



Yucaipa / Calimesa News Mirror

Your Community. Your Newspaper.

Friday, October 18, 2019

VOL. 106 No. 42

Visit us at www.newsmirror.net

70¢ + tax

Calimesa moves forward with County Line Road roundabouts

By KAREN DASILVA
Staff Reporter

Roundabouts on County Line Road moved another step forward Monday night when the Calimesa Planning Commission found the capital improvement project was consistent with the city's general plan.

The cities of Calimesa and Yucaipa are working together to improve County Line Road between Park Avenue and Bryant Street. Together, they applied for and received funding to construct four single-lane and one multi-lane roundabouts on County Line Road, along with other improvements such as sidewalks and bike lanes.

"This is a joint project with the city of Yucaipa," said Planning Manager Kelly Lucia, who presented the item at the Oct. 14 meeting. "We applied jointly for funding. (Calimesa) has taken the lead on design and the CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) analysis."

Chair Mike Barron wanted to know if anyone had contacted the city about the CEQA document and the roundabouts, which is open for public review. Lucia replied she had not heard about any feedback, but the public review period just began the previous week.

"As you know, there has been a horrendous tragedy in our community that we are all

See *Planning*, Page 5

Sandalwood Fire in Calimesa destroys 74 mobilehomes



CAL FIRE firefighters are on the scene within minutes of Thursday's fire call.

Photo courtesy of San Bernardino CAL FIRE

By RACHAEL M. GUSTUSON and
MICHELLE LOPEZ
Staff Reporters

A rapidly spreading fire broke out in the city of

Calimesa on Thursday, Oct. 10, during Santa Ana wind conditions. The devastating fire, which ultimately burned 1,011 acres, was started by a CR&R trash truck, which allegedly

dumped a smoking load on Seventh Street, near a vacant field.

Riverside CAL FIRE reported the fire was 100% contained on Monday, Oct. 14.

The Villa Calimesa Mobile Home Park remains uninhabitable and closed due to unsafe conditions.

Affected residents are urged to call Calimesa Emergency

FALL SALE ends Oct. 31, 2019

Frisch's
Clock Chalet and Gifts

THE BEST GIFTS for every occasion!
LARGE SELECTION OF GREETING CARDS

(909) 797-3249 • 35145 Yucaipa Blvd., Yucaipa • Mon-Fri 9am-4pm, Closed Sat & Sun

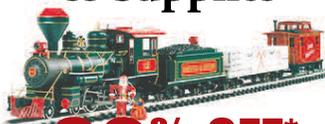
Rhythm Clocks



50% OFF*
SRP

* In Store Inventory Only

Model Trains & Supplies



20% OFF*
SRP

Black Forest Cuckoo Clocks



30% OFF*
SRP

Other Gift Ideas

20% OFF*
SRP

* See store for details



Sandalwood Fire, continued from Page 1



News Mirror reporter Jesse Dinkel arrives on the scene to capture the flames.

Photo by Jesse Dinkel



A CAL FIRE firefighter seen at Villa Calimesa Mobilehome Park on Thursday.

Photo courtesy of CAL FIRE, San Bernardino

operations center at 795-2287, for more information.

Mesa View Middle School

The fire was in close proximity to the Mesa View Middle School campus. At no time were any students in danger or trapped in buildings. The school transported students in buses to Calimesa Elementary School.

Cassidy Melvin, 12, of Mesa View Middle School was picked up by her dad Shawn Melvin, at Mesa View, shortly after the fire started.

"There was this really thick black smoke coming from the mobilehome park and over the intercom, they told us to follow our teacher's instruction but I was scared, shocked and worried," she said.

Nicole Shaver has two children that attend Mesa View Middle School. She said it was a scary but overall effective evacuation, last Thursday.

"The staff at Mesa View did a wonderful job making sure my kids were safe," Shaver said. "However, in the future, I would like that rear gate to always remain open. I would even volunteer my time to monitor the gate, if possible."

KQLH and other help

Fire victims and the public were kept up to date with ongoing fire coverage.

Local radio station, KQLH, 92.5 FM is a locally powered radio station in the community. The Yucaipa-stationed radio station provided ongoing live coverage of the fire.

The city of Calimesa posted on social media and updated fire victims throughout the fire.

Press conference

The following day, Riverside

County Fire department, in cooperation with CAL FIRE, held a press conference in Beaumont to provide an operational briefing and current status of the fire.

During the press conference Jeff Hewitt, Riverside County 5th District Supervisor and Calimesa resident said, "Today is a very difficult day for Riverside County and especially the city of Calimesa. The Sandalwood Fire has caused extensive damage to our community and tragically, someone has lost their life from the result of this fire. My heart goes out to our community, whose been displaced from the safety and comfort of their homes and thrust into a very difficult and uncomfortable time. Our thoughts are especially with the grieving family of the resident who lost their life. This morning, Riverside County and the city of Calimesa proclaimed a local emergency as a result of the devastation to the beautiful city of Calimesa. The local proclamation will support additional opportunities for resources and funding as we continue through this response. We're all in this together."

San Bernardino County 3rd District Supervisor Dawn Rowe also commented.

"The tragic loss of life and property in the Sandalwood Fire underscores the need to be prepared for wildfires, especially during high-wind events like we experienced last week," said Rowe. "The multi-jurisdictional response from Calimesa Fire Department, Riverside County Fire/CAL FIRE, Redlands Fire Department, and San Bernardino County Fire Department undoubtedly reduced the spread of the fire and saved countless lives and structures. I'm grateful for the firefighters and public safety

personnel who risked their lives to keep our communities safe.

Victims

Sadly, there are two reported victims of the Sandalwood Fire. The first was a resident of the mobilehome park, who died in the fire on Thursday. Lois Warren Turner Arvickson, 89, moved to Calimesa in 1939.

Marion Lovelace is Arvickson's niece.

"The family appreciates and feels the support of the community and friends," Lovelace said. "It's greatly appreciated."

The name of a second victim has not been released, as of press deadline.

Calimesa Fire officials

"A 911 call came in and when it was received it, we responded appropriately" said Captain Corey Bennin from the Calimesa Fire Department referring to the Sandalwood Fire. Origin of the fire was a normal operation. Urban interface with the wildland operations battalion chief deployed operations appropriately. There were high-winds and it got ahead of the organization and engulfed the trailer park." When asked if he was satisfied with the way everyone worked together he said "I couldn't be happier with unified command, Yucaipa, Calimesa, Redlands, and Riverside did volumes of support getting the results they desired."

Water

South Mesa Water Company's Board President George Jorritsma announced on Oct. 11 to the company's customers and local firefighting authorities that its reservoir levels are at over 90 percent after fires erupted in Calimesa. In an email sent to cus-

tomers and on posted notifications, Jorritsma said, "We are pleased to have sufficient supplies helping firefighters to prevent the fire from spreading in our service territory in Calimesa ... We urge all our customers to conserve as much water as possible to assure that our supplies remain robust in light of this emergency."

"We have instructed our General Manager, David Armstrong, to stay in touch with firefighting authorities to assure them of our ability to provide the water supplies they need to do their heroic jobs during this emergency," said Jorritsma.

Animal concerns

On Monday, Oct. 14 at the Yucaipa City Council meeting, four residents spoke regarding their concerns on the evacuation process of large animals in the San Timoteo and Live Oak Canyons, including establishing multiple evacuation sites with safe and effective communication to direct evacuation efforts to include large animals. Those four residents echoed the same concerns.

The canyon areas have a "high large animal population due to the number of boarding facilities and private residences containing horses and other types of animals. There is not an effective and efficient method of communication established in order to organize and direct evacuation efforts," said horse owner and local resident Dorre Yamashiro. "Time is of the essence in moving big animals and it helps to have efficient egress and regress through the canyon," said resident Cindy Mendoza.

Yucaipa resident Vanessa Register said there was no clear evacuation plan in place, since the Palmer Fire in 2017.

"Two years ago I was told the city was working on an agreement with the neighboring cities/counties to come up with a plan," said Register, who said she was told the Yucaipa Equestrian Center was not a designated evacuation site. "Two years later do we have a plan? Who executes the plan? Will the ranches know? Who will tell them?"

City Manager Ray Casey responded.

"In that particular instance the equestrian area was used for an evacuation site for large animals," Casey said. "There were some challenges with that because of the geography in the San Timoteo Canyon a lot of agencies were involved - Riverside County, Redlands, San Bernardino County, city of Yucaipa, in the after action report and process from that fire several years ago, it was determined that another site would make for a better large animal evacuation center for the canyon. We will work with the other agencies to inform ranchers of evacuation facilities for large animals."

LAC meeting

During the Local Assistance Center (LAC) meeting held on Oct. 15 at Norton Younglove Senior Center, Sandalwood fire victims received resources and assistance from several organizations. "A lot of these people have been through so very much in such a short period of time," said Specialist Jose Arballo Jr from Riverside University Health System's Senior Public Information. "It is a long process of recovering and this is just one of the many steps along the way," said Arballo.

For the latest fire-related questions, contact PIO Corey Bennin at 951-489-9212.