

Tollway board objects to bonus plan

GOVERNMENT: Members say handing out rewards as high as \$70,000 goes too far.

By NICKY YOUNG
The Orange County Register

A plan allowing bonuses as high as \$70,000 for Orange County tollway officials was sent back to the drawing board Thursday by tollway board members.

Board members said they felt the plan—drafted by Arthur Andersen consultants for \$62,000—went a little too far in running government like a business.

"It's apparent we need to reward people for outstanding work, but we're still dealing with public funds," said Tustin Councilman Jim Potts, a board member. "These funds are not created like a private corporation creates funds."

The incentive plan would have

offered bonuses ranging from 5 percent of annual pay for clerical workers to 50 percent of annual pay for executives. Chief Executive William Woollett could have earned a \$70,025 bonus on his \$141,250 salary.

The performance bonuses would have been paid with toll revenue that exceeded projections, savings from refinanced bonds and other unexpected revenue.

But that money is still public,

Potts said.

"You have to structure it to where it's not a gift of public funds," Potts said. The budget and finance committee of the tollway board delayed the plan for a month of refining.

The Transportation Corridor Agencies is building three county tollways using development fees and assessments, state loans and money borrowed against future tolls.

"The staff does an outstanding

job, and we want a system that is fair to that, but reasonable in terms of an expenditure of public funds," said Dana Point Councilman William Ossemmacher, another board member.

Other board members objected to a provision that allowed employees to receive the bonus if they meet individual job expectations. Board members said employees should exceed expectations before receiving such rewards.

Bowers' curator of Indian art resigns

MUSEUMS: There are exciting opportunities for me elsewhere, says Apodaca.

By PAUL HODGINS
The Orange County Register

SANTA ANA — Paul Apodaca, curator of Native American art at the Bowers Museum, resigned Thursday.

Apodaca had been with the museum for 17 years; however, he has been on a one-year leave of absence to pursue a doctorate. He also is teaching full time in Chapman University's division of social sciences.

"I'm trying to see where I can be most effective in making a contribution to the promotion of American Indian culture and history," Apodaca said. "There are exciting opportunities for me elsewhere, and I'd like to pursue them."

The Bowers' American Indian holdings include California basketry and Southwestern and Meso-American art.

Apodaca's resignation comes amid a controversial transition for the 68-year-old museum.

Santa Ana has begun to reduce its \$1.25 million annual contribution to the museum's \$3 million operating budget by 10 percent annually through 2007. The city has decided to cede governance of the museum to a not-for-profit corporation.

City Council members are considering an accelerated timetable for signing over the building, grounds and collections to the corporation. Apodaca and other longtime museum employees have never spoken publicly in favor of the plan.

Apodaca's resignation is a major loss, museum spokesman Brian Langston said. "For many years, Paul has been the public face of the Bowers Museum. He knows this collection so well. He knows the value of it. He's passionate about it. We'll miss him very much."

School district target of suit by ex-official who was fired

The Orange County Register

LAGUNA BEACH — The school district's ex-chief financial officer, who was dismissed in August in the midst of a financial scandal, has filed suit alleging he was wrongfully fired.

Terry Bustillos sued the Laguna Beach Unified School District in Orange County Superior Court on Wednesday, contending he is owed \$179,271 for lost wages and compensation plus an unspecified amount to cover future earnings losses and court costs.

School district officials said Thursday that they had not been served with the suit and declined to comment.

The school board dismissed Bustillos on Aug. 12 after a disclosure that the district faced a \$1.3 million shortfall attributed to poor bookkeeping and declining tax revenues. Bustillos had been on leave since February because of ill health.

On July 1, 1996, six weeks before his dismissal, the school board extended Bustillos' contract for two years, according to the lawsuit.

The financial crisis forced teachers and other employees to accept a 5 percent pay cut and led to cuts in academic and extracurricular programs for Laguna Beach Unified's 2,500 students.

Superintendent Paul Possemato was forced into retirement the day after Bustillos' dismissal. The board is still searching for a permanent superintendent and financial officer.

Statue of slain Arab-American defaced

POLICE: The vandalism of civil-rights leader Alex Odeh's monument is called a hate crime.

By BILL RAMS
The Orange County Register

SANTA ANA — Vandalism splattered red paint early Thursday over a statue honoring slain Arab-American civil-rights leader Alex Odeh, an act police are investigating as a hate crime.

"There were straight lines across his neck and wrists as if they were trying to make a statement about killing him," said Alison Loeper, 24, who passed by the statue outside the Santa Ana Public Library. "It's pretty sick."

When police arrived at 5 a.m., the paint wasn't dry and the vandals had left footprints. Sgt. Bob Clark said.

In October vandals also put red paint on the statue days before the anniversary of Odeh's death. Clark said. The department will give copies of its report to the FBI.

Odeh's brother, Sami, visited the statue at noon. A maintenance worker with a high-powered water hose had already removed the almost two gallons of paint.

"Whoever did this must be a sick, deranged person," he said. Alex Odeh, 41 at the time of his death in 1985, was killed when he opened the door to his Santa Ana office, tripping a pipe bomb left on a chair inside. He had appeared on television the night be-



H. LORREN AU JR./The Register

fore praising Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In August the FBI offered \$1 million for information leading to an arrest in the slaying.

Jewish Defense League Chairman Irv Rubin, who protested the reward, said he is disgusted by the statue and isn't concerned

with the vandalism.

"I think the guy is a war criminal," he said.

The FBI's suspects in the blast included Robert and Rochelle Manning, a couple with ties to the Jewish Defense League, but no one was charged. Robert Manning is serving a life sentence for an unrelated fatal bombing in Manhattan Beach.

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