

# City Councilmembers Vote 5-0 On Ordinance Requiring Panic Buttons At All Area Hotels, While Four Members Leave The Dais Before The Vote

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**  
STAFF WRITER

The Long Beach City Council voted at the September 4 meeting to create an ordinance mandating that all of the city's hotels and motels provide employees with panic buttons. Four councilmembers, Lena Gonzalez, Jeannine Pearce, Roberto Uranga and Rex Richardson, left the floor before the vote, while their five colleagues voted in favor of the proposal.

These four councilmembers previously expressed support for a broader measure regarding hotel safety that is set to appear on the November 6 ballot. The Hotel Workplace Requirements and Restrictions Ordinance, Measure WW, would mandate that hotels with 50 or more rooms provide panic buttons to employees who work in guest rooms alone. It also limits the amount of space a worker is allowed to clean in an eight-hour day and prohibits hotels from requiring an employee to work more than 10 hours without written consent. Unionized hotels may receive an exemption from the workload restrictions.

At the August 7 meeting, councilmembers voted unanimously to place Measure WW on the ballot after the Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community submitted petitions with 46,084 signatures in support of it. The

Los Angeles County Clerk's office verified that enough of those were valid to qualify the initiative for the ballot. The council was required to take one of three actions: adopting the ordinance outright, placing it on the ballot, or requesting further study into the measure.

The councilmembers who walked out during the vote said they thought the timing of the panic button proposal was rushed, as it was introduced during a holiday weekend right before Tuesday's meeting. They also argued that it would confuse voters, since they are already set to vote on an ordinance concerning panic buttons in November.

During the meeting, 7th District Councilmember Roberto Uranga said the proposal "doesn't pass the smell test." He stated, "What we're doing here is circumventing a vote that more than 40,000 people signed a petition to put there [on the ballot]."

Third District Councilmember Suzie Price, the principal author of the panic button ordinance, said she introduced it in part because she was accused of turning a blind eye to women's rights after voting down an earlier version of the Hotel Workplace Requirements and Restrictions Ordinance last September.

"In September 2017, this council made it very clear that we were all in favor of

panic buttons. Those of us who voted against [the ordinance] did so because there was no nexus between some of the provisions and panic buttons," Price explained, referring to the workload restrictions.

Price expressed dismay that the issue caused such divisiveness among the council, and that the members who supported the original proposed ordinance last year did not extend more tolerance to those who did not. "Our colleagues allowed the implication to stand that we don't support panic buttons. They allowed, as leaders of this dais and of this issue, for people to come to the podium and say that we don't support safety for women," she said.

She then called on her colleagues to separate the timing of the election from the issue at hand. "Tonight, it's about voting on panic buttons. If there's a woman who gets assaulted in the next few weeks or months, I don't want to go on record as someone who voted against panic buttons. . . . So tonight, I am supporting them, loud and clear."

The ordinance also requires that guest room doors remain open while rooms are cleaned, and that hotels assign employees who report abusive behavior to an area away from the accused perpetrator. The measure also calls on the police department to conduct regular outreach to hotel workers educating them on their rights and on the protocol to address assaults.

Jeremy Harris, senior vice president of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and staff liaison to the Long Beach Hospitality Alliance, endorsed the ordinance in part because it provides for panic buttons at all of the city's hotels

and motels, whereas the ballot measure only requires them for hotels with 50 or more rooms. He also stated that the proposal encapsulates the same safety recommendations while costing the city less to enforce.

"The Long Beach Hospitality Alliance endorses the city council's proposed hotel safety ordinance as it aligns with measures our hotels have advocated for years, ensuring the safety of our employees and our guests," he stated.

Hotels across the country are making a similar commitment to improve safety for their employees. The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) announced on September 7 a pledge to provide hotel workers nationwide with personal safety devices, and committed to developing more training and resources to address sexual assault. This includes forming partnerships with organizations that target sex crimes, such as the National Alliance To End Sexual Violence and End Child Prostitution and Trafficking.

"Protecting our employees, as well as the millions of guests who stay in American hotel rooms each day, is critically important to our industry," AHLA President and CEO Katherine Lugar stated. "Unfortunately, no industry is immune to dealing with sexual harassment, but we will continue to work, day in and day out, so America's hotels are secure places for those who work in and visit them."

CEOs from the Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Hyatt, InterContinental Hotels Group, Marriott International and Wyndham Hotels & Resorts joined Lugar for the announcement. Industry leaders set an implementation goal for 2020. ■

## City Council Approves Fiscal Year 2019 Budget, With Additions And Changes

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
EDITOR

The Long Beach City Council voted to adopt the \$3 billion city budget for Fiscal Year 2019 on September 4. The council included about \$2.985 million to fund their own recommendations, including some made by the mayor, as part of the final vote. According to Interim Budget Manager Grace Yoon, these changes are being funded with existing monies within the \$3 billion budget.

The city council identified and approved \$315,000 in one-time funding to be divided equally among the council districts for "district priorities." Another big-ticket council recommendation, compared to the others, was \$215,000 for the removal of tree stumps, of which the city has a backlog.

The council also approved the creation of a "Justice Fund" with \$150,000 to provide legal support to immigrant residents of the city. Councilmembers Suzie Price and Stacy Mungo voted against this proposal. Another \$100,000 was approved for training and education funds on LGBTQ and bullying issues.

A monetarily sizable change to the budget made by the council was reallocating the city manager's proposed use of \$1.25 million for convention center and Alamitos Bay parking improvements to instead improve concessions stands at Alamitos Beach and Granada Beach, and to begin a "waterfront visioning process" to potentially develop downtown's shoreline area.

City staff still has to identify funding for two of the mayor's recommendations, including the restoration of Fire Engine 17 and six new police positions as part of a restored community rapid response bike team, according to Yoon. Staff must also identify funding to strengthen the city's existing proactive residential inspection program, which is meant to prevent rental properties from falling into disrepair.

Yoon said she did not know when city staff would bring suggested funding sources for these proposals back to the city council for approval. "We do anticipate, however, to meet the mayor's request of coming back with plans for restoration sometime in FY 19," she stated via e-mail. ■

### Aquatic Academy Fall 2018 How will we feed an additional 2-2.5 billion people by 2100?

A new evening course at the Aquarium this fall will examine how we can feed an additional 2-2.5 billion people by 2100 and reduce our human impact on the environment. The course will also examine how climate change is impacting global agriculture and productivity. In this new normal, the Anthropocene, scientists and farmers will need to identify new crops that can withstand higher temperatures, drought, and, in coastal areas flooding as a result of sea level rise. Speakers will discuss how agriculture and food systems around the world need to change over time, what agricultural innovations are being developed, the role of genetically modified organisms and gene editing technologies like CRISPR, and how farming the sea will become an increasingly important source of animal protein. With limited class size, attendees will have the opportunity to interact with speakers and learn the latest science directly from scientists and researchers studying these topics.

**When:** This course will take place on 4 Wednesday evenings, 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. October 10 & 17 and November 7 & 14

**Cost:** \$40 for adults, \$35 for members, \$10 extra for CEU credit in conjunction with CSULB (optional)

**Where:** Aquarium of the Pacific, 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach, CA 90802

**Parking:** We will validate parking for course participants

**RSVP:** For reservations, contact Guest Services: (562) 590-3100, ext. 0  
For additional information, email: Adina Metz, ametz@lbaop.org or visit aquariumofpacific.org/aquaticacademy

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