

Culver City OBSERVER

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Culver City Year in Review:2014

By Lynne Bronstein



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Culver Ice Rink

By Lynne Bronstein

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January

The Culver City Expo Line station was closed for almost two hours on January 7 due to a security threat involving what police called "a suspicious package" on the station platform. The Culver City Police were alerted and dogs from the County's K-9 division sniffed out the package, which was wrapped in duct tape and

appeared to be merely a cushion.

On January 17 Culver City police shot and wounded a man outside a 7-11 store at Washington Boulevard and Huron Avenue after he pointed a shotgun at them. After a short foot chase the man reportedly pointed a shotgun at the officers. Three officers opened fire, hitting the suspect. No officers were injured.

The Culver Ice Arena announced it would be closing in February, prompting a massive community effort to save it. More than 2000 signatures were collected and speakers came en masse to City Council to ask the Council to intervene. A company known as Planet Granite, specializing in rock climbing facilities, planned to move into the former ice arena site. In the meantime, supporters of the rink looked into the possibility of having the arena designated as a city landmark.

February

With the Culver City Ice Arena officially closed, Culver City officials informed the Karagozian family who owned the property, and the would-be new lessee, Planet Granite, that the property was zoned for ice skating only and for no other commercial purposes. Supporters of the ice skating rink hoped the zoning issue would help their cause.

Planet Granite announced it was canceling its plan to open a rock climbing facility in the ice rink building.

Later in February, city officials claimed that the ice rink building was unsafe to reopen and operate, due to its refrigeration system. Inspections by the city's fire department and a consultant hired by the city revealed that a massive overhaul and repair of the system would be required for continued operation. The overhaul would take at least six months according to the consultant's report. The Takahashi family, operators of the ice arena, had only six months left on their lease.

In the meantime, local police stationed a patrol car outside the closed arena building to prevent vandalism and protect against contaminants that might be released from the building if it was broken into.

The City Council election season kicked off with a candidate's forum on February 5. Candidates who participated were incumbents Jim Clarke and Jeff Cooper, and aspiring-to-the-Council Gary Abrams and Christopher Patrick King.

March

On March 4 the Culver City Unified School District voted to place a \$106 million School Bond on the June 2014 California General Election.

After a city inspection on March 7 Michael Karagozian, owner of the Culver City Ice Arena, turned off the compressors and closed the facility for good. According to Karagozian's attorney Nadine Lewis, he was threatened with fines "totaling \$7,500 per day plus costs" for unknown Hazmat violations.

On March 10 the City Manager's office and the Fire Department released a report on the hazards found at the ice arena, commissioned by the city and prepared by an independent expert in ammonia refrigeration, Michael Dillon, P.E. of the Long Beach firm Dillon Consulting Engineers. It concluded: "[T]he current ammonia refrigeration system constitutes an imminent hazard to any occupants within the building and to the neighboring community."

Mayor Jeff Cooper delivered an address at the 34th annual Mayor's Luncheon at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel. Putting a positive spin on developments, he commented "[j]ust a short time ago, we were on pace to out-spend our reserves in just three years....our city is socking away more reserves and pre-funding our pension liabilities, something we have never done before."