

Local

B2 Local reports B5 Obituaries B6-7 Editorial & Opinion



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Columnist

Fundamentals key for new Supervisor Jim Desmond

Newly minted county Supervisor Jim Desmond has outlined several priorities, including some that require big solutions for tough problems. But what he won't do is overlook the basics.

It's instructive that the first thing he did in his inauguration speech on Monday was laud the previous Board of Supervisors for keeping the county on solid financial footing.

He also focused on keeping county government accountable.

In his first major legislative act, Desmond sounded as though he was going to toss a monkey wrench into a proposal for the county to explore how it can help asylum seekers from foreign countries. He eventually signed on, but only after successfully refining the scope of, and putting a time limit on, a board-created task force aimed at pulling together local, state and federal officials to address the matter.

That may sound like playing little ball, but Desmond suggested the county needs to be good on the fundamentals to keep running smoothly and do other things. That means vigilance on the financials and ensuring services are delivered efficiently.

"I'm going to be questioning how things are done," the former San Marcos mayor said in an interview.

Desmond and Nathan Fletcher bring fresh perspectives to the board. They were elected to replace Bill Horn and Ron Roberts, who each served for 24 years.

LA MESA INQUIRY: NO EXCESSIVE FORCE

Independent probe finds school resource officer not out of line with teen

BY KAREN PEARLMAN

LA MESA

An independent investigation into an incident involving a La Mesa police officer who twice body-slammed a handcuffed student at Helix Charter High School concluded the officer did not use excessive force, that his actions were not

racially motivated and that he did not lose his temper during the incident.

The findings were disclosed Tuesday to the La Mesa City Council nearly a year after the incident, which occurred when school officials asked a school resource officer to escort a 17-year-old female student who refused to leave the campus.

The altercation between the student, who is black, and Officer Scott Wulfig, who is white, occurred on Jan. 19, 2018. Cellphone footage that has been shared widely on social

media shows the officer flinging the student, who was handcuffed, over his hip and onto the cement and then body-slammng her a second time.

Scott Tiedemann, a lawyer representing investigator Barry Aninag, told the City Council that concerns about the officer's conduct raised by the city were not supported by the evidence and were deemed unfounded, though he did not share publicly any of the specifics used to reach that conclusion.

Aninag's investigation sought to make a determination about

whether any La Mesa Police Department use-of-force policies or procedures were violated and whether race played a role.

The City Council was not given a copy of the report because of privacy laws that govern police personnel matters.

Mayor Mark Arapostathis pressed Tiedemann several times for more information, noting that the city had "waited a year" to get the report, which was originally supposed to be finished in 90 days, dating back to last February when Aninag

SEE FORCE • B3



EDUARDO CONTRERAS U-T

CREATIVITY TAKES FLIGHT

Artist Manuel Molina installs some of the birds made by middle-schoolers as part of an exhibit called "Birds Without Paradise" at Liberty Station. The exhibit, opening today, is a cross-border project involving students from San Diego and Baja California.