

# Costa Mesa hires high-powered trial lawyer Jennifer Keller to defend sober living ordinances

The City of Costa Mesa has hired Jennifer Keller, one of the nation's premier trial attorneys, to defend itself against lawsuits and challenges to the city's sober living ordinances, which are designed to protect residential neighborhoods from overconcentration of rehab homes.

"I look forward to representing the City of Costa Mesa against untrue accusations that it has treated certain sober living homes unfairly," Keller said. "The opposite is true, and the City looks forward to being vindicated by a jury."

Keller's resume includes several victories in multiple high-profile cases, including the famous Barbie vs. Bratz trial, Auerbach vs. Daily and the United States vs. The McGraw-Hill Companies.

"By hiring Jennifer Keller, we hope that sends a message that we will vigorously defend our sober living ordinances and our neighborhoods from nuisance issues related to rehab homes," Mayor Sandy Genis said. "Our ordinance is fair and strikes a balance between the rights of residents and those who are recovering from addiction to enjoy our residential neighborhoods."

Keller will first go to work defending the city in a lawsuit filed by Yellowstone Recovery that challenges the city's sober living ordinances and will continue to defend the city in other related legal actions.

Keller's impressive resume notes she has tried over 150 cases

to jury verdict across a broad range of complex civil and criminal subject matter, including business, intellectual property, insurance and white-collar crime.

One of her most recent victories was the Chavez et al vs. MassMutual Life Insurance Co, a bellwether class action jury trial in which she secured a complete defense verdict as well as the People vs. Biane et al, a nine-month white collar jury trial that took the jurors a little over two hours to decide in favor of her developer client.

In the Barbie vs. Bratz trial, Keller represented MGA Entertainment and prevailed against Mattel, and the toy company was ordered to pay \$85 million in theft damages and \$85 million in punitive damages to MGA.

Just two years earlier, Keller won California's largest business jury verdict in 2009 with \$350 million awarded to her venture capitalist client in Auerbach vs. Daily. More recently, she represented Standard & Poors in the United States vs. The McGraw-Hill Companies in a case that eventually settled for over \$1 billion.

Described as a "gifted litigator," Keller is a past president of the Orange County Bar Association and is currently a member of the Chapman University Board of Trustees. Her clients include judges, public officials, law enforcement officers, CEOs, CFOs, lawyers, physicians, professional athletes, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs.

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**Nationally**

**Recognized**

# Designer Introduces New Handbags Inspired By Local Student's Designs

For the first time in her career, Newport Beach premier handbag designer Suzan Lee Paek of Suzan Lee Designs has partnered with Mariners Christian School in Costa Mesa to create a one-of-a-kind opportunity for two students to experience the thrill of designing an actual on-the-market designer handbag.

The exotic leather handbags, based on the students' designs, were auctioned off at a school fundraiser on Friday, March 23, 2018 at the Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach.

A limited number of the purses will also be offered on Suzan's website for the general public, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting MCS.

As Founder and Creative Director of Suzan Lee Designs, Suzan was inspired to become involved after learning about the school's growing Maker Education program and integration of design thinking throughout the curriculum. She is also known for her strong Christian faith.

"When I learned of Mariners' educational focus on creativity and the design thinking process within a Christian school setting, I felt compelled to create something special that would benefit both the children and the school," said Lee.

The winning students' designs were selected by Suzan from a school-wide contest of more than 100 entries from MCS students grades K-8<sup>th</sup>. The two winners are Mary Jane Pfaff, whose mother is MCS Maker Education Facilitator, and Kawaii Sanita, whose mother is MCS Fine Arts teacher.

"I was overwhelmed by the talent I saw in all the entries. It was difficult to pick! I'm pleased to see that our winners showcase artistic talent running in the family," said Lee.



When asked how it felt to have her design chosen for production by Lee, 5<sup>th</sup> grader Mary Jane Pfaff said, "Now I really feel like a true designer. I always used to draw and create designs, but no one knew about them. Now I can say that I am a real designer and I have one of my purses in an actual store!"

"We are so honored that Suzan would lend her talent and experience to create such a unique learning opportunity for students. The fact that the funds raised through the sale of these handbags will help build our Maker Education program is a bonus," commented MCS Head of School Troy Moore.

"This project warms my heart. I'm going to get my other designer, artist, and manufacturer friends to join me in encouraging our future generation," said Lee.

Suzan Lee Designs is a worldwide fashion brand that specializes in exotic leather bags and accessories for both women and men. The student-inspired handbags will be available at [suzanlee.com](http://suzanlee.com), and 20% of the proceeds will be donated back to Mariners Christian School. More about Suzan Lee designs can be found on her website.

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## **City to live stream tonight's Special City Council meeting via Facebook Live**

Beginning at 5 p.m., the City of Costa Mesa will be video streaming via Facebook Live the March 28 Special City Council meeting regarding homeless and the Fairview Developmental Center.

[Click here](#) to go the City of Costa Mesa Facebook page to watch the meeting.

Also, the agenda for tonight's meeting is available [here](#).

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## **Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue adds a new captain and engineer to**

# the mix

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue announced the promotion of Fire Engineer Kevin Reddy to Fire Captain and Firefighter/Paramedic Mike Ruhl to Fire Engineer.

This past week, family, friends and members of Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue team gathered in their valued tradition of celebrating the first day of promotion at their newly assigned fire station, respectively.

Those gathered at Fire Station No. 3 watched as Fire Chief Dan Stefano pinned the captain's badge on Kevin Reddy's chest and the entire Command Staff joined in with his collar brass pinning and the presentation of his captain's helmets.

"We expect Captain Reddy to have an immediate impact in his new role," Chief Stefano said. "He has consistently shown himself to be a strong, fair, and ethical leader who clearly understands the big picture and the value in serving others."

Two days later, at Fire Station No. 5, those gathered watched as Chief Stefano pinned the Engineer's badge on Mike Ruhl's chest.

"Engineer Ruhl's strong technical skill sets are matched with an extraordinarily positive approach in everything he does and an unwavering compassion for those around him," Chief Stefano said.

Capt. Reddy has been a member of the Costa Mesa team since 2008, preceded by service with the Riverside County Fire Department.



Reddy's contributions to the organization have been outstanding, ranging from his leadership with EMS Programs, Community Engagement, Strategic Planning, and Probationary Firefighter Training. In addition, Reddy has earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Applied Studies from Brandman University.

Engineer Ruhl has been a member of the Costa Mesa team since 2008 and has contributed to the organization in many ways. His work includes being a paramedic preceptor and mentor to others, a leader and department coordinator for the Race for the Cure, as an Explorer Advisor and member of the Tools and Equipment Committee and his most recent involvement as the lead for our Firefighter Peer Support Program.





Ruhl earned an Associate of Science Degree from Santa Ana College and is currently attending Kaplan University, where he is very close to earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Emergency Management.

On May 3, 2018, Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue will have a formal promotional badge pinning and swearing in ceremony that will include the department's 16 newest firefighters.

The ceremony will begin at 9:00 am in the City Council Chambers and the entire community is invited to attend.

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# City calls for special



# **council meeting Wednesday to discuss homeless and Fairview Developmental Center**

The Costa Mesa City Council will hold a special meeting at 5 p.m. Wednesday March 28 to discuss homeless issues and the Fairview Developmental Center.

The meeting will be held in the Grand Hall of the Costa Mesa Senior Center, which is located at 695 W. 19th Street.

A formal agenda for the meeting will be available and distributed on Tuesday March 27.

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## **Some Residents should Expect Power Outages throughout the Week**

Southern California Edison has announced it will perform maintenance on electrical systems in areas throughout Costa Mesa. For this to be done safely, power will temporarily be shut off in some areas.

This needed maintenance will allow SCE to make necessary upgrades and repairs that will increase reliability.

Below is the anticipated power outage schedule:

**Monday, March 26, 7:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.,** Outage Boundary: Londonderry across Fairview Road (eight residential customers

affected).

**Wednesday, March 28, noon – 3 p.m.,** Outage Boundary: Santa Ana Ave – 18th St. (11 residential customers affected) .

**Thursday, March 29, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.,** Outage Boundary: Sunflower Ave South side – East of Smalley St. (446 residential customers affected).

Please be advised that power may be turned off for the whole period or may be turned off more than once.

For questions, please call 800-611-1911.

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## **Costa Mesa seeks public input for Arts & Culture Master Plan**

The Parks and Community Services Department and the Cultural Arts Committee are currently working with Arts Orange County to complete an Arts and Culture Master Plan.

The master plan will serve as a tool that will guide the development of arts and culture related projects, programs and initiatives in the City and will help to personify Costa Mesa as the “City of the Arts”.

An important part of the Master Plan process is to hear from the public regarding ideas, visions, hopes and wishes for the City’s arts and culture future!

The public is invited to participate via in-person forums and focus groups as well as through a short on-line survey, found here. Public outreach sessions are scheduled for:

**Tuesday, March 27, 6 p.m.** Costa Mesa Senior Center, 695 W. 19th St.

**Wednesday, March 28, 7:30 a.m.,** Costa Mesa City Hall Conference Room 1A, 77 Fair Dr. (Coffee & light refreshments provided)

**Thursday, March 29, 12 p.m.,** Balearic Community Center, 1975 Balearic Dr. (bring your own lunch)

**Thursday, April 5, 6 p.m.,** Kaiser Elementary School MPR, 2130 Santa Ana Ave.

**Friday, April 6, 1-5 p.m.,** Costa Mesa City Hall Conference Room 1A, 77 Fair Dr. (drop-in office hours)

**Saturday, April 7, 10 a.m.,** Costa Mesa Senior Center, 695 W. 19th St.

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## **City Manager Leadership Award goes to the Finance Department's Matt Schmelzel**

City Manager Tom Hatch presented the March City Manager Leadership Award to the Finance Department's Treasury Specialist Mathew Schmelzel at the monthly Meet and Greet event on Thursday March 22.

"Matt is a great contributor to the Finance Department team,"

City Manager Hatch said. "He is respected by his peers and has a can-do attitude. I truly appreciate his dedication to his work and the city."

Schmelzel was promoted to treasury specialist in December of 2016 and that alone is a big job. Some of his primary job functions are to review financial records and related revenue collections for compliance with the City's Municipal Code including: Transient Occupancy Tax, various rent payments and business licensing. He also issues nonprofit solicitation permits, and bingo permits. In the absence of the revenue supervisor he is responsible for daily banking and cash management functions as well as training and supporting staff.

But soon after assuming that role the revenue supervisor and the accounting specialist left the City leaving a huge vacancy in the Treasury Division. Schmelzel stepped up to take on some of the Revenue Supervisor's job responsibilities such as daily cash management, special event permits, and fireworks permits.

In addition to learning his new role as the treasury specialist, Schmelzel was training a new employee on issuing business and animal license permits and managing Treasury staff. Plus, Schmelzel was on a committee for the selection of a new online animal licensing system.

Schmelzel has continued to coordinate the City's special event permitting process, which requires collaboration with City departments and outside parties to ensure compliance with the City's Special Events Permit Ordinance. In addition to issuing over 50 permits in 2017, some of the larger special event projects he has worked on include the OC Marathon and the Chargers Training Camp.

Schmelzel joined the city in March of 2014 as a part time permit processing specialist. He has Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Cal State Fullerton with a concentration in finance.

In addition to Schmelzel, City Manager Hatch welcomed several new and newly promoted employees. The new hires included:

Flor Paniagua, Jade Sims and Andre “A.J” Wallace, all recreation leader IIs in the Parks & Community Services Department, and Police Officers James C. Hagan and Tyler Salem. In the Public Services Department, Hatch welcomed Azita Fakoorbayat a new principal civil engineer, Bobby Fouladi, a new associate engineer and Nazila Mokarram a senior engineer.

The newly promoted employees include Code Enforcement Officer Andy Godinez, Rene Jimenez and Elena Martinez to recreation leader IV and Jessica Martinez to recreation specialist.

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## **New library construction meeting milestones**

The Lions Park Projects construction continues and scheduled milestones are being met.

The steel reinforced concrete foundations, and infrastructure for water, sewer, gas and power utilities for the new library have been surveyed and constructed.



The structural steel frame system for the building has been erected, welded, bolted, inspected, and secured in place. The framework for the large, oval shaped sky light above the future staircase is taking form. The aesthetic arches of the building's exterior are now visible.

On March 7, the concrete for the library's first floor was constructed, including all utility penetrations, elevator pit and connections to its adjacent vertical components. On March 19, the concrete for the second floor of the building was placed. Underground storm drain construction is also underway for the new, one-acre park.

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# Bristol Street Project

# Achieves Milestone

# Another

# New

Improvements on the Bristol Street Project has achieved a new milestone. Striping of the newly paved section of Bristol Street between Baker Street and Randolph was completed and all median curbs have been installed.

A traffic signal was installed at the intersection of Bristol Street and Sobeca Way, at the CAMP and Pep Boys driveways.

This newly installed signal will allow for controlled crossing of pedestrians between the east and west sides of Bristol Street and improve traffic operations. Traffic engineers will be monitoring this location and adjusting the signal timing as needed to coordinate with other traffic signals in the vicinity.

Landscaping and irrigation improvements will be completed over the next four weeks.

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## Sandbags available at City Hall for residents only

As a fierce spring storm approaches and is expected to hit Costa Mesa and Orange County beginning early Thursday March 22, the City of Costa Mesa will provide residents with free sand and sand bags in the southeast corner of the City Hall parking lot at 77 Fair Drive.

The National Weather Service predicts the storm could bring as much as 1 to 2 inches of rain to coastal and inland Orange



County areas.

Maintenance Services staff will also be patrolling potential flooding spots to make sure catch basins are clear of debris and operational and standing by to respond to other weather-related incidents.

Sand and sand bags are also available at Fire Station No. 4, located at 2300 Placentia Avenue.

Both city hall and the fire station are self-service location with shovels available for use, and the number of sandbags is limited to 15 sandbags per household.

No commercial use please.

For more information on sandbags [click here](#).

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## **City launches new Community Improvement webpage detailing all code enforcement activities, including group home information**

The City's Community Improvement Division has created a new web page that will provide visitors with a host of information regarding various categories of code enforcement activities.

[Click here](#) to view that page.

Visitors to the page can get lists of the code enforcement

activities throughout the City such as building code violations, property maintenance violations, inoperable vehicles, and group home complaints. [Click here.](#)

For example, for group homes, the webpage provides information regarding group homes that have received conditional use permits to operate, state licensed facilities, pending group home applications, homes that have been issued citations, closed locations and homes currently under review. [Click here.](#)

The page also has links to information related to medical marijuana uses permitted by Measure X and garage sales.

The page also has contact information, phone numbers and links to file nuisance complaints.

Residents and web page visitors can call a duty officer/main hotline at (714) 754-5638 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or use the City's Costa Mesa Connect service [here.](#)

For state licensed homes, residents can [click here](#) to file a complaint with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).