who is redefining what effectiveness and efficiency look like when innovation is infused as a core value within that framework and Jon embodies that mindset."

Neal's commitment to public service began when he enlisted in the United States Coast Guard immediately after high school, where he served as a firefighter on the USCGC Alert, a 210-foot cutter, among other assignments. Upon completion of his active duty in 2004, Neal worked as the inventory control manager for three years at Active Ride Shop, which was followed by his service in Gulu, Uganda, as a logistics manager for Invisible Children, a non-profit organization.

Neal joined the Fire & Rescue team in 2015 in the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Division and he has done an outstanding job of serving in a number of areas ever since, from fire and life safety to plan review to code adoption and much more.

His initial work in Costa Mesa began in 2008, when he was hired as the city's storekeeper, working in the Corporation Yard warehouse. Thereafter, as part of the organization's restructuring, Neal went on to fill a range of vacant positions within the Public Services Department Maintenance Services Division.

In 2012, he was promoted to Code Enforcement Officer in the Community Improvement Division where he was tasked with coordinating and leading the multi-agency Hotel/Motel Taskforce, which also included presenting cases to the Planning Commission and City Council that led to C.U.P. revocations.

Neal has also earned a number of California State Fire Marshal Certifications and is nearing completion of his Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science Management from American Military University.

Two Community Meetings upcoming for the City's Proposed Active Transportation Plan

Costa Mesa is updating its Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) for the General Plan Circulation Element and is looking for the public's input.

The Bikeway & Walkability Committee has expanded the BMP to include walking and other forms of personal transportation, resulting in a proposed Active Transportation Plan (ATP).

Join us to review and comment on the proposed ATP.

The draft report and exhibits are available on the City's website on the Bikeway and Walkability Committee web page. The Community meetings will follow the November 2017 and December 2017 Bikeway & Walkability Committee meetings:

- Dates: Nov. 1, 2017 and Dec. 6, 2017
- Location: City Hall, Conference Room 1A
- Time: 7 p.m.

Chief Dan Stefano honored with Spurgeon Award from local Explorer organization

Exploring of Orange County presented Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano with the organization's Spurgeon Award, citing his commitment to youth and impressive record of community service and outstanding leadership to Explorer programs.

Stefano received the award at Exploring Orange County's 28th annual Spurgeon luncheon on Friday Oct. 20. Also honored were Orange County Sheriff Sgt. Dan Daniels and Jeff Snow, municipal services director for Republic Services.

"Our Explorer programs provide incredibly valued opportunities for us to connect with the youth of our community," Chief Stefano said. "The sustained success of Costa Mesa's Explorer programs is only possible with the engaged support provided throughout all levels of our organization. At the end of the day, it is about helping our youth develop their leadership, character and life skill sets."

Stefano has been the Costa Mesa Fire Chief since 2013. Prior to that he served for 18 years in the Laguna Beach Fire Department where he held several roles starting with Reserve Firefighter to Fire Division Chief, Training and EMS Chief and Fire Marshal.

Stefano has the distinction of being the state's 32nd Certified Fire Chief through the Office of the State Fire Marshal and he also holds the designation of Chief Fire Officer through the Center of Public Safety Excellence.

Exploring of Orange County serves about 1,300 youth in more than 60 explorer posts throughout the county, which provides young people with opportunities to explore career paths, many in public safety and law enforcement.



Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue has managed Explorer Post 400 since 1996, which is led by Capt. Rob Gagne, Engineer Steve Cathey and Engineer Eliasar Maldonado. All of them were explorers before being hired as full-time professional firefighters.

In addition to Stefano being honored, Costa Mesa Fire Explorer and Intern Moises Vaca and Costa Mesa Police Explorer Citlaly Gomez received the 2017 Young American Award scholarship presented by the Orange County Council Boy Scouts of America. The Young American Award is presented to an Explorer who is recognized as a leader within their Explorer Post.

A graduate of Aliso Viejo High School in 2013, Vaca attended the Fire Tech Program at Santa Ana College and was a Fire Explorer with Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue from 2015-2017. He received the department's Explorer of the Year award in 2016. He currently is a Fire Explorer Advisor for the Costa Mesa Department and a Fire Prevention Volunteer Intern.

Gomez, a graduate of Costa Mesa High School, joined the Costa Mesa Police Explorer program in July of 2012 and has risen through the ranks and is currently a captain supervising 37 Explorers. She has volunteered 3,870 hours in her five years as an explorer and has received numerous awards.

Yvette Aguilar receives City Manager Leadership Award for October

City Manager Tom Hatch presented Senior Recreation Program Administrator Yvette Aguilar with the October City Manager Leadership Award at the monthly employee Meet and Greet on Thursday Oct. 26.

"Yvette's success can be seen every day at our city Senior

Center,” City Manager Hatch said. “Under her leadership, the Senior Center’s programs and membership have flourished, resulting in what is now one of the most robust and successful public senior facilities in Orange County. I’m extremely proud of what she has accomplished in such a short time.”

Aguilar came to the City of Costa Mesa in 2015, after spending nearly a decade working for the City of Covina. She was hired as the City’s Senior Center Program Administrator, which is a full-time staff position that served to lead in the transition of the operation of the Senior Center from a non-profit corporation to a fully operated City facility.

Aguilar has been a key factor in creating a successful relationship with the City’s Senior Commission as well as with local stakeholders and non-profit organizations to assure the forward moving direction and ultimately the success of the facility and program. Two notable project accomplishments that Yvette was instrumental in creating and facilitating were the implementation of the Senior Center’s strategic one, three and five-year goals and objectives and the revamping of the City’s senior transportation program.

Her current role as the Senior Recreation Programs Administrator has allowed her to branch out beyond the Senior Center Program, and to also take on the managerial responsibility of the facilities, programs and staff at the Downtown Recreation and Aquatics Centers.

She is grateful for and proud of the outstanding team that works diligently within the Parks & Community Services Department to make sure that there are quality programs and services that transcend all age groups.

In addition to honoring Aguilar, City Manager Hatch welcomed several new employees to the City and congratulated Jeffrey Bibler, who was recently promoted to Fire Captain.

Also honored were several new employees including Community

Outreach Worker Bill Nelson and Administrative Secretary David Nguyen from the City Manager's Office, Miranda Garcia the new Human Resources Analyst and Jasmine Vega an Accounting Specialist II in the Finance Department.

Development Services interns Ashley Bonetto and Jorge Maldonado were also honored as well as Parks & Community Services Department employees, Jonathan Hooton, Joseph Nguyen, Peter Nguyen and Riley Stutz, all Recreation Leader II. Also honored was Cynthia D'agosta, the new Fairview Park Administrator.

Cynthia D'Agosta joins Costa Mesa as the new Fairview Park Administrator

The City of Costa Parks & Community Services Department has recently appointed Cynthia D'Agosta as the new Fairview Park Administrator, who is tasked with maintenance, inspiring local participation and trust in the improvement and protection of Fairview Park.

"Fairview Park as a truly unique and special, local and regional resource, that can serve the community through passive recreation, environmental and cultural education, volunteerism and its pure landscape beauty," D'Agosta said.

D'Agosta is a native Californian, urban open space planner, landscape architect and artist. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in science and fine arts from UC Santa Cruz and a Master's Degree in landscape architecture from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design.

In her 25-year career, she has focused on: enriching human experiences with local landscapes; supporting and leading communities in the area of preservation; and in the creation of meaningful public spaces.

Her expertise includes community leadership, project management, and planning of urban parks, open spaces, natural areas, and cultural resources. She has studied and performed management and design of regional scale urban open spaces for both non-profits and government entities such as the Los Angeles County Dept. of Parks & Recreation, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the National Parks Service, and the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority.

D'Agosta's Southern California experiences have included projects for the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and Santa Ana River restorations; LA County regional parks; and in private practice, designing trails and parks for housing developments of Newport Coast and Rancho Santa Margarita.

Most recently while in the Bay Area, she has served as Executive Director for a multi-jurisdictional urban infrastructure creek project (the SFCJPA), 50-year-old environmental advocacy non-profit, and a historic garden estate.

**Point in Time Count shows
Costa Mesa's homeless**

population dipped to 103

The results of the Point in Time survey of homeless by the nonprofit service organization 21loc indicates Costa Mesa's homeless population has dropped to 103 individuals, a decrease from the last count by Vanguard University in February of 2016 that counted 158 homeless on Costa Mesa's streets.

That Vanguard study was reported on [here](#).

As always, there are many factors that have helped with this positive change. A key factor for Costa Mesa is the City's Network for Homeless Solutions, which since 2013 has helped house nearly 300 people who were previously homeless.

The Network for Homeless Solutions is a collaborative effort among city outreach workers, code enforcement, police and park rangers, community churches, and non-profit and private organizations to address homelessness in Costa Mesa. The network works daily to assist homeless and educates community members and businesses on how to best manage the issues that arise from homeless populations.

Additionally, a recent survey by the County of Orange found that of the 422 individuals living in the homeless encampment along the Santa Ana River near Angels Stadium, only five of them or 1.6 percent stated Costa Mesa was the last place they called home. This demonstrates that Costa Mesa's homeless is not necessarily contributing to the larger countywide problem.

The Point in Time count of homeless individuals in the county was conducted by the nonprofit service organization 21loc and began on the night of Jan. 27, 2017 and continued until the next morning. There was a 40% increase in volunteers helping 21loc to conduct the count (1,184 people), which represents a 47% increase in the number of mapped areas covered, making this the most comprehensive and detailed count ever completed.

To see the city's Point in Time Report prepared by 211oc click [here](#).

Costa Mesa, with a population of 113,000, represents approximately 3.6% of the total population in the county. That 3.6% number is reflective of nearly the same ratio of the city's homeless population in the entire county, which is at 4%.

This brief report provides information for Costa Mesa on the estimated number of people who were experiencing unsheltered homelessness within the city on the morning of the 2017 Point-In-Time Count.

The estimates were derived using the total unsheltered PIT count as well as census data indicating the 2016 estimated poverty population of the city (see Appendix for a discussion of the data and assumptions used). In addition to the total number of people experiencing homelessness who were unsheltered, the table below provides additional estimates of that population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and race.

As the table below indicates, three people in families experiencing unsheltered homelessness and 100 unsheltered individuals (a total of 4% of the all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the County of 2,584 individuals) are estimated to have been in Costa Mesa. Single adults were primarily: over 24 years old, male, and Caucasian. The family household had two adults over 24 years old and one child under 18 years old.

The Table below illustrates both family and adult only households

| City | Pop | Pov Rate | Est #people unshel | Est % people unsheltered |
|------|-----|----------|--------------------|--------------------------|
|------|-----|----------|--------------------|--------------------------|

| | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|
| Costa Mesa | 113204 | 14.5% | 103 | 4% |
| County | 3,172,532 | 13.0% | 2,584 | 100% |

The Point in Time count is mandated by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be conducted at least every two years, and includes counting those sleeping in both sheltered (emergency shelter and transitional housing) and unsheltered locations.

Orange County, and the cities within Orange County, were further interested in the geographic distribution of the people experiencing homelessness. Because the location of shelters varies throughout the County, the only information that is useful to report at a city level is people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The full PIT report can be found at <http://www.211oc.org/>.

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Team Member of the Month – Battalion Chief Kevin Diamond

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue’s Team Member of the Month is a person who serves the community with Passion, Professionalism, & Pride.

This month, Battalion Chief (BC) Kevin Diamond is the focus

profile of the month.

Diamond was born in Michigan and with his dad being an electrical engineer who was in sales for a company now known as Siemens, he has lived in several places, including New Jersey and San Mateo, Calif. before settling in Corona del Mar at the age of 14. His mother was in cosmetic sales for the now defunct Broadway department store.

After graduating from Corona del Mar High School in 1983, Diamond's goal was to become an airline pilot. However, while lifeguarding one summer, he took an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) class and his career goals took a turn.

After completing his EMT class, Diamond went to work for Seals Ambulance and knew it was a good fit for him. While working at Seals Ambulance, he met a friend named Dave Thomas (retired Asst. Chief from OCFA) who encouraged him to pursue a career as a firefighter/paramedic.

Diamond was hired with the City of Santa Ana in 1987, where he honed his craft as a paramedic. Before coming to Costa Mesa in 1990, he worked for Laguna Beach Fire Department as a firefighter/paramedic. While with Costa Mesa, BC Diamond has held the rank of Firefighter/Paramedic, Captain, and Battalion Chief.

BC Diamond is a true leader who enjoys teaching, coaching, and mentoring. He not only teaches, coaches and mentors past, present and current Costa Mesa firefighters but also teaches for other organizations, such as Santa Ana College and private organizations offering professional development/leadership classes for the fire service.

Diamond has assisted countless individuals to successfully prepare for promotional tests.

Additional achievements include assisting in the implementation of our Arson Investigation unit, active

instructor for our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Citizen Fire Academy's (CFA), and significant contributions to improving firefighter safety through a company he founded, Breaking The Accident Chain (BTAC). Additionally, he is an example to those he mentors as he achieved his master's degree from Columbia Southern University in Emergency Services Management.

Diamond is married to his wife Jenni, who works as a case worker for Run to Rescue. Together, they have two twin boys (20-years old) who were accomplished soccer players in high school and now hope to follow in their dad's footsteps as they are currently attending a local fire academy. Diamond enjoys eating out, going to movies, and family trips.

Walk to School day returns to three local schools on Wednesday Oct. 4

After a four-year hiatus, Walk to School Day will return in Costa Mesa on Oct. 4 at three elementary schools in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

The schools taking part in this year's event are the following:

- College Park – [Click here for route details and times for this school.](#)
- Kaiser – [Click here for route details and times for this school.](#)
- Victoria – [Click here for route details and times for this school.](#)

City elected leaders, staffers from the Fire and Police Departments, Public Services and the City Manager's Office will be out that day to assist families as they walk their children to school.

The first Walk to School Day – called Walk Our Children to School Day – was held in 1997. Since then, it's come a long way. In May 2012, the first-ever National Bike to School Day was celebrated across the USA. Event organizers have reported that this one-day event has led to great changes such as long-term walking and bicycling programs, new sidewalks and pathways, enforcement of unsafe driving behaviors and needed policy changes at schools and in communities.

Finance Department's Christine Tsao latest to receive City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Tom Hatch presented accounting supervisor Christine Tsao with the September City Manager Leadership Award at this month's Meet and Greet on Thursday Sept. 28.

"Christine is a part of our top-notch Finance team that continues to earn awards for excellence in budgeting and just recently helped us bring our Standard & Poor's ratings to Triple A status," City Manager Hatch said. "I truly appreciate

the leadership and dedication that Christine brings to her job each and every day.”

As Accounting Supervisor, Tsao is in charge of year-end closing and assists in the annual financial audit and CAFR preparation. She also oversees accounts payable and payroll and serves as the backup payroll coordinator when necessary.

She is universally described by her co-workers as always positive, gracious, responsive and willing to help. She has been especially helpful in assisting the interim assistant finance director. She works very hard and is efficient, prompt and accurate.

In her service to the City, Tsao has been responsible for various accounting assignments, including reconciling the City’s monthly bank accounts, accounting for the City’s capital assets, filing the quarterly federal grant claim report, and preparing journal entries for accounting transactions into the general ledger. She was also very involved in the Successor Agency dissolution accounting process in 2012.

Tsao joined the City of Costa Mesa in 2001 and worked as an accountant for six years and was promoted to Accounting Supervisor in 2007.

Prior to joining the City, Tsao worked for two years at Arthur Andersen, one of the world’s largest accounting firms at the time, as an accounting information system auditor. Then she joined another regional CPA firm, specializing in Governmental Accounting services.

As a lead auditor, Tsao conducted financial audits in many different cities and special districts in southern California before she took her first government job as an accountant in the city of San Clemente.

Tsao received her bachelor’s degree in Business

Administration, majoring in accounting, from Eastern Michigan University in 1992. She continued studying and earned her master's degree in Management Science Information Systems from Cal State Fullerton in 1995. She also has been a Certificated Public Accountant in the State of California since 2000.

In addition to Tsao, City Manager Hatch welcomed several new employees and congratulated others on promotions and one on her retirement.

Robert Matsuura joined the city as a Human Resources Technician, Jeffrey Tol is the new Building Technician II in Development Services, Lily Lorenzana is the new Management Analyst for IT and Ashley Avalos has been hired as a Recreation Leader II.

Hatch recognized Kelly Dalton, Irina Gurovich and Christina Oquendo, who were all promoted to Assistant Engineer and Cherie Pittington, who recently retired as Senior Communications Supervisor after 31 years with the city.

Fire & Rescue crew member Jeff Bibler promoted to fire captain

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue announced that Firefighter/Paramedic Jeff Bibler has been promoted to Captain.

Bibler fills the gap left by longtime Capt. Bruce Pulgencio, who retired earlier this month.

"Captain Bibler is the right person at the right time to replace Capt. Pulgencio," Chief Dan Stefano said. "Our team is

extremely fortunate to have such strong quality and depth with our future leadership and Jeff is a shining example of exactly that.”

This past week, family, friends, and members of Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue team gathered in their tradition of celebrating the first day of promotion.

Those gathered watched as Chief Stefano pinned the Captain’s badge on Bibler’s chest and the entire Command Staff joined in with his collar brass pinning and the presentation of his Captain helmets.

Bibler has been a member of the Costa Mesa team since 2003. Prior to joining Costa Mesa, Bibler served at both the Montebello Fire Department and the Orange County Fire Authority.

Bibler’s contributions to Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue include serving as a founding member of our EMS Committee, Academy Instructor and Paramedic Preceptor, among others.

In addition, Bibler previously served as an Executive Board Member for the Costa Mesa Firefighters Association.

Bibler earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Applied Studies from Brandman University, is a graduate of the California Fire Chiefs Training Officers Fire Command College, and has demonstrated strong leadership skill sets.

Standard & Poor’s raises

Costa Mesa's credit rating to its highest level of AA+

The City of Costa Mesa received excellent financial news this week as its credit ratings with Standard & Poor's jumped from AA to AA+, the highest possible rating issued by the financial services company for this type of financing.

The new improved ratings were issued in a report that came out today. This upgraded rating is the direct result of significant research by Standard & Poor's during many meetings and discussions with Costa Mesa administrative and finance staff to analyze the city's financial procedures and practices.

The high rating will allow the city to get the best rate possible for the sale of bonds that will be used to complete the Lions Park Projects.

"This is great news for the city and this AA+ rating assures the taxpayers of Costa Mesa that we will be able to complete the Lions Park projects with lower financing costs," Mayor Katrina Foley said. "Congratulations to the current and former city councils, city staff and the Finance and Pension Advisory Committee for the prudent fiscal policies and management that helped us achieve this accomplishment."

The Standard & Poor's report also credited the effort to responsibly manage city reserves and debt. Indeed, Standard & Poor's report cited several reasons for this top rating.

[Click here to see the full report.](#)

According to Standard & Poor's, the following findings played into the rating being raised to the top level.

- Very strong economy, with access to a broad and diverse

- metropolitan statistical area (MSA);
- Very strong management, with strong financial policies and practices under our Financial Management Assessment (FMA) methodology;
 - Strong budgetary performance, with operating surpluses in the general fund and at the total governmental fund level in fiscal 2016;
 - Very strong budgetary flexibility, with an available fund balance in fiscal 2016 of 54% of operating expenditures;
 - Very strong liquidity, with total government available cash at 81.8% of total governmental fund expenditures and 26.4x governmental debt service, and access to external liquidity we consider strong;
 - Strong debt and contingent liability position, with debt service carrying charges at 3.1% of expenditures and net direct debt that is 21.9% of total governmental fund revenue, as well as low overall net debt at less than 3% of market value, but a large pension and other postemployment benefit (OPEB) obligation; and
 - Strong institutional framework score.
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Longtime gymnastics instructor calls it a day

Antje Morris, the program director for the City's popular Gymnastics Program said goodbye on Sept. 1 after a nearly 40-year career.

Morris has taught three generations of Costa Mesa residents while overseeing the program and has been instrumental in the safety training of staff and in the equipment upgrades that

have taken place over the years.

Morris is leaving the program in safe hands as she moves into her retirement years.

As a token of appreciation, Morris was presented with a plaque from department staff.