

B Local

'CAT TAX' PROPOSAL IRKS TWO ON COUNCIL

San Diego's auditor suggests vaccination and licensing requirements, costing about \$25

CRAIG GUSTAFSON • U-T

SAN DIEGO

A proposal that would require cat owners in San Diego to vaccinate their feline companions for rabies and pay the city a one-time licensing fee — a plan critics have dubbed a “cat tax” — is on its way to the City Council for consideration. The requirement was one

of 10 recommendations stemming from a report by City Auditor Eduardo Luna that found several problems with the contract the city has with the county to provide animal services. The most glaring finding is that city residents are essentially subsidizing the animal service costs in other county jurisdictions by roughly \$630,000 annually because costs are distributed

based on population rather than actual usage. The recommendation to require cats to be registered and vaccinated at an average cost of about \$25 was based on public-safety concerns. It would have generated about \$500,000 in additional revenue above costs for the city if it had been in place during the past three years, assuming about 5

percent of San Diego's estimated 373,000 cats were licensed annually.

City Councilman Carl DeMaio, a mayoral candidate who held a news conference Monday with his Bengal cat Ace, said there is no justification to levy a new tax on cat owners.

“This cat tax is not driven by a legitimate need but in-
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DIANE BELL

Our beloved Chicken earns perch in shrine

The San Diego Chicken, aka Ted Giannoulas, truly has something to cluck about. Giannoulas will gain immortality Sunday when he is inducted into the Baseball Reliquary's Shrine of the Eternals. The Reliquary honors the game's offbeat heroes and trailblazers, and has a traveling museum of unusual artifacts.

The group called Giannoulas, who “hatched” the chicken in 1974, “one of baseball's greatest entertainers,” noting that fans came to see the Chicken's parodying performances as much as the game — “maybe more.”

The gig started when, as an SDSU student, Giannoulas took a \$2-an-hour job wearing a chicken suit to promote KGB radio. Eight years later, his photo was on a Donruss baseball card, says local baseball author Andy Strasberg, who will introduce Giannoulas on Sunday in Pasadena. The late one-armed outfielder Pete Gray and base-stealing phenom Maury Wills also will be inducted.

Discount rate: James Bie, always on the lookout for a bargain, noticed a sign advertising 44-cent postage stamps as he sidled his cart up to a Costco cashier.

“Do you really sell stamps here?” he asked. The cashier told him yes, but he had to buy 100 at a time.

Bie, flashing a grin, asked if Costco offered a discount. To his surprise, she said, “Yes, a quarter off.”

After mentally computing the 25 percent discount, he decided that, while not currently in need of 100 stamps, saving \$11 was too good a deal to pass up. He told her to add the stamps to his bill.

It wasn't until he reviewed his receipt at home that Bie realized the price of the stamps was not reduced by 25 percent. It was, just like she had said, a quarter off — \$43.75.

Party city: Actress Lisa Rinna celebrated her birthday here last weekend. Rinna, who turned 48 on Monday, was joined by her actor husband, Harry Hamlin, and their two daughters. They checked into a Rock Star suite at the Hard Rock Hotel on Saturday and dined there at Nobu.

Her birthday cake? A toasted coconut and passion fruit cream confection topped with buttercream. They worked off the calories touring the zoo and SeaWorld.

Sweet proposal: Area high school students who attended the San Diego Rotary's annual Camp Enterprise crafted business plans, many involving innovative computer programs.

In the nonprofit sector, however, students proposed the Candy Conundrum, offering a choice of candy that is good for your health and candy that is bad for you. Either way, they then made an interesting choice of imaginary benefactor: The American Diabetes Society.

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A sea bass fingerling is shown to Jane Lubchenco of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on her tour of a Carlsbad fish farm run by Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute. JOHN R. MCCUTCHEM • U-T PHOTOS

FISH FARM HELP PLEDGED BY FEDERAL OCEANS CHIEF

In visit to Carlsbad hatchery, administrator announces initiative to boost aquaculture

MIKE LEE • U-T

CARLSBAD

The leader of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration visited Carlsbad on Monday to launch a national initiative for creating jobs and increasing seafood production by fostering public-private partnerships in fish farming.

Agency officials said the so-called Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative will support projects that show promise for creating jobs while maintaining environmental protections.

It's a tricky balance for NOAA, which didn't announce any money for the project and faces opposition from some environmental groups that oppose aquaculture as a source of ocean pollution.

NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco is in San Diego this week for an international convention about managing tuna and other far-ranging species. On Monday, she toured a fish farm in Carlsbad that is run by the nonprofit Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute to augment the wild population of white sea bass.

“This facility really shows what potential exists in expanding sustainable marine aquaculture in the U.S.”
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Lubchenco discusses aquaculture with Don Kent, president and chief executive of the nonprofit Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute.

“This facility really shows what potential exists in expanding sustainable marine aquaculture in the U.S.” Jane Lubchenco • NOAA

INVESTIGATORS: ZOO FIRE WAS ARSON

Damage at Panda Shop totals \$700,000; nearby animals aren't affected

DEBBI BAKER • U-T

BALBOA PARK

An early morning fire at the San Diego Zoo that destroyed a gift shop near the giant-panda exhibit and caused \$700,000 in damage was deliberately set, fire investigators said Monday.

The blaze at the Panda Shop next to the Canyon Cafe was reported at 1:49 a.m. by a zoo security guard, said Maurice Luque, the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department's spokesman.

The guard was doing a routine check of the canyon area when he smelled smoke and saw flames coming from the store, zoo officials said.

When firefighters arrived, they found the one-story, 1,200-square-foot shop with a wood exterior and a tin roof fully engulfed in flames, Luque said.

The fire was extinguished in about 15 minutes, he said. Investigators who stayed at the scene through the night determined that the fire was arson. The method used to start the fire was



Arson is suspected in the blaze that destroyed the Panda Shop at the San Diego Zoo early Monday. PEGGY PEATTIE • U-T

not made public.

Luque said the stand-alone shop was destroyed, but no other structures were damaged. Investigators estimated the damage at \$500,000 to the structure and \$200,000 to the contents.

The store sits about 50 yards from the giant-panda enclosure. Zoo spokeswoman Christina Simmons said that zookeepers checked on the animals and that they “didn't seem to be aware that anything was going on.” Other

animals in the surrounding area were also checked and none was affected, Simmons said.

The zoo was open for business Monday, though the area around the shop and cafe was closed, she said.

The zoo issued a statement of gratitude to the firefighters “whose expertise and hard work helped put out the blaze so quickly.”

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COUNTY DISTRICT MAP MAY BE PUT ON HOLD

ACLU says selected plan dilutes voting power of minorities; alternative proposed

CHRISTOPHER CADELAGO U-T

San Diego County officials today will recommend delaying a vote on new supervisor district boundaries pending a legal analysis of objections and an alternative plan presented by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Supervisors were scheduled to adopt a map created by a board-appointed advisory committee that divides the county's nearly 3.1 million residents into five districts with about 619,000 people each. The map was selected from three presented to the board last month.

County Counsel Tom Montgomery said all three proposals satisfied requirements of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Lawyers with the ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties contend the proposals would dilute minority voting power, a violation of the federal law.

All five supervisors are white Republicans who have served together since 1995.

“Historically, and unfortunately to the present day, district lines were used to either fracture or ‘crack’ concentrations of minority communities into multiple districts so that they could not constitute a majority in one district,” the ACLU's Lori Shellenberger wrote in a memo to the board.

“Or district lines were used to stack majority voters into a district with a
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WOUNDED GIRL IN HOSPITAL AN EXTRA DAY

Gunshot victim has fever; target also convalescing

DEBBI BAKER • U-T

SAN DIEGO

A 7-year-old girl who was shot and wounded in front of her Emerald Hills home in a weekend gang-related shooting was expected to spend another day in the hospital, her family said Monday.

Laura Castelo, a first-grader at Johnson Elementary School, was shot in the leg Saturday afternoon and has been recovering at Rady Children's Hospital.

She was expected to come home Monday, but a slight fever kept her in the hospital for at least one more day, said her sister Alexandra Castelo, 15.

Laura, the youngest of three sisters, was hit by a bullet just before 2 p.m. while walking one of her dogs in front of her house on 56th Street at Roswell Street in southeastern
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THE SAN DIEGO BOAT CRASH TAKING CENTER STAGE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. TODAY AT 5