

# **Lead Equipment Mechanic Evan Rodriguez receives this month's City Manager Leadership Award**

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison presented the City Manager's Leadership Award for the month of December to Lead Equipment Mechanic Evan Rodriguez.

"I was impressed to learn that Evan has created an atmosphere and culture of excellence and customer service by cross training other members of his team on how to repair public safety apparatus and other vehicles in the fleet," Farrell Harrison said. "This allows our staff to expand their knowledge base and skill sets to better serve our customers. I am grateful for his dedication and am thrilled to give him this award."

As the Lead Mechanic, Evan consistently exceeds expectations in his role while being focused in building a team of skilled mechanics who support all City Departments. His attention to detail, problem-solving skills, and ability to meet deadlines have been instrumental in the success of Equipment Maintenance

Rodriguez is a great collaborator and always willing to help his colleagues. He's a big believer in cross-training which allows for the sharing of knowledge about all City equipment and helps the entire Equipment Maintenance team grow their expertise. Rodriguez strongly encourages all the mechanics to attend training.

He's always looking for ways to improve and brings in new ideas. His proactive approach has boosted efficiency and productivity within our team. Rodriguez's positive and can-do attitude is contagious. He maintains a high level of

confidence and professionalism, even during challenging times.

Some specific examples of Rodriquez's accomplishments are successfully leading the team of mechanics developing and implementing a new way of approaching Fire apparatus maintenance. This has been accomplished through in-house cross-training and encouraging staff to attend state certified Fire Mechanic classes. Due to these efforts, along with Rodriquez's approachable style, the City now has multiple mechanics that are able to address the unique demands of the Fire Dept.

Rodriquez's commitment to providing excellent customer service has resulted in numerous positive reports, increased the reliability of our vehicles and equipment and has demonstrated an increased level of professionalism of Equipment Maintenance.

Rodriquez is a recent father so hasn't had much free time lately but does enjoy listening to music and spending time with his family.

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## **Costa Mesa Residents Can Apply Now to Serve on Various City Commissions**

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

**Arts Commission:** This Commission meets on the first Thursday of each month. With a motto of "City of the Arts", the City holds in highest regard the vital role of the arts in the

community. The general objectives of the arts commission shall be to ensure that the City of Costa Mesa is a place where creativity and creative people can flourish; imagination, inspiration and innovation are held in high regard, arts education is essential to all and that arts and culture promotes civic pride and enriches the daily lives of Costa Mesa residents. Four members must be residents of Costa Mesa and up to three non-residents that are affiliated with the Arts. The City is recruiting for four members (Appointments by Mayor Stephens, Council Member Buley, Council Member Gameros, and Council Member Pettis), each for a term expiration of January 2029. For further information, contact Executive Assistant Laura Fautua at (714) 754-5009.

**Parks and Community Services Commission:** This Commission meets on the second Thursday of each month. The Commission serves as an advisory body to the City Council and works with various City departments on issues pertaining to parks, parkways, recreation, and community services. The City is recruiting for four members (Appointments by Mayor Stephens, Council Member Buley, Council Member Gameros, and Council Member Pettis), each for a term expiration of January 2029 and one member (Appointment by Council Member Marr), for a term expiration of January 2027. For further information, contact Executive Assistant Laura Fautua at (714) 754-5009.

**Planning Commission:** This Commission meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month. The Commission functions as an advisory body to the City Council on issues related to the long-term growth and development of the community, on requests for general plan amendments, rezones, specific plans, environmental impact reports and amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission has authority to take final action on a variety of planning applications, including conditional use permits, variances, planned development projects, and tentative tract and parcel maps. Appeals of the Planning Commission's decisions are considered

by the City Council. The City is recruiting for four members (Appointments by Mayor Stephens, Council Member Buley, Council Member Gameros, and Council Member Pettis), each for a term expiration of January 2029. For further information, contact Administrative Assistant Anna Partida at (714) 754-5612.

**Application Process** – Residents who are interested in getting involved in local government are encouraged to complete a 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., Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. The appointments are tentatively scheduled for the Jan. 21, 2025 City Council meeting.

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## **Costa Mesa voters re-elect Stephens and Gameros and add new Council Members Buley and Pettis**

A new Costa Mesa City Council was sworn in on Thursday, Dec. 5 with voters re-electing Mayor John Stephens and Council Member Loren Gameros to District 2 and choosing new District 1 Council Member Mike Buley and new District 6 Council Member Jeff Pettis.

The new Council joins existing Council Members Andrea Marr, Arlis Reynolds and Manuel Chavez. The new Council also voted

6-0 for Manuel Chavez to be the next Mayor Pro Tem.



“I’d like to give a welcome to our two new council members Mike Buley and Jeff Pettis and a congratulations to Mayor Stephens and Council Member Gameros for winning their second terms,” City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison said. “Additionally, I want to thank our outgoing Council Members Jeff Harlan and Don Harper for their dedication over the last four years.”

This is Stephens’ second term as Mayor after successfully running for the post in November of 2022.

“I am honored that the residents of Costa Mesa have trusted me with another two-year term as Mayor of this great City,” Mayor Stephens said. “With the help of my Council colleagues, we have already accomplished some great things and I plan to do even more in these next two years.”

For more information please visit **Mayor Stephens’ webpage here.**

Council Member Gameros ran unopposed for his District 2 seat, which he was first elected to in November of 2020. He was the first person to represent that district, which was created in a city-wide vote in 2018.

“It was a great honor to be elected to represent District 2

four years ago and I have enjoyed my service to the community,” Gameros said. “To run unopposed to me was a vote of confidence in my leadership and I look forward to the next four years.”

A 44-year resident of Costa Mesa, Gameros has more than two decades of experience with the Operating Engineers Training Trust Local 12, a nonprofit labor organization where he serves as an instructor of building inspectors.

**Click [here](#) for more information on Council Member Gameros.**

New Council Member Buley was elected to represent District 1, where he and his wife, Adriana, moved to 21 years ago and have raised three children there.

“I feel a responsibility to my family, friends, neighbors, and supporters to work hard during my term to ensure that Costa Mesa continues to grow and thrive in such a way that it continues to be a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family,” Council Member Buley said. “I’ve been blessed to experience that with my wife and children over the last two decades we’ve lived here.”

Buley has served the community as a volunteer on the St. John the Baptist School’s advisory Finance Committee, coaching basketball and softball at SJB, and countless volunteer hours during the years his son played Costa Mesa Little League.

Buley has been a civil litigation trial attorney for over 30 years, the last 25 years as owner of his own firm.

**Click [here](#) for more information about Council Member Buley.**

New Council Member Pettis was elected to represent District 6, where he has lived with his wife Kerry and three children for the last 13 years.

“I have long understood that there is a positive correlation between the strength of a community and the willingness of its

residents to get involved,” Council Member Pettis said. “Involvement can be as simple as staying informed, or as major as philanthropic financial endeavors. I chose to run for elected office in Costa Mesa as a way to become involved in the community I call home.”

He is currently the Deputy Chief Nurse of Mental Health at the Long Beach Veterans Administration Medical Center and served on the VA’s Nurse Professional Practice Committee, where he developed, reviewed and enacted hospital policies for nursing professional practice.

[Click here](#) for more information about Council Member Pettis.

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## **Costa Mesa Prevails in Defending Sober Living Home Ordinance**

On Wednesday, Dec. 4, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously upheld a jury verdict affirming the City of Costa Mesa’s sober living home ordinance in *Ohio House, LLC. v. City of Costa Mesa*.

“This decision of the Ninth Circuit is the culmination of the hard work and wisdom of City Councils, Planning Commissioners, City Staff, our City Attorney and outside counsel dating back over 12 years,” Mayor John Stephens said. “We have preserved the character of our neighborhoods while allowing for reasonable and appropriate care for those struggling with addiction.”

The Court concluded, as the jury had, that the City’s sober

living home regulations are not discriminatory against the disabled. This verdict is a positive outcome for more than just Costa Mesa as many cities throughout the region have modeled their regulations after Costa Mesa's ordinance.

"We are pleased that the Court of Appeals has upheld, yet again, the regulations the City created nearly 10 years ago to protect the City's residential neighborhoods and the disabled who were being crowded into unsuitable living environments designed for profit, not to help the disabled," City Attorney Kim Barlow said.

The City's outside counsel, who argued the case in court, agreed.

"This is an important win for sensible land use regulation, for Costa Mesa residents and residents throughout California and the Ninth Circuit, and for balancing the needs of all residents, including the disabled," said Costa Mesa's appellate counsel Mary-Christine (M.C.) Sungaila.

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## **Street sweeping to take a break for the Thanksgiving holiday**

Due to the observation of the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no residential street sweeping Thursday, Nov. 28 and Friday Nov. 29.

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. 2.

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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## Costa Mesa launches zero emission, on-demand rideshare service



The City of Costa Mesa is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$1.5 million grant from the State's Clean Mobility Options program to launch Let's Go Costa Mesa, a new on-demand rideshare service in partnership with Circuit to offer free, clean energy transportation to residents with limited or no access to a personal automobile, though all members of the community are welcome to use the service.

This new, free ride share service is intended for short local trips and will use a small fleet of electric vehicles, including a van branded as The Goat. Circuit will provide vehicles, including The Goat, which seats up to 10 passengers. While the name, The Goat, is in reference to Costa Mesa's history of being known as Goat Hill, it is also an acknowledgment that the actual animals are sturdy, full of energy, and able to go anywhere.

"Let's Go Costa Mesa will provide needed mobility to seniors on the Westside and East 17th Street to destinations such as doctors, restaurants and shopping," Mayor John Stephens said. "This increased access also benefits our local businesses. I'm grateful to Council Member Arlis Reynolds, who effectively advocated for this project through the approval process, and to the council and city staff who approved and implemented this important resource for our seniors."

The Mobility Project Voucher worth \$1.5 million is from California's Clean Mobility Options (CMO) program, a part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in under-served communities. This project is in concert with the California Energy Commission's Clean Transportation Program, which is investing more than \$1 billion to accelerate the deployment of zero-emission transportation infrastructure and support in-state manufacturing and workforce training and development.

Also, collaborating with Circuit to use electric vehicles to replace daily trips is a cleaner option since 28 percent of national trips one mile or less are traditionally performed by fossil fuel vehicles, according to National Household Travel Survey Data.

Clean Mobility Options, or CMO, is a statewide initiative that provides funding for zero-emission shared mobility options to under-resourced communities in California. CMO is available throughout California to all eligible disadvantaged and low-income communities and tribal governments, to increase access to safe, reliable, convenient, and affordable transportation options.

The Let's Go Costa Mesa service area will consist of Westside Costa Mesa and College Park south of Joann Street and the area surrounding the East 17th Street shopping district bounded by East 18th Street on the north and East 16th Street on the south.

To use the service, residents and visitors are encouraged to download the Ride Circuit app on the App Store or Google Play or call the hotline at (949) 828-2065. Let's Go Costa Mesa will operate seven days a week, up to 10 hours per day, as part of a four-year pilot program. Rides are free, and are available within the service area Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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**Fire Captain Ruhl is the latest recipient of the City**

# Manager Leadership Award

Assistant City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly joined Deputy City Manager Alma Reyes to present the October City Manager Leadership Award to Fire Captain Mike Ruhl.

“As someone who worked closely with Mike, I can attest to his dedication to his work, family and faith,” Reyes said. “He is a true leader in the Fire & Rescue Department and a pleasure to work with. I am so happy to be able to present him this award.”

Ruhl has been a member of the CMFR Team since January of 2008, when he was hired as a Firefighter. He became a Paramedic in 2013. Ruhl was promoted to Fire Engineer in 2018 and then promoted to Fire Captain in March of 2020.

Ruhl has served the community and Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue in various capacities. These areas include serving on the CMFR Tools & Equipment Committee, CMFR SOP Committee, CMFR Academy Cadre Instructor, CMFR Strategic Planning Committee, CMFR Recruitment Team and the CMFA Executive Board.

He is also CMFR’s Peer Support Coordinator. The Peer Support Group was established in 2017 with Ruhl spearheading the efforts with Battalion Chief Chris Coates. The Peer Support Group now has seven active members to assist as needed and shows the dedication and commitment Ruhl has to his peers and the organization.

“Captain Ruhl is an example of our absolute best, professionally and personally, and on all levels,” Fire Chief Dan Stefano said. “He is highly respected by his peers. His strong core values, ethical leadership acumen, infectious positive energy, authenticity and compassionate care for others is matched with his exceptional work ethic, critical thinking skill sets, impactful mentoring approach, and his unwavering commitment to those around him, always placing the

highest priority on his family, his faith and his friends.”

Ruhl holds an Associates of Science degree in Fire Science and a Bachelor of Science in Emergency Management from Purdue University, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude.

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## **Costa Mesa Announces New Director of Economic and Development Services**

Costa Mesa City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison announced that Carrie Tai, a development services expert with more than 20 years of local government experience, will be the City’s new Director of Economic and Development Services.

“We conducted a nationwide search to find the right person, and Carrie quickly became our top candidate to lead this important City department,” Farrell Harrison said. “I’m excited about Carrie’s focus on servant leadership and developing strong relationships with residents and the business community. She is experienced in creating and implementing organization efficiencies that expedite permit processing and improve customer service.”

As Director of Economic and Development Services, Tai will oversee the City’s economic development, building and safety, code enforcement, planning, housing and cannabis operations. She will also be working closely on the development of the master plan for the State-owned Fairview Developmental Center property as well as manage the planning and visioning for future housing opportunities in Costa Mesa.

“Planning, economic development and code enforcement are vital functions in Costa Mesa,” Mayor John Stephens said. “Our residents and businesses are entitled to outstanding service and thoughtful land-use planning. I’m confident Carrie will deliver results in these areas, and I look forward to working with her.”

Tai comes to Costa Mesa from the City of Hermosa Beach, where she was the Director of Community Development, overseeing planning, building and safety and code enforcement while leading the certification of the City’s Housing Element. She also served in the City of Manhattan Beach as the Community Development Director where she launched the City’s successful outdoor dining program and implemented process efficiencies throughout the department.

Prior to that, Tai was the City of Long Beach’s Zoning Administrator overseeing the day-to-day planning services during one of the most extensive development periods in the City’s history, including projects that resulted in more than 3,000 dwelling units. She also worked for the Port of Long Beach, the nation’s second largest port, where she developed the first comprehensive update of the Port Master Plan in 30 years.

“It is an honor to join the City Manager’s team and guide Costa Mesa’s future growth and development for all segments of the community,” Tai said. “I look forward to advancing major planning initiatives and furthering the City’s ongoing efforts to ensure excellent customer service.”

A native of Boston, Tai graduated from Boston Latin School, the first public high school in the United States. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree with dual majors in Urban Studies and Music, as well as a Master’s of Urban Planning degree from Hunter College of the City University of New York. She has been a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and is a popular speaker at industry conferences regarding

state housing law, environmental review, land-use planning and leadership development.

Tai will start with the City of Costa Mesa on Wednesday, Oct. 16.

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## **Mayor receives award from Angel Light Academy**

Mayor John Stephens was honored with an “Angel on Earth,” award from the nonprofit Angel Light Academy at its annual Above & Beyond Event on Saturday, Sept. 28 at the Avenue of the Arts Hotel in Costa Mesa.

The Above & Beyond honorees were nominated by their peers for their outstanding community service, leadership and proven excellence.

“I am grateful to be recognized by the Angel Light Academy for my contribution to the great City of Costa Mesa, and I’m proud of what our city team has accomplished together,” Mayor Stephens said. “It is a privilege and honor to serve as mayor of this great city.”

Stephens was chosen for this award based on his exemplary leadership and devotion to public safety and the first responder community, according to the Angel Light Academy.

Mayor Stephens joins a diverse group of honorees this year representing youth, family services, domestic violence, homelessness, healthcare, sustainability and youth empowerment.

According to the Angel Light Academy, these honorees have

demonstrated an attitude of excellence, teamwork and leadership that consistently goes *Above & Beyond* in their daily lives.

In addition to being Mayor, Stephens has served as the Chair of the ACC-OC Homelessness Task Force, and as Director of the Orange County Transportation Authority, Transportation Corridor Agency (Toll Roads) and Travel Costa Mesa. He initiated the City's Independence Day Celebration (which had 10,000 attendees in 2024), and he has been Santa Claus at the annual Snoopy House event for many years!

Past winners of the award include current County Supervisor Katrina Foley, who won the award in 2019 during her term as Mayor of Costa Mesa.

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## **Senior Programmer Analyst Yang receives City Manager Leadership Award**

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison has presented the City Manager's Leadership Award for September to Hua Yang (also known as YH) a Senior Programmer Analyst in IT.

"As a subject matter expert in both technology and payroll, YH is well known for troubleshooting issues quickly and efficiently," Farrell Harrison said. "Her comprehension of both IT and payroll systems is a valuable skill and we are so fortunate to have her on our team. I'm happy to be able to

present her this award.”

YH started working for the City of Costa Mesa – IT department in June 1999 as Programmer Analyst II. She earned a promotion to Sr Programmer Analyst in 2005, where she has provided support to the city’s HR and Payroll system (Peoplesoft).

Her major responsibilities include: Implementing MOU changes for different unions, trouble-shooting system/data problems for payroll, working with the users to provide auditing data/report, processing Open Enrollment tasks in PeopleSoft, supporting year-end processes, generating compensation reports for the city/state and applying tax/technical updates to Peoplesoft.

YH earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Science from Nankai University in China. She worked with National Computer Systems Bureau in Singapore before she came to the US. This is her second time getting the City Manager Leadership Award!

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## **Costa Mesa breaks ground on new Fire & Rescue Regional Training Center**

**COSTA MESA, CA** – On Friday, Sept. 6, the Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Department, along with City and State leaders, officially broke ground on a new training tower facility at Fire Station No. 4, marking a multi-year effort to remake the aging structure into a state-of-the-art Regional Training Center.

Participants at the groundbreaking event were Assembly Member Cottie Petrie-Norris, Mayor John Stephens, Mayor Pro-Tem Jeff Harlan, Council Members Andrea Marr and Manuel Chavez, City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, Chief Dan Stefano and Public Works Director Raja Sethuraman. It was Petrie-Norris who secured \$2.5 million in state funding to get the project started to replace the nearly 60-year-old landmark tower on Placentia Avenue.

“The Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Regional Training Center will be instrumental in equipping our firefighters and recruits to handle the myriad challenges they face during fire and rescue operations in our city,” said Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine). “With its advanced training tower and realistic simulation capabilities, this center will enhance their readiness, ultimately saving lives and safeguarding property. I’m proud to have secured state budget funding for this vital project, ensuring our first responders have access to top-notch facilities and equipment to protect our community.”

In addition to the state funding, the Costa Mesa City Council approved \$2.2 million toward the project and Mayor Stephens is proud of that effort.

“I’m grateful for Assembly Member Petrie-Norris’s efforts to secure funding, to my fellow Council Members, who joined me in approving the additional funds needed to complete this project, as well as the leadership of our City Manager, Fire Chief and Public Works Director,” Mayor Stephens said. “We are also fortunate to have amazing and dedicated members of our fire service who are only going to get better with the training and resources this new facility will provide.”

City Manager Farrell Harrison said she is looking forward to the completion of the new facility.

“Under the leadership of Chief Stefano and Public Works

Director Sethuraman, I look forward to watching the transformation of Fire Station No. 4, that was built during Lyndon Johnson's presidency," Farrell Harrison said. "This new Regional Training Facility that will be used by neighboring cities and agencies and will improve the region's fire and emergency preparedness and response."

Chief Stefano highlighted the importance of the new facility.

"Today's groundbreaking ceremony provides us the valued opportunity to celebrate and share this historic moment in time with our community and for our community, with gratitude and thanks for everyone who played a part to help make our vision become a reality," Chief Stefano said. "Our new state of the art Fire & Rescue Regional Training Facility will be one of the most incredibly valuable, public safety infrastructure training assets not only for us here in Costa Mesa, but more importantly, for our entire region, providing our professional firefighters and fire service professionals with the highest quality of training resources and tools available to serve our community, our region, and our statewide interests at our absolute best."

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.

Also in attendance Friday were Battalion Chief Chris Coates, the project liaison, Assistant Chiefs Jason Pyle and Jon Neal as well as Assistant City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly, Deputy City Manager Alma Reyes, Finance Director Carol Molina, Parks & Community Services Director Brian Gruner and IT Director Steve Ely.

The project will use locally sourced and environmentally friendly products and materials.

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

The building and training grounds will also include upgrades to the existing lighting to include energy-efficient fixtures (LEDs) and will include natural light levels. Future 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 will be 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 would greatly benefit from these upgraded facilities to manage increased demand and mitigate wildfire risk during these events.



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# Street sweeping is postponed this holiday week

Due to the observation of the Labor Day holiday, there will be no residential street sweeping Sept. 2 – Sept. 6 2024.

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. 9.

In lieu of street sweeping, the following is a list of tasks that clean streets operators will be conducting next week.

- 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.