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# OJAI VALLEY NEWS

128th Year, No. 6 [www.ojavalleynews.com](http://www.ojavalleynews.com) Friday, Nov. 30, 2018



Water Levels	
Seasonal year-to-date rainfall totals from Oct. 1	
Matilija Canyon	3.80"
Soule Park	2.17"
Casitas Dam	2.66"
Oak View	2.12"
Upper Ojai	2.14"
Lake Casitas Volume	
Oct. 1, 2018	74,657 acre-feet
Nov. 29, 2018	72,279 acre-feet
Current volume	30.4 percent

## Ojai district voting advances as deadline looms

**Austin Widger**

[awidger@ojavalleynews.com](mailto:awidger@ojavalleynews.com)

The Ojai City Council held a public hearing Nov. 27 about switching to district-based City Council elections, in response to a lawsuit filed against the city in September by the law offices of Shenkman and Hughes of Malibu, representing the Southwest Voter Registration Project.

The SVREP is challenging the city of Ojai and many other Cali-

fornia elected bodies over at-large voting systems that it claims prevent Latinos from electing their preferred candidates.

Two preliminary district maps for the city of Ojai were drawn by the National Demographics Corporation and reflect the current City Council members' residences. There will be new maps drawn by the NDC prior to the final public hearing at the Dec. 11 meeting to

**'I don't like this, but we shouldn't waste the taxpayers' dollars in quixotic endeavors.'**

— Ojai Councilman  
**Bill Weirick**

reflect the new council members' residences. The districts would be redrawn a third time in 2021, following the results of the 2020 U.S.

Census.

Just three members of the public spoke on the issue at the meeting, prompting concern from Ojai resident Elise DePuydt. "I'm really shocked at the lack of interest by the residents of this city in this important issue," DePuydt said.

DePuydt also expressed an interest in having an additional public hearing outside of the council meetings for more public input on

the exact drawing of the districts. City attorney Matthew Summers said that would be considered after the Dec. 11 meeting.

"I think it's very odd to stick that little bit up in District 4 just so (Councilwoman) Suza (Francina) could be in District 4," DePuydt said, referring to the drawing of District 4 on each of the two maps. "Because, naturally, her district, where

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## Council tweaks cannabis rules

**Austin Widger**

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"How you vote tonight may change the personality of the entire valley."

Bill Miley, longtime resident and opponent of cannabis manufacturing in Ojai, shared that cautionary advice at the Nov. 27 Ojai City Council meeting at which an amendment to the city's cannabis-manufacturing ordinance was again pulled from the consent agenda of the meeting.

A consent item is generally a routine item placed on the agenda that does not require discussion.

Mayor Johnny Johnston pulled the item from the consent calendar. After

**'Why are we now suddenly becoming the cannabis central for Ventura County?'**

— Ojai Mayor  
**Johnny Johnston**

lengthy debate, the council voted again to "amend and introduce the ordinance with the deletion of the separate standalone two manufacturing facilities," city attorney Matthew Summers said.

The motion was made by Councilman Paul Blatz and approved 3-2. Council Members William "Bill" Weirick

Cannabis, Page A4

## Mayor's lead holding

**Austin Widger**

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With just one update to go before the 2018 Ojai Valley election results are official, it appears that Mayor Johnny Johnston may squeeze out a narrow victory over former Councilman Severo Lara in the mayoral race.

After the latest update Nov. 27, Johnston held a 167-vote lead over Lara.

Still, with the vote so close, the race cannot be called until the final vote update Dec. 3, ahead of the Dec. 7 deadline for results to be verified by the county.

The newly elected City Council members will take office during the Dec. 11 council meeting. The only

newcomer will be Ryan Blatz replacing his father Paul. Blatz and incumbents Randy Haney and Bill Weirick ran unopposed.

Ojai Unified School District Board Members Jane Weil, Kevin Ruf and Michael Shanahan will remain on the board for another four years.

Angelo Spandrio will be the next Casitas Municipal Water District Division 4 board member after beating out incumbent Mary Bergen. Brian Brennan, assistant to Ventura County District 1 Supervisor Steve Bennett, will be the new Division 1 director. He will replace Bill Hicks, who has served on the board for the past 28 years.



Photo by Misty Hall

At a recent Ojai Valley Defense Fund event, OVDF founding President John Broesamle, is given the James D. Loebel Award. Pictured with him are OVDF President Peter Cante (from left), Ojai Mayor Johnny Johnston, Broesamle, Ventura County Supervisor Steve Bennett and former OVDF President Dennis Rice.

## John Broesamle inspires community

**Perry Van Houten**

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An Ojai man who for three decades has fought to preserve the environmental quality of the Ojai Valley was honored at a Nov. 18 event attended by many of the valley's environmental leaders.

Peter Cante, president of the Ojai Valley Defense Fund, presented to civic leader John Broesamle the James D. Loebel Award for sustained environmental excellence. "He's one of a few people that have profoundly influenced the valley for the better," Cante said.

The award is named for five-time Ojai Mayor Jim Loebel, who opposed rampant development, a freeway through the Ojai Valley, gypsum and uranium mines in the Los Padres National Forest and the Weldon Canyon Landfill. Loebel passed away in 2003.

Broesamle is the second recipient of the award, created and presented for the first time in 2011, to environmental activist Pat Weinberger.

For 30 years, John and his wife, Kathy, have been actively involved in the environmental well-being of the Ojai Valley. "When you get John, you get Kathy. They're a tandem," Cante said. "The love they have for this valley is just an unplumbable depth."

As president of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy from 1998 to 2000, John was involved in the acquisition of the Ventura River Preserve, Ojai Meadows Preserve and Cluff Vista Park.

He was also the founding president of OVDF, a community chest that serves to protect the environment of the valley. Because of John and Kathy's leadership and philanthropy, the fund now stands at a \$1 million, according to Cante.

"They're deeply generous not just with their money but with their time. The volunteerism and spirit of community they have is immense," said Cante, who called

John Broesamle, Page A4

## City weathers first storm, more rain on its way

**Perry Van Houten**

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The second Pacific storm to impact Southern California in as many weeks packed more of a punch than the first, but caused no major problems in the Ojai Valley.

The cold front and the main, steady rain band moved through the area overnight into the early-morning hours Nov. 29, making way for showery weather the rest of the day. More rain is on the way, according to the National Weather Service. "There's a weak system on Saturday, but it's not going to amount to much," said NWS meteorologist

Eric Boldt. Weekend temperatures will be below normal, he added, with overnight lows in the mid-30s. Another storm is due midweek, Boldt said. "That one may be a little more significant because it has a little more south flow ahead of it, so it could get interesting."

"In the Ojai Valley itself, it looks like a good 1.5 inches for most areas, and 2.5 to 3.5 looked pretty good in the mountains above Ojai" as of Nov. 29, said Boldt. "We haven't had any reports of damage or mudslides," he added.

Rainfall rates were below

U.S. Geological Survey debris-flow thresholds "for the most part, in the Thomas Fire area, less than 0.50 inches per hour, so that was good news," Boldt said. In Ventura, emergency personnel rescued a woman reportedly clinging to branches in the rain-swollen Santa Clara River, near Harbor Boulevard.

Ojai Police Chief James Fryhoff reported no major problems in the Ojai Valley, while the California Highway Patrol responded to reports of a power line down on Casitas Vista Road in front of Foster Park, along with minor rock slides and street flooding.

"The city had a perfect storm, in a good way," said Ojai Public Works Director Greg Grant. "No drains clogged or other issues. Just what we needed."

A debris flow on Maricopa Highway, north of Ojala, was cleared by road crews before dawn Nov. 29, according to Bob Kilpatrick, Ojai area supervisor for the California Department of Transportation.

Boldt said that given the drought, the timing of the storms has worked out well, so far. "About a week between storms is kind of a good thing right now," he said.



Ojai Valley News photo by Perry Van Houten

The Ventura River, looking south from the Baldwin Road bridge, flows after the storm Nov. 29.

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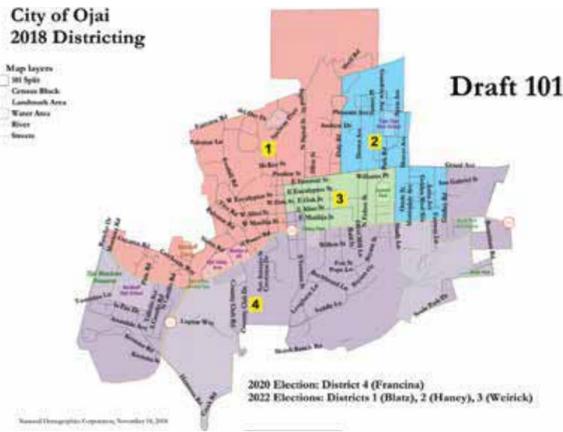
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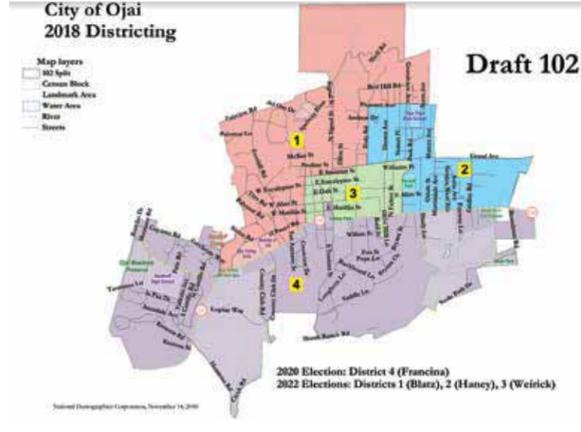


# District voting:

Continued from Page A1



**Draft 101: One of two preliminary district maps viewed by council.**



**Draft 102: One of two preliminary district maps viewed by council.**

she lives, would be in the downtown.”

Councilman Bill Weirick commented on the safe harbor process, which is a legal term that requires public hearings on switching to district elections. It also caps lawyers’ fees during the 90-day process to \$30,000.

“What we’re trying to do is

to be good stewards of the taxpayer dollars, while we watch the legislative and legal environment,” Weirick said. “I just want to make sure my state of mind is clear. I don’t like this, but we shouldn’t waste the taxpayers’ dollars in quixotic endeavors.”

Mayor Johnny Johnston said he agreed and that Wei-

rick’s comments could be applied to the council as a whole. He also stated there is a caveat to the requirement of having a final public hearing Dec. 11, in order for the maps to be revised, if so ordered.

“This is all assuming that the plaintiff ... the Grinch, does not decide to give us the extra time that we requested,”

Johnston said.

He was referring to plaintiff attorney Shenkman. Summers said the city had not received a response from Shenkman, as of the Nov. 27 meeting, but that he is not expecting to receive a positive response in terms of the request for an extension of the safe-harbor period.

# Cannabis:

Continued from Page A1

and Suza Francina dissented.

Under the latest modification to the ordinance, only the three currently licensed medical and adult-use cannabis dispensaries in the city — Sespe Creek Collective, Ojai Greens and Shangri-La Care Cooperative — will be allowed to open up cannabis-manufacturing establishments in the city.

Blatz was the first council member at the meeting to take issue with the initially proposed number of up to five separate cannabis-manufacturing businesses. “Why are we allowing those extra two? That, to me, I think it’s too many,” Blatz said. “I think we should limit it to the three who have licenses now.”

Councilman Randy Haney asked: “Why are we running to five or six or seven (manufacturers) when we’ve

already run to three? We can always come back and amend this and allow additional. We can even come back at a later date, when there’s more clarity, on even Type 7 (volatile-substance manufacturing), as long as we have more information and more facts to base our decisions on. But, I think three exceeds our needs of the community already.”

Francina said: “It’s clear from this discussion that you are prejudiced against the product. Because you don’t have that concern about all of the coffee breweries, wineries. The town is saturated with businesses that no one objects to. In the future, this will become a normal business. All of this phobia ... it’s old thinking, it’s outdated.”

Mayor Johnston said he disagreed:

“All I’m saying is why do we not start, when we’re giving out something new in permits, to start out in a nice, moderate way? Do it, measure it and then expand it if it were successful. Why are we now suddenly becoming the cannabis central for Ventura County?”

Weirick explained his logic behind favoring the cannabis legislation. “I’m actually quite proud that the city of Ojai, and the people of Ojai, which, remember, voted for Prop. 64 — three out of four — that we have taken a lead in a way that our citizens I think, themselves think of themselves as leaders in terms of rationalizing the situation with cannabis, with looking at it as the best way to handle this as legalized, regulated,” Weirick said. Proposition 64 — the Adult Use

of Marijuana Act — is a state statute approved by voters in 2016 to legalize recreational marijuana for people aged 21 years or older under state law and establish certain sales and cultivation taxes.

Haney responded: “We have clearly demonstrated what Bill is saying. We have led. We have three more than most cities have anywhere in this county, other than Port Hueneme. So it’s disingenuous for you (Francina) to say we, for some reason, hate cannabis or hate medical cannabis or hate this. It’s to the contrary.”

The newly modified ordinance will be up for a vote at the Dec. 11 meeting. In addition, the regulations proposed by staff will be amended and brought back to the next council meeting as well.

# Fire remembrance Dec. 1 at Libbey Park and Bowl

Ventura County assistance agencies will come together Dec. 1 at Ojai’s Libbey Park to host a Thomas Fire one-year remembrance event, rain or shine. The event at the park is free.

There will also be a concert, rain or shine. Tickets to the music event are \$35 to \$65. Music tickets are free for those who lost their homes in the Thomas Fire or slide (as capacity allows). Those with gifted tickets are asked to bring proof of burned residence, along with a picture ID, to receive access to the music portion of the event.

Reserved-seating tickets are available for purchase by going to <http://www.totalylocalvc.com/thomas-fire-remembrance/>.

Booths are open from noon to 6 p.m. Food and music will be available from 12:30 to 7 p.m. Proceeds from the event will go to Help of Ojai’s fire relief

fund and the Local Love Project’s fire relief fund.

“The event will be a celebration of our community perseverance as we continue to support all those affected by the Thomas Fire and slide as they continue to recover,” said Kat Merrick with TotallyLocalVC.com. “Help and support agencies from throughout Ventura County will be on hand to provide information about their long-term recovery services. The Ventura County arts community will host a Makers Artist Market, creating a great way to support local artists who were affected by the fire and to kick off your holiday shopping.”

Headlining the concert will be Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. Other performers include the Charles Law Band, Guy Martin, Todd Hannigan and Sleeping Chief.

Each of the areas affected by the Thomas Fire and slide will be represented through support organizations, the art community and music, activities and vendors, according to organizers.

“We want all those affected by the Thomas Fire to know that we are all here standing together to help as we continue to heal and work toward recovery,” Merrick said. “We hope that everyone will join us for a day of remembrance, music and community.” The Makers Artist Market, vendor area and support organization resource areas of Libbey Bowl are at 210 S. Signal St., Ojai.

# Broesamle

Continued from Page A1

Broesamle his mentor. “He’s tireless, determined, passionate and compassionate, visionary and strategic, and John is also profoundly wise, and that wisdom is such a valuable attribute for the valley.”

Among those attending the event were representatives from the Defense Fund, Citizens for Responsible Oil and Gas, OVLC, Ojai Mayor Johnny Johnston and 1st District Supervisor Steve Bennett, who represents the Ojai Valley.

“I just think they’re the epitome of effectiveness. When they touch something, they make good things happen,” Bennett said of the Broesamles. “And they both have a way to do it with a certain grace and humor that makes it enjoyable, and that’s a real gift.”

Bennett said it’s important for a community to have effective people like John and Kathy. “Because they’ve been successful, other people are willing to tackle things. It creates a sort of positive energy,” he said.

Ojai Mayor Johnny Johnston agreed, calling Broesamle an inspiration for the community. “I don’t know of anybody I’ve run across who had the combination of tenacity, strength and civility in pursuing things for the public good. It’s a blessing that the valley has had someone like John,” Johnston said.

# Police blotter

## Crimes

- Vandalism was reported in the 100 block of Bryant Street Nov. 18.
- Battery, shoplifting and criminal threats were reported in the 300 block of East Ojai Avenue Nov. 23.
- Battery was reported in the 200 block of North Lomita Avenue Nov. 24.
- Vandalism was reported in the 800 block of Mercer Avenue Nov. 26.
- Battery, vandalism and destruction of a wireless

emergency communications device were reported in the 200 block of Fairway Lane Nov. 26.

• Petty theft was reported in the 100 block of West Ojai Avenue Nov. 27.

## Arrests

- A 36-year-old woman was arrested in the 11400 block of North Ventura Avenue Nov. 23 for being under the influence of a controlled substance and resisting arrest. Bail was set at \$10,000.
- A 44-year-old woman

was arrested at Libbey Park Nov. 23 for misdemeanor warrants. Bail was set at \$15,000.

• A 50-year-old man was arrested in the 700 block of Fernando Drive Nov. 23 for public intoxication. Bail was set at \$2,500.

• A 29-year-old man was arrested at Cañada Larga Road and Ventura Avenue Nov. 24 for battery, shoplifting and criminal threats. Bail was set at \$40,000.

• A 57-year-old man was arrested at Cañada Larga

Road and Ventura Avenue Nov. 24 for violation of vehicle registration requirements. Bail was set at \$150.

• A 54-year-old man was arrested in the 100 block of West Ojai Avenue Nov. 25 for public intoxication. Bail was set at \$2,500.

• A 31-year-old man was arrested in the 200 block of North Lomita Avenue Nov. 24 for battery. Bail was set at \$2,500.

• A 30-year-old man was arrested in the 200 block of

Fairway Lane Nov. 26 for battery, vandalism and destruction of a wireless emergency communications device. Bail was set at \$17,500.

• A 48-year-old woman was arrested in the 100 block of West Ojai Avenue Nov. 27 for petty theft. Bail was set at \$2,500.

• A 37-year-old man was arrested in the 1200 block of Tico Road Nov. 27 for contempt of court. Bail was set at \$500.

## THE OJAI RETREAT FACES CLOSURE!

Due to unexpected financial circumstances, The Ojai Retreat needs your support before the end of this year. In order to prevent closure, \$200,000 is needed. Almost 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of it has been raised so far.

THE OJAI RETREAT & CULTURAL CENTER HAS OFFERED EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS TO THE OJAI COMMUNITY FOR 25 YEARS, and has received the “Spirit of the Ojai Valley Award” for making the Ojai Valley Community a better place for all.

For more details about our unexpected financial challenge, please come to an information meeting on Dec. 8 at 11am at The Ojai Retreat, or go to [www.ojaireretreatculturalcenter.org](http://www.ojaireretreatculturalcenter.org) and click on DONATE to make a tax deductible donation, or call the office at 805-646-2536. Any donation, small or large, will be highly appreciated.

With gratitude, Ulrich Brugger, Director, The Ojai Retreat.

Quote from an Ojai Retreat supporter: “The most magical and beautiful place in the world” – Joan Carra.

The Ojai Retreat, 160 Besant Road, Meiners Oaks (close to the Ranch House Restaurant) [www.ojaireretreatculturalcenter.org](http://www.ojaireretreatculturalcenter.org) // [info@ojaireretreat.org](mailto:info@ojaireretreat.org)

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