

INTERIM MUSIC VENUE • NEW RETAIL CENTER • PLASTIC BAN

IRVINE
WEEKLY

WEEKLY

JANUARY 12, 2024 • VOL. 6 • NO. 1

DAN
AYKROYD

CRACKING THE CREATIVITY CODE

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

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MAYOR FARRAH KHAN SECURES BALLOT SPOT FOR COUNTY SUPERVISOR

THE IRVINE OFFICIAL WILL FACE INCUMBENT DON WAGNER IN THE PRIMARY ELECTION MARCH 5.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

On Thursday, Dec. 14, Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan announced that her campaign for Orange County Board of Supervisors officially secured a spot on the 2024 Primary Election ballot.

Seeking Orange County's District 3 seat – which covers Yorba Linda, Anaheim, Villa Park, Tustin, Irvine, Lake Forest, and Rancho Santa Margarita – Khan will challenge current District 3 Supervisor Don Wagner, who was elected to the board in 2019.

Khan's campaign website asserts that considering her two terms as Mayor of Irvine, she has a "proven record" serving as a community representative.

In addition to helping launch the Orange County Power Authority, and assisting in the development of Irvine's Climate Action Adaption Plan, Khan said other notable accomplishments from her time in office include establishing Orange County's first COVID-19 vaccination clinic and ensuring HERO pay for frontline workers.

In her candidate statement filed with the Orange County Registrar of Voters, Khan said she is focused on battling homelessness and increasing public health access in District 3.

"My top priorities are to tackle homelessness with tailored city-based solutions, launch an Affordable Housing Initiative, expand public health access, promote public safety through innovative programs, prioritize environmental sustainability, address historical resource disparities head-on, and enhance our

disaster preparedness efforts to keep our communities safe," Khan wrote.

Khan lists Planned Parenthood Community Action Fund of Orange & San Bernardino Counties, along with the Orange County Labor Federation, The Democratic Party of Orange County and the Irvine Democratic Club as endorsers of her campaign.

Wagner, who served as Mayor of Irvine before heading to the OC Board of Supervisors, said he is committed to improving the quality of life in Orange County. Elected to District 3 after defeating Loretta Sanchez in 2019, Wagner's current term will expire in January 2025.

As the incumbent, Wagner said he will continue to advocate for safe cities within District 3, while maintaining efforts to develop the veterans cemetery in Gypsum Canyon.

If re-elected, Wagner said he would work to address the fentanyl crisis and continue to advocate for the mental health of veterans, according to his candidate statement.

"Many Third District cities now rank among California's ten safest. My office eliminated rape kit backlogs and created "safe zones" for e-commerce and child custody transfers. By partnering with elected leaders of both parties, I am working to reduce the scourges of fentanyl poisonings and veteran suicides. My public safety record earned the endorsement of Sheriff Don Barnes."

The 2024 Primary Election will be held on March 5.



DR. JERRY MANDEL, IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE PRESIDENT TO STEP DOWN

ONE OF ORANGE COUNTY'S MOST RECOGNIZED LEADERS IN PERFORMING ARTS HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL VACATE HIS ROLE AS PRESIDENT OF THE IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE AT THE END OF DECEMBER.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

After more than two decades as an exemplary leader in Orange County performing arts, Dr. Jerry Mandel, President of the Irvine Barclay Theatre, has announced he will step down from his role on Sunday, Dec. 31.

Mandel, a professional jazz musician, has been a stalwart in the world of performing arts in Orange County and is most recently credited for finding solutions for the Irvine-based community theater to withstand the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bob Romney, Irvine Barclay Chairman, had nothing but praise for the work that Mandel has done to support performing arts in Orange County.

"Jerry dedicated his career to elevating performing arts and education throughout Orange County," Romney said. "He changed the face of philanthropic support for the performing arts during his time leading Segerstrom Center for the Arts, and then as President of the Barclay."

Now 83, Mandel will continue to support the Barclay in an advisory role as President Emeritus for the theater. Mandel also plans to serve as the Vice Chair

of Barclay Board of Directors, Capital Campaigns.

Before his 26 years working in the Orange County performing arts, Mandel built a stellar reputation over a 20-year career in higher education. Working locally at the University of California, Irvine, Mandel was a senior academic administrator and the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement at UC Irvine.

In a statement regarding his change in leadership, Mandel was pleased to announce that he would be returning to a role in higher education at UC Irvine.

"I have been blessed to have had a wonderful career," Mandel said. "As former President of the now Segerstrom Center for The Arts, I had the joy of completing a world-class concert hall. As President of Barclay, I was fortunate to see the theater emerge and evolve into one of Orange County's premier venues. Now, I am pleased to announce that I will be returning to my roots at UC Irvine where it all began."

With Mandel's change of tempo, Dr. Craig Springer, who has served as Executive Vice President of the Irvine Barclay Theatre since 2021, has agreed to take on the role of President beginning on Jan. 1, 2024.

In his tenure as Executive Vice President, Springer has led programming and operational management along with marketing and Barclay fundraising events.

Before his role at the Barclay, Springer held roles in higher education, working as a professor at the University of Southern California, where he taught marketing and fundraising courses at USC's School of Theater.

While Mandel may shift into the background at the Barclay Theatre, he will be close to the music. Irvine locals will be happy to know that the jazz musician plans to maintain weekly performances around town, including at Bayside and Bistango, along with special appearances at Campus Jax, The Drake and Lugano Privé.



DR. JERRY MANDEL, IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE PRESIDENT.
PHOTO: DOUG GIFFORD

ENTERTAINMENT

DAN AYKROYD

CRACKING THE CREATIVITY CODE

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



DAN AYKROYD AT THE MAGIC CASTLE. PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING

It was in the gonzo-era of the '70s that we first came to know a skinny young comedian from Canada by the name of Dan Aykroyd. It was the golden age of standup comedy, when nothing was taboo. Everybody and everything was fair game. If we

weren't at an underground comedy club watching Robin Williams go off the rails, we were getting high around the record player, listening to Steve Martin Get Small on vinyl.

The Second City improvisation comedy troupe brought its talents from both



ARTIST RISK ROCK, LEFT, AND DAN AYKROYD. PHOTO BY DUSTIN DOWNING



ARTIST SKULL PHOTO BY DUSTIN DOWNING

its original Chicago and its Toronto companies together with L.A.'s the Groundlings in 1975 and provided many of the performers who made up the Saturday Night Live ensemble. It included Aykroyd, Chevy Chase, Laraine Newman, Garrett Morris and other Not Ready for Primetime Players that have since passed on to the great Friar's Club in the sky, like Gilda Radner and John Belushi. The show, whose first host was standup royalty George Carlin, forever changed the landscape of comedy and late night television.

"Saturday Night Live has been consistent with cultural iconography from then until now," Aykroyd recently told L.A. Weekly over card tricks at the Magic Castle. "They're still doing a great job. The writers and the cast are strong. It's as vibrant and as relevant as ever."

One of Aykroyd's most classic and defiant skits at the time that has gone down in SNL history, was taking on the holiness of culinary goddess Julia Child in the hysterical French Chef episode. It involved lots of liver and a kitchen knife wound resulting in a fountain of gushing blood that was orchestrated by comedian and former Minnesota senator Al Franken from underneath the table.

"Everybody loved Julia Child and she was a phenomenon at the time," says Aykroyd. "They wrote that and I looked at it thinking it was just a cheap blood joke. But I did it and looked just like my

mother when I was doing it. But everybody loved it, including Julia. My aunt was Helene Gougeon, a culinary writer and food columnist in Montreal. She had her own radio show, cooking show and a shop that brought the first cuisinart to Canada and she knew Julia very well. It was a beautiful connection."

But as a creative force, the award-winning writer, producer and actor says that comedy is a serious business that has its own pros and cons.

"Comedy is one of the most creative arts," he says. "The pros are that you get instant gratification and creative fulfillment from a laugh and satisfaction from an audience. The cons are you are completely rejected on a lot of projects and you have to claw your way back to the top from the bottom every time. I've had scripts and ideas rejected and concepts I pitched to directors during a movie that have been shut down, as well as scenes at SNL that didn't work — many, many times. Being in a creative field, not everybody is going to love what you're doing at all times and you have to take those risks. But they are healthy risks to take."

Forty years ago he took a risk that paid off in spades, when he teamed up as actor and screenwriter with fellow SNL alumnus Bill Murray along with Harold Ramis, Rick Moranis, Ernie Hudson and Annie Potts in Ghostbusters. To celebrate the anniversary, Ghostbusters: Frozen



CRYSTAL HEAD GHOSTBUSTERS COCKTAIL STAY PUFT COCKTAIL



CRYSTAL HEAD GHOSTBUSTERS COCKTAIL SLIMER'S REVENGE COCKTAIL

Empire, will come out exclusively in theaters on March 29, 2004 with Aykroyd, Murray, Potts and Hudson returning to the franchise. They will be joined by People's Sexiest Man Alive Paul Rudd.

The sequel will continue the Spengler family's story and bring the series back to familiar locations. It will see the team facing their biggest challenge yet, when New York City suddenly gets plunged into a new ice age as a supernatural artifact unleashes the "death chill," which has the power to literally frighten people to a frigid death.

When he's not busting ghosts or unearthing *The Unbelievable* in a new nonfiction series on the History Channel, the seemingly ageless Aykroyd's truest passion when it comes to spirits is Crystal Head Vodka, which he co-founded in 2008 with John Alexander, a renowned American artist and the designer of the liquor's unique skull bottle.

The brand routinely partners with artists and encourages the community to express creativity in new mediums, most recently with American graffiti artist Risk Rock, and 50 other renowned creatives around the world to paint bottles donated by Crystal Head Vodka. The one-of-a-kind personalized bottles were on display at a recent event hosted by Aykroyd at the legendary Magic Castle in Hollywood, as well as at Rock's Compound Contemporary gallery in Thousand Oaks.

Once again a pioneer in a liquor landscape littered with celebrity names, Aykroyd was the first to set up the company that originally imported Patron tequila into Canada. It was his love for tequila that inspired him to create Onyx, a unique agave-based vodka.

"Dan Aykroyd was one of the original celebrities who started a liquor brand," entertaining expert and co-host of the event Paul Zahn told L.A. Weekly. "Something that is great about Dan is he is very serious about the quality of his Crystal Head Vodka and its different line extensions, but also has a sense of humor about the booze business. Exactly what one would expect from a comic legend with an enterprising side."

Crystal Head Vodka uses water from Newfoundland, Canada, to create a pure, additive-free, ultra-premium

vodka. It is filtered through layers of Herkimer Diamonds and is made from locally sourced Canadian corn, Aurora, crafted from English wheat, and Onyx, crafted with Blue Weber Agave sourced from a single farm in Mexico and is sold in more than 75 countries around the world.

"Bar chefs love us all over the world and enjoy working with our virgin product as a canvas for their creations," says Aykroyd, whose current favorite LA bar is Mama Shelter. "We figured the best thing to sell was pure, unadulterated vodka with no added oils in a vessel like the skull, which is associated with the legends of powers of positivity in the Navajo, Aztec and Mayan communities. The bottles come in black, clear, mirrored, spatter/rainbow for Pride Month in June and an upcoming vessel in cobalt blue.

"When you start with nothing, you have to be creative or you'll end up with nothing," said Aykroyd while sipping on a paloma in the hallowed halls of the Magic Castle.

In the celebration of spirits and 40 years of Ghostbusters, Crystal Head Vodka shared its cocktail recipes for Stay Puft and Slimer's Revenge with us:

Stay Puft

2 oz. / 60 ml Crystal Head Vodka
1 tsp / 5 ml Marshmallow Syrup
4 Scoops of Vanilla Ice Cream
1 Marshmallow
Sprinkle of Sea Salt

Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend. Pour into a glass. Garnish with a marshmallow and a sprinkle of sea salt.

Slimer's Revenge

2 oz. / 60 ml Crystal Head Onyx
1 1/2 oz. / 44 ml Pineapple Juice
3/4 oz. / 22 ml Lemon Juice
3/4 oz. / 22 ml Honey Simple Syrup
1 tsp. / 5 ml Matcha Powder
Fresh Mint Sprig

Directions:

Combine all ingredients into a cocktail shaker with ice and shake. Strain over ice in a Collins glass. Garnish with a fresh mint sprig.

NEWS

IRVINE PREPPING FOR INTERIM MUSIC VENUE AT GREAT PARK

IRVINE WILL MOVE FORWARD WITH A TEMPORARY MUSIC VENUE BUT WILL WAIT FOR MORE DIRECTION FROM THE GREAT PARK DIRECTORS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



PHOTO: DESI MENDOZA/UNSPLASH

Despite the closure of Irvine's FivePoint Amphitheatre in October, the Great Park Board of Directors, on Tuesday, Nov. 28, unanimously approved preliminary details for a temporary music venue at the Great Park.

More detailed plans for the interim

venue will come back to the Board of Directors in January. Until then, Irvine leaders have agreed to partner with the Pacific Symphony as the resident orchestra for the temporary venue and will accept a \$600,000 donation from FivePoint. In exchange, the Pacific Symphony has requested a total of five

shows over the summer months, including the Fourth of July.

While leaders in Irvine expect a permanent amphitheater at Great Park to be operational by 2027, the interim solution would allow the city to host live musical performances at a temporary venue by next summer. The temporary

venue would be in operation through the summer 2026 concert season.

In terms of placement, Pete Carmichael, Great Park Executive Director, explained that to mitigate noise complaints from the surrounding neighborhoods, the stage will be facing away from residential areas.

"The stage points to the northeast, away from the closest residential neighborhood, Truvada," Carmichael explained.

In terms of cost over three years, Carmichael explained that staff projected the venue's operational cost could range between \$1 million - \$3 million in total subsidy. In the event costs surpass \$3 million, the funds would be subsidized from the Great Park fund.

"We were looking at a business model where we recover as much of the cost as we can from ticket sales, merchandise, food and beverage. The initial look shows that over the three years, we could get pretty close to breaking even," Carmichael explained.

The yet-to-be-constructed venue will host approximately 6,000 - 8,000 seats and is set to be located on the North Lawn of the Great Park. There are plans to enlist the assistance of a third-party operator, which would manage the facility's calendar. Promoters would be in charge of booking and promoting acts at the venue.

While the Board of Directors unanimously supported the idea of a temporary music venue in the Great Park, Chairman Mike Carroll suggested a substitute motion that he hoped would ease the impact on development there.

Specifically, Carroll explained that with the execution of Irvine's \$1 billion Great Park Framework Plan and the Orange County Department of Transportation's \$180 million Orange County Maintenance Facility in the area, residents in the area – specifically in the Truvada community – could be overwhelmed with development.

"This does feel like it's going perhaps a little bit too fast. The idea that maybe we go a little bit slower on something doesn't seem to me to be the worst thing in the world," he explained. "I think I'm becoming more and more acutely concerned over the footprint of this happening."

THREE UPCOMING PROJECTS TO BRING RETAIL CENTER, 766 HOMES TO GREAT PARK

GREAT PARK RESIDENTS VOICE FRUSTRATIONS OVER LACK OF RETAIL AND OVERCROWDING IN GREAT PARK NEIGHBORHOODS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



GREAT PARK RETAIL RENDERING. COURTESY ALMQUIST

The Irvine Planning Commission recently approved three separate projects that will create 766 new homes and bring a 77,000-square-foot retail center to the Great Park Neighborhoods.

Construction is expected to begin later this year but residents have already challenged aspects of development.

On Thursday, Nov. 2, the Planning Commission unanimously approved a 15-acre, 82-unit,

single-family residential project at Cadence Park.

Plans for the project will utilize the ARDA site, which is located inside Dis-

trict 4. The project's location is expected to be bounded by Irvine Boulevard to the west, Cultivate to the south and north of Pusan.

However, despite the project's unanimous approval from the commission, several residents opposed the project, claiming that the area was already overcrowded.

Great Park resident Phillip Pham filed an appeal against the project. In his appeal, filed a day after the commission approved the Great Park retail center, on November 17, Pham urged the Irvine City Council to reverse the Planning Commission's vote.

In his arguments, Pham said that the 82-unit residential project would be inconsistent with the neighborhood design, and would significantly degrade the quality of life within Irvine.

Later, on Tuesday, Dec. 12, after a public hearing, the Irvine City Council denied Pham's appeal in a 4-0 vote, confirming the commission's decision.

In response to complaints of overcrowding from residents during the commission's first meeting in November, Planning Commissioner Branda Lin asked if the commission could make alterations to the Cadence Park project.

"We did receive a lot of public comments stating, 'we can't handle any more homes in the Great Park Neighborhoods – were impacted already,'" Lin said. "In terms of what's to come, is there anything we on the planning commission can do? Can we, for instance – let's say we wanted mixed-use versus single-family homes, could we deny this application based on that?"

Eric Tolles, Assistant City Manager for the Great Park, explained that the planning commission had no control over the proposed development. Adding that the land is part of a development agreement between Irvine and FivePoint that was established in 2011.

At the crux of the development agreement, Irvine received the land for the Great Park, and in return, the city would allow FivePoint to build a maximum of 10,556 residential units within the city's master plan.

"A key fundamental benefit to the city, from the original development agreement is the Great Park. That, over 1,000 acres of land that came to the city," Tolles explained. "The Navy originally sold that land to Heritage Fields, and the city had no ownership of the land."

The commission continued a busy November by approving a proposed 77,000-square-foot retail development within the Great Park.

On Thursday, Nov. 16, at the request of developer FivePoint, the commission unanimously approved two conditional-use permits for a pair of drive-thru restaurants, along with an 11-acre master plan concept for a retail center.

The project is slated to be located in District 1, south of Great Park Boulevard, east of Beacon, and to the north

and west of the Great Park, according to a staff report. The staff report also indicated that since 2013, both the City of Irvine and FivePoint have received feedback from Great Park residents who have complained about the lack of retail and grocery options near their homes.

While the project is still pending council approval, conceptual plans for retail development include two different plans for an eight-building design. The conceptual design of the Great Park retail project was created by development and investment firm Almquist and includes space for restaurants, a grocery or liquor store, and space for a brewery or taproom.

Dan Almquist, Founding Principal and Chief Executive Officer of Almquist, explained that he understood the frustrations of residents over the lack of retail in the area. He also added that the project was currently being accelerated and anticipated beginning construction in Late 2024.

"I've never gone this fast on a project. Right now, our target is early fall of next year to break ground on this," he said. I think this project will take between 15 and 18 months to build. So that would put us in the first quarter of 2026."

The 82-unit Cadence Park project will not be the only project on FivePoint's radar in 2024.

Most recently, on Thursday, Dec. 7, the commission unanimously approved a 61-acre project that will give the green light to FivePoint for the construction of 684 attached and detached condominium units.

A staff report indicated that the project would be situated on undeveloped land west of Bosque, south of Carmine, north of Hornet and east of Ridge Valley.

While the Irvine City Council will need to weigh in on final approval for the trifecta of projects centered around the Great Park, Irvine City Manager Oliver Chi said he expects the retail project to be completed before the Cadence Park units are occupied.

"The retail project is currently scheduled to be under construction mid-part of 2024," he said. "Likely, the retail center would be constructed and open before all of the 82 units are sold and moved in, but the timelines are roughly similar."

NEWS

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAN WILL BEGIN WITH IRVINE CITY HALL

LEADERS IN IRVINE TOOK STEPS TO IMPLEMENT A BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BUT OPTED TO CONDUCT MORE RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH BEFORE WIDESPREAD IMPLEMENTATION.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



PHOTO: MEIR ROTH/PEXELS

In a 4-1 vote, on Tuesday, Nov. 28, the Irvine City Council approved aspects of a proposed citywide waste ordinance that calls for a ban on single-use plastics and polystyrene items.

Despite the approval, leaders in Irvine opted to pause on immediate citywide implementation and directed staff to perform more research and community outreach. However, the council agreed to immediately eliminate single-use plastic and polystyrene – commonly known as Styrofoam – items from use at city operations and city-sponsored events.

Once enacted citywide, Irvine's single-

use plastic ban could become the most far-reaching in the state. In terms of prohibited items, the ban aims at many single-use plastic items, including cups, water bottles, straws and utensils. The ordinance will also include single-use items containing intentionally added chemical classes known as ortho-phthalates, bisphenols, and PFAS.

Instead, the city of Irvine is encouraging businesses that utilize single-use items to prepare for a shift in behavior by transitioning to items that are 100% compostable or recyclable.

However, the council remained cau-

tious about abruptly implementing such impactful measures. In terms of implementation, a staff report indicated that a yearslong “phased roll-out” schedule would be utilized, beginning in 2024.

Until then, the council members directed city staff to refine the scope of the ban and prepare a cost-impact analysis for the businesses and industries impacted once the ordinance takes effect.

Irvine Council member Mike Carroll voted against the ban, emphasizing he felt that the city had not performed adequate, unbiased outreach within the community to get a realistic concept of how businesses or the public would be impacted.

Additionally, Carroll pointed to the ongoing development of state legislation focused on regulating the plastic production industry could guide Irvine in implementing similar laws.

Specifically, Carroll said, SB 54, California's Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act, signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2022, extends responsibility to plastic producers to create fully recyclable or compostable packaging or plastic foodware by 2032.

“I will support sending this entire thing back to the Sustainability Commission to look at SB54. And to take a months-long process looking through it carefully and determining what we need to do – what's practical, and quite frankly, doing a deep dive on SB54, including the important exemption on recyclable plastics,” Carroll said.

SB 54, according to CalRecycle, aims to cut the use of single-use plastic by 25% and recycle 65% of single-use packaging and food ware within the next decade.

Carroll added that he thought the council was moving too fast considering the widespread implications related to SB 54.

“My understanding is there's going to be huge lists of materials that manufacturers are going to have to grapple with this spring,” he said. “We can let the state do its job, and be the vanguard on this issue, rather than some disjointed effort here in Irvine.”

Councilmember Dr. Kathleen Treseder, who is a PhD and the Howard A. Schneiderman Endowed Chair in the School of Biological Sciences at UC Irvine, explained that she originally brought this plastic ban to the council in July, after receiving feedback from her students at UC Irvine.

Treseder, who voted to adopt the ordinance, said that the issue of plastic pollution is an issue of top concern for students.

“I asked [students] year after year – what is the environmental issue that they are concerned most about? And it is by far plastics – even more than climate change, and they're very worried about climate change.”

Yet, from Treseder's perspective, the problem with plastics begins with the petroleum industry.

“The reason that we have a single-use plastic issue is because we have the petroleum industry. They have a product they need to sell – petroleum. They see the writing on the wall, and they know that they're not going to be able to sell gasoline for very much longer. So they're looking for new markets. And the new big market is plastics,” she said.

Treseder also said that the usage of non-recyclable, single-use plastic is becoming more common.

“They've been doing ‘plasticization,’ where they push for things to be made out of plastic that were never made of plastic before – and don't necessarily need to be made out of plastic. It's a way for them to sell their product. So reusable plastic, I don't have a problem with, it's the single-use plastic where it's used for a day or a moment and then thrown away,” she said. “That plastic lasts forever.”