

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

IMMIGRATION REFORM: IT'S A LOT LIKE GROUNDHOG DAY

The situation at the U.S.-Mexico border feels a lot like Groundhog Day, minus Punxsutawney Phil. Groundhog Day was celebrated at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pa., on Wednesday. Phil left his burrow early that morning, as usual, to look for his shadow.

In case you missed it, Phil saw his shadow, which means six more weeks of winter. If one thing is true about this 136-year-old ritual, it's this: Nobody gives poor Phil another thought for the next 364 days, once his prediction is made.

And so it goes at the border. Last September, photos and video surfaced of agents on horseback swinging long reins near Haitian migrants who had crossed the border near Del Rio, Texas. A group of 15,000 had amassed under the Del Rio international bridge, living in makeshift huts while awaiting their turn to be processed. The oppressive conditions were made worse by the Texas heat, with temperatures above 100 degrees on consecutive days.

As a country, we were outraged. The incident drew swift condemnation from senior officials in President Joe Biden's administration, who pledged to investigate it in "days, not weeks." But the Department of Homeland Security took a pass, referring the incident to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Professional Responsibility. It hasn't been resolved. And we've moved on.

Still, the numbers of undocumented migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border continues to grow. According to the Border Report, U.S. authorities stopped 496,148 migrants in the last quarter of 2021, a 137 percent increase over the same period in 2020. More than 2 million migrants were apprehended or turned themselves in last year.

Historically, most migrants attempting to cross have come from Mexico or the Northern Triangle countries of Latin America — Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. But last month, the border filled with people whose journeys were much longer: from places like

Venezuela, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and India.

The upswing in border activity has occurred because of — or despite — U.S. immigration policy, depending on your views. When Biden was on the campaign trail, he promised to eliminate the Migrant Protection Protocols, better known as "Remain in Mexico." The policy was first implemented by former President Donald Trump; it requires asylum seekers arriving at the border to wait in Mexico for their hearings in U.S. immigration court.

While Biden fulfilled his promise, it was short-lived. Remain in Mexico was reinstated in December, following a court order, but with improvements like greater access to legal resources. Still, the administration has asked the Supreme Court to allow it to terminate the policy. A decision is expected by the end of June.

Expulsions from the U.S. have been hastened by Title 42, a 75-year-old public health law that's become pandemic-era policy. Title 42 gives authorities the power to summarily oust migrants on health grounds without

providing them their legally mandated opportunity to seek protection here. Just last week, the Department of Homeland Security announced it would begin returning Venezuelans to Colombia if they had previously resettled in that country, citing Title 42.

Even as policies come and go (and come again), we're no closer to solving the immigration problem. It doesn't matter whether a Democrat or Republican is in the White House. We need new and different approaches, instead of relying on enforcement to effect change. It hasn't worked yet.

Maybe we can start by recognizing the humanity in others and treating them with dignity.

We can follow the example of Sister Norma Pimintel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. In 2014, Pimintel found her calling: providing aid to unaccompanied migrant children and families at the border. Since then, her organization has helped more than 150,000 people.

Pimintel is careful not to criticize U.S. immigration policy.

Instead, she talks about the importance of changing the way we think about and treat people who are so desperate to come to our country. After all, Pimintel says, we are all part of the same human family.

She points to negative rhetoric as the source of our fear-based thinking. We build internal walls to keep ourselves safe. And with walls in place, it's easy not to care. Instead, Pimintel insists, we need to allow ourselves to get close enough so we can feel what migrants are feeling. The caring will follow.

Unlike Punxsutawney Phil, we can't burrow away. Migrants will continue to come to our country from all corners of the globe, seeking economic opportunity and safety.

Above all, we need to remember: It's not about policy. It's about people.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncronline.com.

PROJECT

FROM B1 tion and along one of the city's busiest Breeze bus lines.

"You can't get any closer to transit than that," project representative William Morrison said Friday. "It's consistent with the city's Smart and Sustainable Corridors Program and its Climate Action Plan."

Both documents advocate for a planning policy often called "smart growth." It suggests building higher density housing in older neighborhoods near public transit to create walkable communities, reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

But not everybody sees the Ocean Creek project as smart growth. An online petition requesting the city's denial had more than 200 signatures by Friday.

"This project will cause significant traffic and safety impacts to the existing Fire Mountain community," states the petition placed on Change.org by Oceanside resident Jennifer Meyerderks.

"Fire Mountain has been a respected, safe, friendly neighborhood for over a century," the petition states. "Our safety is an issue, and will become a bigger issue with increased traffic. Fire Mountain residents object to the vast increase in traffic, congestion, pollution, noise, and speeding through our peaceful neighborhood with this new high-density development."

The developers are aware of those concerns and are working with the city to address them, Morrison said. Additional studies are under way of nearby intersections and changes that better accommodate the additional traffic.

"We believe that opening up South Oceanside Boulevard will alleviate existing issues and offer a route away from Fire Mountain," he said. The developer also is working with the city to add a left-turn pocket from Crouch Street onto South Oceanside Boulevard.

High-density housing planned for Oceanside Boulevard

Ocean Creek would have 295 apartments and 3,000 square feet of commercial space next to the Crouch Street Sprinter Station.



Source: OpenStreetMap

MICHELLE GUERRERO U-T

Construction is expected to begin by the end of 2023 and the first units could open in 2025, Morrison said. So far no Planning Commission or City Council hearings have been scheduled for the project, though the developer has been meeting with city planners and neighborhood residents.

The apartments will range from 591 to 1,301 square feet and have one, two or three bedrooms. Some will be reserved for low-income residents, but the number has not been determined yet, he said.

Plans include 10,000 square feet of interior space for conference rooms, a game room, a gym, dog spa and bike cafe, along with a total of 478 parking spaces, of which 299 would be covered in carports or garages. Open space will include a courtyard, pool, spa and barbecue area.

Thomas D. Weese, a trustee for the Robert A. Weese family trust, owns the property, according to documents on file with the city Planning Department. The developer is JPI Development Co. of San Diego, and the architect is Architectural Design Col-

laborative of Laguna Hills.

Oceanside has approved a number of higher-density residential projects in recent years. The trend is encouraged by state laws that require incentives for developers who include low-income housing and build infill projects close to public transit.

Last month, the Oceanside City Council voted 3-2 to approve a single eight-story building with 115 studio apartments and 64 hotel rooms on 1/3-acre gated parking lot at the corner of Seagaze Drive and Nevada Street.

Traffic and parking issues led the list of concerns raised by neighborhood residents, nearly all of whom objected to the height and density of the building. However, the project will include 12 apartments reserved for low-income occupants, which allows it to waive some of the local limits on things like parking and building heights.

Mayor Esther Sanchez and Councilmember Kori Jensen opposed the Seagaze project. But the council majority said the project meets

the state's requirements for high-density housing, and they had no choice but to approve it or face the possibility of a lawsuit.

In October, the city's Planning Commission approved a four-story, 54-unit condo building on South Coast Highway, despite objections from neighborhood residents, also citing concern about state housing laws.

State law also appears to have trumped the opposition to the 585-home North River Farms project proposed for 177 acres in Oceanside's agricultural community of South Morrow Hills.

North River Farms would place up to 15 homes per acre, along with a hotel, retail shops and offices, on its Village Core area in what is now farmland. Other parts of the project would be less dense, with single-family homes, community gardens and space preserved for native habitat.

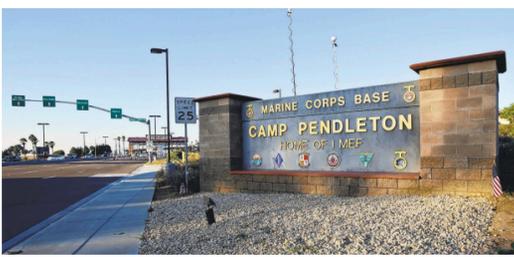
Oceanside voters overturned the City Council's approval of North River Farms with a ballot referendum in November 2020. However, the developer, Integral Communities, filed suit and a judge ruled that the referendum was "preempted" by state Government Code 66300, which the Legislature passed in 2019 to maximize housing development.

A separate case against North River Farms, filed by the nonprofit Preserve Calavera over environmental issues, remains undecided and so far construction has not begun.

In a San Diego court case, a judge ruled last month that the luxury 525 Olive building going up in Bankers Hill overlooking Balboa Park is allowed to be 25 percent taller than the city's building height limit because the structure includes 18 subsidized apartments for low-income residents.

Community groups who sued the developer said the 20-story building would block their views, was too close to the street, cast shadows over the neighborhood and didn't fit well with the community.

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AP FILE

A Marine Corps Reserve spokesperson confirmed that Cpl. Victor Krvaric is under investigation.

RESERVIST

FROM B1 to our core values."

Military members are prohibited from participating in extremist organizations and the Pentagon has increased efforts to root out extremism in its ranks in the wake of the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection.

Krvaric did not respond Tuesday to a text message sent to a number associated with him. When a Union-Tribune reporter called Wednesday morning, a young man answered, refused to identify himself and hung up. "Have a nice day," the man said.

Krvaric joined the Marines in July 2018 and is currently assigned to the Selected Marine Corps Reserve as a light-armored-vehicle Marine. He's assigned to the 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion at Camp Pendleton, the Marines said.

According to the SPLC, Patriot Front was founded in the wake of the deadly 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Va., after breaking off from neo-Nazi group Vanguard America. Its founder, Thomas Rousseau, led Vanguard America members at the rally. A man photographed holding a Vanguard America shield, James Fields Jr., went on to drive his car into a crowd of anti-racist protesters, killing one. In 2019, Fields was convicted of murder and federal hate crimes and sentenced to life in prison. The group denied Fields was a member.

In January, activists from the reporting collective Unicorn Riot published more than 400 gigabytes of leaked Patriot Front communications.

"Ostensibly private, unedited videos and direct messages reveal a campaign to organize acts of racial hatred while indoctrinating teenagers into national socialism (Nazism)," Unicorn Riot said in a story announcing the leak. The U-T was unable to independently confirm the authenticity of the documents. Thomas Rousseau, the leader of Patriot Front, confirmed in a podcast on Jan. 27 that the organization was hacked.

In a membership interview report, "Interviewee 441515" told the hate group he believed in antisemitic conspiracy theories and that non-Europeans shouldn't be allowed in the U.S. unless they were "doctors" or a "net positive" to the economy.

The applicant discussed the Marine Corps during his interview, according to the leaked documents, saying he had a tumultuous experience, including a fight at a Marine Corps ball. He also told Patriot Front that he "found out about Jews" after joining the Corps.

The applicant told the group he was currently working as a guard with the Department of Homeland Security, handling inmate check-ins. According to his LinkedIn account, Victor

Krvaric works for contractor Stratus Security Management, handling detainees for the Department of Homeland Security.

The applicant also told the group he currently works for his father's financial practice. Tony Krvaric, the former chairman of the county Republican Party and Victor Krvaric's father, is the president and CEO of Krvaric Capital & Risk Management. Victor Krvaric is listed on the company's website as a client service associate.

Tony Krvaric did not respond to a request for comment. Homeland Security and the contracting company did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

The interviewee told the group he was 21 years old and living in San Diego, and said he was a first-generation immigrant and that both of his parents were from Sweden. Tony Krvaric was born and raised in Sweden before immigrating to the U.S. in 1992, he previously told Voice of San Diego.

The interviewee also told Patriot Front he had previously been "doxed" at a BLM protest. Victor Krvaric was identified at a BLM protest in August 2020 when protesters accused him of "antagonizing" them.

The Patriot Front interviewee credited his brother with exposing him to extremist ideology. Victor Krvaric's brother, Oliver Krvaric, 23, was the former head of the San Diego State College Republicans. While in charge of the organization, Oliver Krvaric took the group to the extreme right and frequently engaged with and retweeted accounts affiliated with the White nationalist "Groyper" movement, according to The Daily Aztec.

An archived screenshot of an Instagram account alleged to be Victor Krvaric's, published by KPBS, shows that, at one time, he also identified as a "Groyper."

Patriot Front has been active in San Diego since at least 2018, when its flyers were distributed at SDSU. The flyers, which featured the White supremacist slogan "not stolen, conquered" over a graphic of the continental United States, were found in a Daily Aztec newsstand near the university's music building. They also featured the group's website URL: "bloodandsoil.org."

Another former Marine, Lance Cpl. Thomas Martin, shared the same graphic on social media in 2019. Martin was kicked out of the Marines after a Union-Tribune investigation into his social media accounts.

It's not the first time the group has had its communications leaked by Unicorn Riot. In 2019, Discord messaging app chat logs from several extremist groups were published, including those of Patriot Front. Some of the chats revealed details about extremist activity on San Diego college campuses.

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SMOLENS

FROM B1

McElroy is the CEO of the Alpha Project, the nonprofit that runs programs to help homeless people that oversaw operations at the camp for the city.

The experience on the lot at 20th and B streets could provide lessons for possible future "safe villages," recently advocated by the San Diego Downtown Partnership and others in response to growing numbers of homeless people and encampments on the streets.

But the kind of success there could be a singular experience and hard to replicate.

San Diego, like other cities, is under increasing pressure from businesses and residents not just to clean up unsanitary conditions, but to clear out unauthorized homeless encampments. After the Sports Arena Boulevard operation, people who were living there were allowed to return.

The problem is there are not a lot of places for those folks to go, especially since shelters have limited or stopped taking in people because of the rapidly spreading Omicron COVID variant.

In discussing the 20th and B camp, McElroy em-

phasized there were strict rules about behavior that aren't typically found at some other camps set up by other cities. Without them, he said, he would not get involved this time around.

"I would not be interested in doing a campground that would allow people to use drugs and bring paraphernalia on site," he said. That goes for alcohol as well.

He said the large tent shelters run by the Alpha Project allow people at various levels of inebriation in, but they can't be disruptive. Use of drugs or alcohol on site is prohibited. McElroy is a believer in enforcement and rules that require people to behave in return for the safe space and services they are receiving.

"There has to be some kind of personal responsibility," he said. "Our facilities have low-barrier rules, but there are rules," he added. "The vast majority of people want to be safe. We don't want to bring the same aspect of the street into a facility."

The tent camp set up in 2017 had many families with children, along with individual women and individual men. Some camps elsewhere aren't so family-oriented.

Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Sacramento

and other cities have created village-camps using tents, tiny homes, pallet houses and other structures. McElroy has visited some of them and declared them "disasters" because of the drug and alcohol use along with lax rules that allow people to "come and go as you please."

A temporary "Safe Sleep Village" in Los Angeles received mixed reviews, according to KCRW. The camp did not put many restrictions on substance use. If it had, some residents said they wouldn't stay there.

That underscores a dilemma. Allowing drugs and alcohol may seem antithetical to helping homeless people, in addition to potentially causing problems at a camp. But many homeless people use one or both, and if the goal is to get them off the street into a more sanitary space — and they won't go because of the restrictions — some camp advocates feel allowances should be made.

What the policy will be if San Diego moves ahead with a safe village pilot project somewhere, as the Downtown Partnership suggests, remains to be seen.

The 136-space San Diego camp near Balboa Park that took in some 200 people had other restrictions and services that are rare. People there weren't allowed to

simply walk in and out. Alpha Project members shuttled adults to and from the site throughout the day to appointments and drove children to school.

There were some bumps along the way, but nothing that couldn't be overcome, such as a minor issue about getting cable TV immediately hooked up.

"Nobody asked me what kind of tents to buy," McElroy said. "They bought the wrong ones, but we made it work."

But then, the hepatitis A outbreak brought a great sense of urgency to get people into safe shelter quickly.

McElroy said the 20th and B camp was up and running in 10 days.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Ron Nehring (@RonNehring), former chair of the Republican Party of San Diego County and California.

"Since 1988, the Republican nominee for President has won the popular vote exactly...once. In 2004. Governing requires consent of the governed. Spending time trying to figure out how to change the process to win while losing misses the point. Earn more votes."

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