

Signature Verification To Begin For Hotel Workplace Initiative; Rent Control Backers Look To 2020

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

While the Long Beach City Clerk's office is slated to begin verifying signatures for one proposed local ballot initiative, to qualify it for placement on the November ballot, another is still in the signature-gathering phase.

The city clerk's office tallied 46,084 signatures for a ballot initiative aimed at creating hotel worker safety protections and workload restrictions, which the Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community submitted on May 22. The clerk's office is slated to begin the verification process, which ensures that the signatures are from Long Beach registered voters, on June 21. The deadline to complete this process is July 5.

The proposed Hotel Workplace Requirements and Restrictions ordinance would apply to hotels with 50 or more rooms. It mandates that hotels provide personal alarms to employees who work in guest rooms without other workers present, and to post signage informing guests of this practice. The proposed ordinance also restricts the amount of space a worker is allowed to clean in an eight-hour workday, and bars hotels from assigning more than two hours of overtime in a day without written consent. However, a unionized hotel may receive exemptions to the proposed regulations.

The Long Beach City Council voted down a similar ordinance by a narrow margin last fall. Councilmembers who voted against it were Suzie Price, Al Austin, Stacy Mungo, Dee Andrews and Daryl Supernaw. The Long Beach Hospitality Alliance, an arm of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, also expressed opposition to that ordinance and to the current proposal.

The Business Journal is also opposed to the initiative. "The fact that if a non-union hotel unionizes exempts it from the initiative's requirements says it all," stated Publisher George Economides. "This has nothing to do with helping employees and everything to do with gaining more union members and dues for union bosses."

The other proposed city ballot initiative would establish a rent control policy in Long Beach. After failing to meet the June deadline to qualify for the November ballot, members of the #RentControlNOW Coalition behind the proposal are striving to submit their petition signatures by July 30. If they achieve their goal, the initiative could qualify for the March 2020 ballot, according to Long Beach City Clerk Monique De La Garza.

"We were originally gunning for the November 2018 election. But we had created a multitude of plans, so depending on how the campaign ended up going we'd be fine submitting to either," Jordan Wynne, a community organizer for coalition member Housing Long Beach, said. "The sooner we can get this issue heard, the more rapidly and efficiently we can help tenants in this city." Housing Long Beach is a nonprofit that aims to improve and increase the

amount of affordable housing in the city.

The proposal would set a maximum allowable rent increase based on the consumer price index, the average that consumers pay for goods and services. No more than one rent increase per year could be enacted. It would also establish just causes for eviction and a rent board to handle appeals. It would make rents retroactive to January 1, 2017.

In addition to Housing Long Beach, other supporters of the proposal include the

Long Beach Gray Panthers and the Long Beach Tenants Union. Other organizations such as Better Housing For Long Beach and the Apartment Association of Southern California Cities have spoken out against it, as has the Business Journal. ■

City Council Approves Airport Lease With Ross Aviation

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

During its June 12 meeting, the Long Beach City Council unanimously approved new lease terms with Ross Aviation for space

the company currently occupies at Long Beach Airport (LGB), which will allow the company to develop new hangar space.

"We welcome Ross Aviation's current and future operations at Long Beach Airport," LGB Director Jess Romo told the Business Journal. "They consistently demonstrate strong operational fundamentals with excellent customer service, enhance the airport's appeal to aeronautical users, and contribute to the airport's role as an economic engine for the city and the region."

On August 21, the City of Long Beach released a request for proposals (RFP) for the development of 31 acres on the west side of the airport. The RFP included five parcels located east of Cherry Avenue, adjacent to the 90-acre former Boeing C-17 Globemaster III manufacturing site: Parcel

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Although we're fully committed to serving all of our clients to the fullest extent possible, businesses with a privately-owned structure are one segment we feel we can passionately serve like other financial institutions cannot.

In fact, one family-owned business, RMI International, Inc. (RMI), discovered firsthand the commitment First Bank has to other

like-minded organizations. After possessing a long-term relationship with another larger financial services provider, the Rodriguez family sought funding to buy out the entire ownership shares of a silent partner whose involvement no longer made sense and, conversely, was hindering further growth and expansion of the family's security services' operations. After interviewing eight other banks and receiving five viable proposals, First Bank was ultimately chosen as their strategic partner.

"We truly felt First Bank understood what the unique needs and challenges of a family-owned business are," said Rick "Rocky" Rodriguez, Jr., President of RMI. "Both privately-held businesses, we have a common DNA and synergy."

Now, in its second generation of family leadership, RMI sees its' employees, clients, and partners as an extension of their family. Introduced to me through RMI's CPA, Lew Finkelstein, Partner at Rossi, LLP, Rodriguez said they saw us as not only a strategic partner but also an extension of their family. Much like First Bank, RMI places great emphasis on their people

and long-term relationships. "We have similar histories and family values," said Rick Rodriguez, owner of RMI and father to Rocky Rodriguez, Jr. And, as often is the case of family-owned businesses, the family's values are also parlayed into the business setting.

Striving to be long-term partners with their clients, RMI works to find the most effective, cost-efficient solutions available. "We know there are thousands of security options out there," said Rodriguez, "but our clients definitely feel a sense of partnership with us."

Poised for growth, the Rodriguez family partnered with First Bank because we offered access to local decision-making; nimble responsiveness; a creative financing structure, and are family-owned. After all, we understand family-owned business; quite simply, because we are one.



Starting with just \$300 in his pocket, Rick Rodriguez, along with his wife, Lupe, started their own security services business in 1996 to provide for their seven children. Now, with over \$41MM in annual revenues, RMI International, Inc. is one of the largest Hispanic-Owned security services businesses in the nation and a qualified Minority Business Enterprise. With all seven of their children assisting in running RMI's daily operations, they also now employ over 1,500 professionals in peak season while operating in over 17 states.



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Maria Hunter, Vice President and Commercial Banking Officer, has over 13-years of experience in the commercial banking industry. She is a passionate trusted advisor, helping small to mid-sized companies achieve economic success. Clients see her as an advocate and a partner. A native of Nicaragua, she's fluent in Spanish. Maria resides in Long Beach and is an active board member of the Los Altos Family YMCA where she was recently nominated as the Board Chair.