

A PATH FORWARD

PANDEMIC REVEALS TWO CAMPS: DEFIANT AND COMPLIANT

STEVEN P. DINKIN

With millions of Americans out of work, it's fair to ask: How many of us would like San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer's job? Step up. Don't crowd. Not everyone at once.

Faulconer must decide when to reopen the local economy amid the coronavirus. If the economy reopens too soon, there could be a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases. If it reopens too late, our entire region could be hobbled for years.

Meanwhile, the city faces a \$300 million pandemic-induced budget shortfall, its largest deficit in history.

Gov. Gavin Newsom recently provided guidance with a four-stage reopening plan that returns our state to something approaching normal. There are no specific dates attached to it, however, and the governor warns of the reprise of stay-at-home orders if case counts start to rise. He said, "If our behavior radically changes, we risk the framework we're advancing."

That note of caution is well-placed because this pandemic has shown that most Americans fall into one of two camps: the defiant and the compliant.

More than 40,000 people defiantly swarmed Newport Beach when the weather turned warm

recently, even as officials continue to warn against such mass gatherings. Beaches in neighboring Los Angeles and San Diego counties were closed at the time under stay-at-home orders, contributing to the crowds. Faulconer reopened city beaches, with limitations, the following Monday.

Some folks are defiant out of economic necessity. If forced to choose between risking their health and putting food on the table, they opt for the latter. And so, these people go to work despite feeling sick. Their fear is not unfounded: Already, in this crisis, 43 percent of adults report they or someone in their immediate family has lost a job or suffered a pay cut. In these financially fragile households, the economy can't reopen soon enough.

The compliant camp adheres to social-distancing guidelines and hygiene protocols, like hand washing. Many of these people wore masks even before the May 1 mask mandate. Their compliance may have limitations, however: If the economy were to reopen tomorrow, it's unclear that they would play along. In a recent KFF Health Tracking poll, nearly half of respondents said they would not resume public life until the national outbreak had subsided completely. "Better safe than



MARK J. TERRILL AP

Beachgoers in Newport Beach on Thursday. Gov. Gavin Newsom has temporarily closed Orange County's coastline.

sorry" is a fitting mantra. Americans can't will our way into business as usual. Nor can we do it without some degree of civility. Even as we perfect testing, how are we really going to know who is COVID-free (or immune) and who isn't? And how will this knowledge affect the way we treat one another?

It's as if two new camps are emerging: the susceptibles and the immunes. And absent some drastic tracking policies that most of us can't abide (like the electronic wristbands used in South

Korea to identify people required to self-quarantine), we won't have any visible assurances.

This reminds me of the Dr. Seuss story "The Sneetches." In it, there are two groups: the Star-Belly Sneetches, whose bellies had stars, and the Plain-Belly Sneetches, who "had none upon thars." It's a story of haves and have-nots that ended with the Sneetches realizing that — star or no star — they were all just the same. The Sneetches was written in 1961, in the middle of the civil rights movement. So, it's logical to

conclude that the story was meant to convey how the author — Theodor Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss — viewed discrimination and racial inequality.

Whenever Americans reopen the economy, we need to do so with civility. This requires a Sneetch-like consciousness. Our citizens won't have stars on their bellies to indicate COVID status. Nevertheless, we will need to put our faith in humankind that people will do the right thing and treat each other with respect.

To Mayor Faulconer, I say: Thank you, sir, for doing your job. A job that not many of us could stomach. Your decisions as to when and how to reopen the economy will need to be thoughtful and informed. Millions of lives depend on it. In turn, the citizenry will do its part. We will reward your leadership by committing to civility and fairness in how we treat all San Diegans.

The Sneetches would expect nothing less.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based organization working to create innovative solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. NCRC is nationally recognized for its conflict management and communication strategies. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com

DEAL

FROM B1
The site has been \$41,495. The new rent will be either \$54,300 per quarter or 5 percent of West Coast Turf's gross income, whichever is higher.

The company, which calls itself a leader in the turfgrass industry, has provided sod for Angel Stadium in Anaheim, Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Dodger Stadium, Oracle Park in San Francisco, Santa Anita and Del Mar racetracks, as well as Disneyland, the L.A. Coliseum and the Rose Bowl.

West Coast Turf also has provided sod for eight Super Bowl venues, according to the company's website, and it provides sod to many colleges, including UC San Diego, San Diego State University, the University of San Diego, and some local school districts, including Carlsbad, San Marcos and Poway.

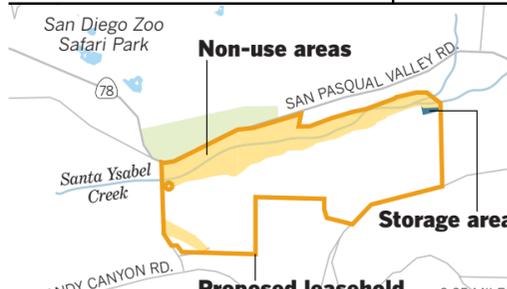
The minimum lease payment to the city is based on a recent appraisal that says market-rate annual rent for the land should be \$600 per acre multiplied by the number of usable acres, or \$217,000 per year.

City officials say West Coast Turf has been a quality tenant, particularly with regard to the nearby environment and the Lake Hodges watershed.

"For over 25 years, West Coast Turf has responsibly maintained a clean and successful farming business in San Pasqual Valley," a city staff report says. "They have demonstrated an understanding that the Lake Hodges watershed is an important asset of the community and that the upstream

San Diego extends turf lease

The city agrees to a 30-year lease with a turf company for 507 acres in San Pasqual Valley.



Sources: City of San Diego; Nextzen; OpenStreetMap
MICHELLE GUERRERO U-T

runoff is an important aspect."

The company also focuses on water-saving varieties of sod, and its activities are monitored to make sure they aren't impacting the aquifer in the area, city officials say.

The company sought a long-term lease extension because sod is a long-term perennial crop that typically takes several years to propagate.

West Coast Turf says on its website that using sod for grass fields is superior to seeding them. Sod is immediate while seed is often lost

to wind and erosion. Seed also requires more water and takes several weeks to germinate, the company says.

The council approved the new lease in an 8-1 vote, with Councilwoman Vivian Moreno voting "no." Her staff said there were concerns that the company has in the past produced dust clouds when farming some county-owned land near San Ysidro.

Calls to West Coast Turf seeking comment were not returned last week.

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WINGS

FROM B1
Clark said rare shorebirds such as least terns and snowy plovers could be freed from their isolation as we remain in social-distancing mode. The birds' nests are simple depressions in the sand, and are vulnerable on crowded beaches.

Scientists maintain protected areas for least terns at local lagoons and on the San Diego Bay, where they are safe from predators and people that threaten their eggs. But those areas aren't their preferred habitat, he said.

"For the most part, they want to fly out to the ocean where the fishing is," he said. "Historically, they want to be right on the beach, in the sand dunes. They'd much rather be in Mission Beach or Coronado Beach."

With foot traffic down, however, terns might recolonize those prime areas, he said, spreading out across the San Diego County shoreline instead of sheltering in the preserves.

"As they arrive, maybe they'll think that the beaches look a lot nicer than these protected areas we have for them," he said.

Snowy plovers hunt for small crustaceans on the shoreline, and must nest near the water. But since most beachfront in San Diego and neighboring counties is crowded with people, they stay mainly within fenced off preserves on Silver Strand Beach.

"They have to forage along tide lines to feed their chicks," Clark said. "They have very little nesting area left in Southern California. They're going to be expanding out to use these areas that people aren't using anymore."

Expanded nesting grounds could be jeopardized by renewed beach use, however, as San Diego County coastal cities roll out plans to reopen beaches over the next week. Still, large groups won't be allowed, and social-distancing restrictions — imposed to prevent COVID-19 infection — could also safeguard ground-nesting birds. Beachgoers should be aware of possible nest sites, and steer clear of them if they see them, said Hans Sin, a sen-



A spotted towhee, observed in San Diego during the international City Nature Challenge
SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

ior environmental scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"The big thing we want to let the public know is to be cautious if you do encounter wildlife, and to tell the lifeguards where they are, so that we can have information on them," he said.

In addition to notifying lifeguards or other local authorities about shorebird nest sites, beachgoers can report sightings on apps such as eBird or iNaturalist, which scientists use to help map and monitor wildlife.

"The biggest concern is giving them space as far as nesting, and if you are recreating with dogs, to make sure they are on leash, and to make sure that we can give them the best chance at reproduction that we can," Sin said.

There are other possible outcomes of the closures on wildlife, Clark and others said. Roadkill may decline because of drops in vehicle traffic, he said, which could lead to fewer deaths of small animals such as reptiles and rodents, and "even rare species like ringtail foxes, mountain lions and bobcats."

Predators could be winners as well, with hawks and other raptors getting a better shot at squirrels in typically crowded spots such as Balboa Park.

Last weekend, the San Diego Museum of Natural History helped host the City Nature Challenge, a citizen science event in which cities around the world tally plant and wildlife sightings over a four-day period, vying for the greatest diversity. Outdoor enthusiasts in the Americas, Europe and Asia capture images of local flora and fauna, then upload their photos on the iNaturalist app for verification. In the past it has run as a competition, and last year San Diego

took third place for both biodiversity and total sightings. This year, it was reimagined as a celebration of nature, amid the global health threat.

Participants in the event said it was tough to find places to observe nature that weren't shuttered by the closure, or occupied by hikers or recreationists who turned to open space nature preserves after city and county parks closed down, said museum spokeswoman Rebecca Handelsman.

Patricia Simpson, an avid iNaturalist user, had planned a whirlwind circuit through the region, from Cabrillo, to Mission Trails, Mount Laguna, Anza Borrego and Palomar, for this year's City Nature Challenge.

"COVID-19 changed all that, but I was amazed about how much I could do right here!" she said.

Mary Duffy, a regular iNaturalist user and Outreach Director and Biologist at Earth Discovery Institute, said she missed the "joy of discovery" that comes from personal interactions with other nature-watchers during the City Nature Challenge. However, she added that San Diego was "lush and green, and water (was) flowing everywhere," which created excellent conditions for viewing plants and wildlife. The closures, she said, may be an opportunity to take a closer look at nature in our own backyards.

"Of course, I hope people had fun getting to know the critters in their yard," Duffy said. "The more you know, the more connected you feel and the more you want to know. Maybe it was a good year for noticing the little things."

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, May 3, the 124th day of 2020.

Today's highlight

On May 3, 1802, Washington, D.C., was incorporated as a city.

On this date

In 1913, Clorox had its beginnings as five entrepreneurs agreed to set up a liquid bleach factory in Oakland.

In 1937, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Gone with the Wind."

In 1984, Michael Dell founded Dell Computer Corp. while a student at the University of Texas in Austin.

In 1987, The Miami Herald said its reporters had observed a young woman spending "Friday night and most of Saturday" at a Washington townhouse belonging to Demo-

cratic presidential candidate Gary Hart. (The woman was identified as Donna Rice; the resulting controversy torpedoed Hart's presidential bid.)

Today's birthdays

Actor Alex Cord is 87. Singer Frankie Valli is 86. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 74. Singer Christopher Cross is 69. Actor Bobby Cannavale is 50. TV personality Willie Geist ("Today") is 45. Dancer Cheryl Burke is 36.

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SMOLENS

FROM B1
county is making fighting the disease. San Diego health officials say the county has met four of the five criteria that need to be satisfied before reopening, at least according to guidelines developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The county has achieved necessary downward trajectories in the percent of test results that are positive, people with flu-like symptoms and the number of people who are sick with COVID-like symptoms. The fourth criteria is hospitals functioning normally and not just in crisis-care mode. San Diego has yet to hit the coronavirus-testing benchmark, the fifth criteria, but has been continually conducting more tests and on a broader spectrum of people.

Newsom has his own set of criteria for when the state

can start reopening and, ultimately, it will be his call.

Nevertheless, the forward momentum in San Diego motivated county officials to loosen restrictions on outdoor activities, even as stay-at-home edicts remain. But some people want more, and right now. As other states begin opening up parts of their economies, more and more local officials are speaking out for San Diego County and California to do the same.

Nearly two weeks ago, county Supervisors Jim Desmond and Kristin Gaspar pushed a measure calling for the reopening of businesses this past Friday. They were voted down by Supervisors Greg Cox, Nathan Fletcher and Diane Jacob.

Last week, Gaspar and Desmond were joined by mayors of North County cities who pleaded for lifting of the shutdown of non-essential businesses soon.

"People are suffering," said Escondido Mayor Paul

McNamara, adding that some are having trouble feeding their families. "This can't go on forever."

That those concerns are being vocalized more doesn't mean there's a consensus on reopening. Just days earlier, national business leaders expressed caution about moving too fast and some businesses in states that are reopening are not willing to do so yet.

But there's a clear consensus behind this: keeping San Diego County beaches open even in a limited way.

That appeared to be threatened by the Newsom administration. Unhappy about crowded beaches in Orange County last weekend, officials in the administration put out word Wednesday that the governor was going to close all beaches and state parks in California, according to the California Police Chiefs Association.

Mayor Kevin Falconer said his office was told the same thing by the state's

Natural Resources Agency. Faulconer and numerous other local officials publicly criticized the apparent pending move. Newsom then announced he was only closing beaches in Orange County temporarily and denied he had planned to shut them down statewide.

The governor's defenders, including Fletcher, suggested there was miscommunication or that inaccurate information was being passed around. Whatever really happened, the Newsom administration didn't attempt to knock down what became a national story that circulated for more than 12 hours — until his OC announcement.

All the while, Faulconer and other local officials have been effusive in their praise of residents for adhering to the rules on beach access.

"When other beaches across the U.S. have reopened, the nation saw pandemonium," Faulconer said on Twitter. "Today, the nation saw San Diego acting

like America's Finest City."

That was Day One of the city beach openings. By Thursday, Faulconer and San Diego public safety officials were still lauding the citizenry but were clearly concerned about how things would go this first weekend. Even on weekdays, there were some trouble spots where social-distancing rules were being ignored by many — notably Sunset Cliffs and Pacific Beach.

In the broader county picture, Del Mar, Solana Beach and Carlsbad did not open their beaches when the others did, though they were moving in that direction by the end of the week. On April 22, a San Diego city press release said coastal city mayors "have pledged to move forward in unison."

In Encinitas, officials said they were caught off-guard — they weren't the only ones — by the county's green light, and scrambled to allow restricted access to Moonlight Beach. On Thursday, Mayor Catherine Blake-

spear said the city was having "a problem with compliance day after day."

Meanwhile, with beach parking lots closed, nearby neighborhoods were heavily impacted by traffic from people hunting for a parking space. Because people are told not to linger at the beach, there appeared to be regular turnover in spaces.

On the first day, resident Lisa Packey described her search for parking to the Union-Tribune this way: "It's like chaos, but it's like organized chaos."

That could have been the motto for the entire week.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Lyndsay Winkley (@LAWinkley) of The San Diego Union-Tribune. "I'm happy to report you stayed classy, San Diego" — Mayor Kevin Faulconer about how residents behaved at the beaches (on Monday).

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