

## New Action Committee Fires Back After Claiming Local Community Group Has 'Launched An Attack' On Property Owners



Elaine Hutchison, right, and Joani Weir have teamed up to create an action committee in Long Beach to fight for the rights of property owners. The committee claims that Josh Butler, executive director of Housing Long Beach, has "launched an attack" on property owners' rights. (Photo by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**  
Staff Writer

**W**ith rents skyrocketing around the city, community groups are looking for a means to eradicate slumlords and implement programs to protect renters' rights.

Since 2013, Housing Long Beach, a nonprofit organization led by Executive Director Josh

Butler, has been pushing for a Rental Escrow Account Program (REAP) like Los Angeles implemented in 1988.

In L.A., if a property owner is found to provide tenants with substandard living conditions, the property is placed in REAP and tenants may pay a reduced rent into a city-managed escrow account until inspectors determine the violations have been corrected.

Last year, instead of REAP, the Long Beach City Council voted unanimously to enact the Proactive Rental Housing Inspection Program (PRHIP) to "safeguard the stock of decent, safe and sanitary rental housing" in the city through mandatory periodic inspections of rental properties.

While Butler acknowledged that PRHIP was a good starting

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## Low Interest Rates Forecasted To Persist, Driving Buyer Demand For Residential Properties

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

**A**lthough an improving economy usually triggers increases in interest rates, such has not been the case in the United States over the last couple of years. Financial and real estate experts, as well as economists, agree that continued global uncertainties are keeping rates low and are likely to do so well into 2017.

Low interest rates are putting pressure on demand for residential real estate, both in the single-family and multi-family markets, according to local real estate professionals. Homebuyers are seeking to take advantage of lower home mortgage payments, while investors in apartments hope to capitalize on steady cash flows af-

forded by lower rates and payments coupled with increasing rental rates.

"For the last couple of years, we

have been in an interest rate situation that is very atypical," Robert Kleinhenz, economist and execu-

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Robert Camerota, senior vice president of residential lending operations for Farmers & Merchants Bank, said he doesn't expect interest rates to increase significantly in the foreseeable future. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

## Long Beach Sales Tax Measure Voters Draw A Line In The City

By **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**  
Publisher's Analysis

**A**map by a local consulting firm plotting the final results of the June 7 Long Beach sales tax measure shows that most of the opposition to the tax increase came from residents living in Northeast Long Beach, with heavy opposition from the Los

Altos area, Naples and other parts of East Long Beach.

On January 1, 2017, the city's sales tax moves to 10% from the current 9% – an 11.1% tax increase. The new revenue is to be used for the city's public safety and infrastructure needs.

While the measure passed easily citywide – 60% to 40% – a dis-

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## Jess Romo Named Airport Director



Jesus "Jess" L. Romo is the new director of the Long Beach Airport, effective September 6. City Manager Pat West announced the appointment on July 29.

Romo has been serving as interim deputy executive director of Los Angeles World Airports, overseeing operations and emergency management at LAX, and has also served as director of airport operations for Ontario International and Van Nuys airports.

"Mr. Romo is an accomplished aviation professional who will provide strong leadership and strategic planning for Long Beach Airport," West said in a press release. "He will work collaboratively with all stakeholders, including the community, tenants and our commercial and general aviation partners."

In the same release, Romo said he is "committed to being an approachable and responsive steward of this great airport." He earned a bachelors in psychology from UC Irvine and a masters in industrial psychology from CSU Los Angeles. He also holds the designation A.A.E. – Accredited Airport Executive. ■ – Business Journal Staff

## Americans With Disabilities Act – 26 Years On, The Court Battles Continue

By **MICHAEL GOUGIS**  
Contributing Writer

**T**he parking lot at Coast Auto Care & Tires isn't a parking lot in the common usage of the term – it's a driveway into the service bays. Therefore, there is no designated parking area set aside for spaces that are accessible to people with disabilities.

That set of circumstances has become an issue in federal court.

The civil lawsuit, filed in June

in the Central District of California, U.S. District Court, against the Long Beach auto repair facility shows that 26 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, litigation remains the way that specific issues of access for the disabled are resolved.

And in California, despite efforts to reform the system, enforcement of compliance still takes place through what one court called "serial litigation" against public agencies and pri-

vate businesses. This has left public agencies, but especially business owners, footing the bill for enforcement and compliance actions.

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## Understanding The School District Bond Measure

By **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**  
Publisher

**L**ocal voters are being asked to support a \$1.5 billion school district bond measure to not only complete the work of the earlier bond Measure K approved in 2008, but to ensure that all of the K-12 facilities are in the best

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