

# South Bay Cities

Featuring the Weekly Newspapers of Hawthorne, Inglewood and Lawndale

**Hawthorne Press Tribune**  
The Weekly Newspaper of Hawthorne

**Inglewood News**  
The Weekly Newspaper of Inglewood

**Lawndale Tribune**  
AND LAWNDALE NEWS The Weekly Newspaper of Lawndale

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## Inside This Issue

- Calendar of Events.....4
- Certified & Licensed Professionals.....7
- Classifieds.....2
- Entertainment.....2
- Hawthorne.....3
- Lawndale.....4
- Inglewood.....5
- Legals..... 6,7,8
- School Board.....2

## Aero-Flex Students Recognized



The Hawthorne City Council presented Certificates of Appreciation to the 23 Hawthorne High School Manufacturing & Engineering Students who graduated from the South Bay Workforce Investment Board's Aero-Flex Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Photo: City of Hawthorne

## Hawthorne City Council Hears Different Views on Desalination

By Brian Simon

The most recent Hawthorne City Council meeting featured a standoff between Bruce Reznik, who heads the local environmental watch group Los Angeles Waterkeeper, and West Basin Municipal Water District (West Basin) Manager of Water Policy and Resources Development E.J. Caldwell concerning the agency's potential ocean water desalination project in El Segundo. Desalination (desal) uses reverse osmosis to remove salt as well as minerals and viruses from water that is pumped through membranes under high pressure. Both individuals took turns at the podium presenting their positions on the matter as West Basin prepares to release the project's final draft environmental impact report (EIR) by the end of the year. The agency has conducted its research on desal for 17 years and spent more than \$60 million over that period.

Reznik urged the Council to oppose the project on a future agenda, arguing that the technology is the most expensive (one of the slides in his presentation showed an estimated price of \$2,100 per acre foot that exceeded all other options, with an overall project cost thought to be in the range of \$500-\$600 million), most harmful to the environment and ocean life, and most energy intensive in adding to the grid and increasing carbon footprint. He maintained that there are better alternatives already underway including reducing water waste, reusing stormwater, recycling wastewater and restoring groundwater. Reznik contended that the desal plan does not meaningfully consider impacts on frontline communities. He also expressed concern that West Basin could choose to certify the EIR as soon as 15 days after its release. Reznik spoke of the need for a local water supply, but not one that creates

"new problems." Heal the Bay and Surfrider Foundation are among the groups opposed to the desal project.

In response, Caldwell noted that Reznik failed to focus on the potable drinking water supply that is at the core of West Basin's mission. "We cannot drink half of the supplies he [Reznik] has on his charts," he said. Delving into the particulars of the water supply and historical usage, Caldwell explained that West Basin's region was completely reliant on groundwater before 1947. The number dropped to just 20 percent by 1990, with imported water now comprising 80 percent of the supply. Through its Water for Tomorrow Program, Caldwell said West Basin hopes to reduce reliance on imported water to 39 percent by 2030 -- with desal taking up 11 percent of the pie as one of the potable water sources.

Caldwell summarized West Basin's efforts to protect both juvenile and adult sea life and larva from harm, and also inroads made in seeking clean technologies such as wind and solar to increase energy efficiency. He and Reznik disagreed on the potential of stormwater as a potable source. The latter maintained that this is already happening elsewhere. Caldwell confirmed that stormwater can be made drinkable in the San Gabriel Valley where water can "percolate," but is not reusable in this particular area and that the costs to go potable are also astronomical. Speaking about the EIR timeline, Caldwell indicated that West Basin's board would not move quickly on a project and that permitting will likely take years.

Both individuals took questions, with Councilmember Mike Talleda pointing out that "plastic is doing more damage to animals and the ocean than anything out there." Councilmember Haidar Awad was

curious about desalination plants in Israel and Australia as potential models for facilities here. Mayor Alex Vargas ultimately wrapped up the discussion by stating that he didn't have "enough information to pass judgment." He also put the onus on Reznik (whom he referred to as "someone we don't know" asking to "oppose something one of our agencies is doing") to provide more factual data with breakdowns on cost comparisons. Both he and City Manager Arnie Shadbahr mentioned Hawthorne's status as a leader in the area of energy conservation.

Also on Tuesday, Councilmember Alex Monteiro received his colleagues' blessing to stage a World Fest 2020 on Aug. 22 next year as a City-sponsored event designed to showcase Hawthorne's diversity. He envisioned the festivities including music, food, arts and crafts, a mini carnival, rock climbing, video games and more. The idea, he emphasized, is "to bring all the cultures together" and "to show that Hawthorne is the 'City of Good Neighbors' in harmony with all the different cultures."

Monteiro called for immediate formation of a planning committee and also asked to bring back the Christmas holiday parade in December 2021 to make this a multi-year process culminating in Hawthorne's centennial celebration in 2022. That year would feature a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, Summer Fest and Christmas parade. Vargas strongly supported the plan and suggested the city manager look into getting a stage. He viewed the World Fest as a key step in "bringing back a golden age to Hawthorne" that he felt was lost 20-25 years ago. The rest of the Council concurred to move forward. Vargas later reiterated the desire to hold more activities, which he said is now realistic because

See City Council, page 5

## Weekend Forecast

**Friday**  
Sunny  
73°/60°



**Saturday**  
Mostly Sunny  
77°/62°



**Sunday**  
Mostly Sunny  
79°/63°

