

Gloria seeks to navigate troubled waters



Michael Smolens  
COLUMNIST

Mayor Todd Gloria recently noted that back in January he warned San Diegans, both in what he said and symbolically, that austere times were ahead. “That’s precisely where we are,” he said last week, reflecting on his State of the City speech given in the City Council chambers, eschewing more ornate locales often used in the past. The day after presenting his revised budget that seeks to close — for now — a \$350 million shortfall, the mayor sat down for a wide-ranging interview that touched on reducing spending, efforts to increase revenue, the push for more housing, federal cuts and how the confluence of faraway events affects San Diego. The budget, among other things, relies on a partial hiring freeze and reduced library and recreation center hours while prioritizing police operations — and the cuts have received widespread attention. SFGate, a Bay area news website, even did a story on Gloria’s plans to close numerous restrooms at beaches and parks. Road repair funding would be reduced, though a report last year said San Diego streets have deteriorated significantly. Some of that has been met with criticism that lower-income and underserved areas will be hurt the most by the cuts. Nevertheless, Gloria had a hopeful, if not optimistic outlook, about things stabilizing in the future, even while acknowledging matters could get worse before they get better. He noted that San Diego is not alone and that the state and other cities are grappling with budget shortfalls. Here are some of the areas he touched on during the interview.

**Budget cuts:** This has been a major topic at City Hall and beyond for weeks. “I’d like to say it’s better, but the cuts are half of what they could have been. I’m still not happy about it,” he said. At this stage, the budget likely will have to tap the city’s currently underfunded reserve for \$10 million — something that hasn’t happened in a decade. Gloria said he’d rather not do that, but wasn’t overly

See **SMOLENS** on Page B8



The inside of the recently opened Sharp Grossmont Hospital for Neuroscience in La Mesa is seen Monday. In its first two weeks of operation, the center has averaged an 84% occupancy rate. **ANA RAMIREZ / U-T**

Hospital’s new neuroscience center already is nearly full

Facility expected to enhance level of stroke, other brain care at Sharp Grossmont

By Paul Sisson  
UNION-TRIBUNE

LA MESA — In its first two weeks of operation, the new neuroscience center at Sharp Grossmont Hospital has averaged an 84% occupancy rate. That number is not terribly surprising, given that the La Mesa medical facility treated the 10th-most acute strokes in the state and handled the largest volume in San Diego County in 2023, according to state data. Retired New York firefighter

Thomas Daniels, 88, was among the first to occupy one of the 50 beds at what is officially called the Sharp Grossmont Hospital for Neuroscience. Admitted to Grossmont’s emergency department after having a stroke April 29, he was transferred to the new center one day after it opened on May 1. Thirteen days later, he is still there, feeling significant pain in his face, but able to chuckle over the enthusiastic welcome that occurred when the center’s first patients arrived. “They were cheering for me

and I said, ‘vote for me’ like I was running for governor,” he said. “That’s my way, just having fun.” His ability to recall those memories made such a short amount of time after suffering a major neurological emergency is the entire point of building this new hospital within a hospital in the first place. By dedicating space for neurological maladies, and filling that space with nurses, technicians and physicians all specifically trained to handle brain-related care, the idea is to make it more likely that

patients will receive medical interventions they need as quickly as possible. Especially with stroke, the phrase “time is brain” has been the mantra in neurological care since the 1990s. The speed and precision with which clot-busting drugs can be administered and surgery performed is literally the difference between full recovery and living the rest of one’s life with severely impaired movement. Or

See **HOSPITAL** on Page B8

Pier’s burned end closed 2 more years

Oceanside officials discussing designs for new buildings

By Phil Diehl  
UNION-TRIBUNE

OCEANSIDE — The fire-charred end of the Oceanside Municipal Pier will remain off limits to visitors for at least another two summers, city officials said. Talks are underway with the lease holder of the restaurant

and food kiosk destroyed by a blaze in April 2024, Associate Engineer Luis Cardenas said in an email Friday. “We are still assessing our options in regards to rebuilding the restaurant and kiosk,” Cardenas said. “In the meantime, we’ve asked the tenant to move forward with developing the building plans.” Once plans are ready, obtaining the necessary permits will take six months to a year, and construction could start in the fall of 2026, Cardenas said. The City Council approved a 10-year

extension on the lease June 21, 2023, including the option for two five-year extensions. City officials have said the repairs will cost as much as \$17 million, excluding the buildings, and that insurance should cover most of the expense. State and federal elected officials have offered to help where possible, which may include obtaining grant money to help pay for construction. “If we do move forward with the rebuild of the restaurant and kiosk, the tenant will be responsible for it, including obtain-

ing all necessary permits and approvals,” Cardenas said. Permits will be needed from agencies including the California Coastal Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state Department of Fish and Wildlife, federal Fish and Wildlife, State Water Resources Control Board, and the city’s Building Division and Water Utilities Department. Investigators said a short in old electrical wires beneath the pier’s deck started the blaze. Fire departments from across

See **PIER** on Page B8

Orphaned bear cub gets rehab

At 3-4 months old, it’s youngest ever taken in by Ramona Wildlife Center

By Karen Kucher  
UNION-TRIBUNE

RAMONA — Campers in the Los Padres National Forest were out hiking last month when they made a heartbreaking discovery: They heard an animal crying and found a tiny black bear on the trail, alone. His mother was nowhere to be found. They scooped him up and carried him to a campground manager, who notified the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Wildlife biologists initially hoped the cub might be reunited with his mother. They returned him to the forest trail and left him overnight, but the mother didn’t come back. That’s when the cub was brought to the San Diego Humane Society’s Ramona Wildlife Center to be nursed back to health. Staff said the cub, thought to be 2 or 3 months old when he arrived, was extremely fragile since he had gone days without eating, calling his condition “touch and go.” Over the past month in Ramona, though, he’s gained weight and become more active, even starting to climb little branches and logs brought into his enclosure. Staff members typically don’t



This black bear cub was extremely fragile when he arrived at the Ramona Wildlife Center but now weighs more than 10 pounds and is beginning to learn how to climb. **SAN DIEGO HUMANE SOCIETY**

name the wild animals at the center but have taken to calling him “Baby Bear,” said Autumn Welch, the center’s wildlife operations manager. Initially, he was given formula — he balked at a bottle so he laps it up from a bowl. Now that he’s over 10 pounds, he’s being fed some dried pellets and fruit, as well as beetles and mealworms, and grass and leaves. The goal is to have him remain

as wild as possible, with the hope that eventually he will be released. When care workers interact with the cub, they don a bear mask and fur coat that smells like black bears, which is stored with bedding provided by the Lions, Tigers and Bears sanctuary in Alpine. That way, Welch said, “we also smell like the bears in addition to looking as best as we can

See **CUB** on Page B8

La Jolla cityhood faces added hurdle

S.D. council votes to authorize city attorney to move forward with litigation over signatures

By Ashley Mackin-Solomon  
U-T COMMUNITY PRESS

SAN DIEGO — Efforts for La Jolla to separate from San Diego as its own city could face a new obstacle after the San Diego City Council decided during a closed session last week to authorize legal action over the regional Local Agency Formation Commission’s handling of petition signatures promoting La Jolla’s potential cityhood. Having previously called the process for verifying the signatures “outrageous,” San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria sought to initiate litigation against the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCO, which provides guidance to communities seeking to incorporate as cities. The City Council voted 6-0 on May 12 to authorize the city attorney’s office to proceed with litigation. Councilman Joe LaCava, whose District 1 includes La Jolla and who lives in Bird Rock, voted in favor. He did not comment

further, and a representative said last week that he was “out of the office due to illness.” Council members Stephen Whitburn and Marni von Wilpert recused themselves from the vote, and Councilman Raul Campillo was absent. The dispute centers on LAFCO’s actions during the verification process that ultimately reversed the San Diego County registrar of voters office’s initial determination that the petition drive by the Association for the City of La Jolla had failed to gather enough valid signatures to continue the cityhood effort. “From the outset, I’ve made it clear that the city of San Diego has serious concerns about LAFCO’s exceptionally broad and questionable interpretations that led them to overturn the county registrar of voters’ official determination that the La Jolla secession petition was insufficient,” Gloria said last week. “The decision by LAFCO to overrule the registrar under-

See **LAWSUIT** on Page B8



