

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# THIS BASEBALL SEASON, A BIG BET ON CHANGES PAYS OFF

Baseball and gambling have a long, intertwined history. Back in 1919, eight players from the Chicago White Sox, including star hitter “Shoeless Joe” Jackson, conspired to throw the 1919 World Series in exchange for payoffs from gamblers. The players believed they were underpaid and mistreated. The Cincinnati Reds became world champions.

In 1970, it was reported that pitcher Denny McLain of the Detroit Tigers had been a partner in a bookmaking ring. According to Sports Illustrated, a mob enforcer crushed two of McLain’s toes to force him to pay on a horse racing bet. McLain was suspended from the game, then retired. He spent seven years in prison for related crimes.

Manager Pete Rose of the Cincinnati Reds — who still holds baseball’s career hit record (among others) — bet on 52 Reds games during the 1987 season. He wagered tens of thousands of dollars per week on other sports, too, for many years. In 1989, Rose

was banned from baseball and the following year, served five months in prison for tax evasion.

In between and since, there have been other incidents of gambling involving baseball players and managers.

This year, however, the biggest wager in baseball was placed by the league itself. I wrote about it before the season, with some trepidation. Tinkering with America’s pastime is not without its risks. But baseball, it seemed, had become too long for a fan base with a shrinking attention span. The games were boring.

Analysts blamed an addiction to the home run that began with Babe Ruth and grew in the era of data analysis. Teams were doing whatever they could to optimize performance, rearranging their defense in ways that made it harder to get a base hit. It made the home run the preferred (if not only) way to score.

Major League Baseball responded by implementing rule changes, intended to speed the

pace of play and increase offense. A timer was introduced to hustle players to the batter’s box and shorten the time between pitches. Bases were enlarged to increase the likelihood they would be stolen. Limits were placed on “disengagement” — the number of times a pitcher could step off the rubber.

By all accounts, the league hit a home run. According to Forbes, total attendance for the 2023 MLB season was 70.7 million, a 9.6 percent increase from 2022. Year-over-year attendance was higher for 26 of the 30 ball clubs. The games were quicker, taking 2 hours, 39 minutes on average, compared with 3 hours, 10 minutes two years ago. Batting averages, stolen base attempts and even the number of home runs grew.

It validates what to me is the most interesting part of the story. Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred was the architect of the new rules. As I wrote in spring, Manfred had been contemplating changes to the game practically

since taking the helm in 2015, according to New York Times reporter Mike Schmidt. But as someone who never played baseball or ran a team, Manfred thought it important to listen and learn from baseball’s constituents, especially the fans. Apparently, they had a lot to say.

Because of his knack for listening, Manfred didn’t have to persuade people that the rule changes would be good for baseball. He understood the importance of hearing different points of view, before giving his own.

It’s not easy to do. In conversations, we often speak right away, sharing what we think or offering advice or telling a personal story. Or our minds wander, searching for what to say next.

It conveys a message that the conversation is all about us (the other person — not so much). But as William Ury, co-founder of the Harvard Program on Negotiation and author of “Getting to Yes,” wrote, “How can you possibly change someone else’s mind if you

don’t know where their mind is?”

Listening also helps us connect with people, by showing we care. And everybody wants to be heard. At the National Conflict Resolution Center, we teach a course called “The ART of Inclusive Communication.” The “A” in ART stands for active awareness, a part of which is genuine listening. It means focusing on the other person and asking questions that encourage them to say more on a topic. It means making a genuine effort to understand their perspectives and underlying needs. As Ury wrote, it means “listening to the human behind the words.”

Manfred, it seems, did all of the above. It was a safe bet: After all, the more we listen, the more we are heard. And so begins true persuasion.

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 [nccrconline.com](http://nccrconline.com)

## SMOLENS

FROM B1 come law in January, two months after the districts voted to leave.

The exit of the Fallbrook and Rainbow districts would mean they no longer would help pay off debt accumulated by the water authority over the past two decades from a massive infrastructure upgrade costing more than \$2 billion that improved water storage and expanded supplies.

The districts contend they don’t benefit from a lot of that building program, yet they are paying for it.

Initially, the costs of infrastructure improvements were considered a worthy trade-off for reliable long-term water supplies in a future projected to have recurring droughts.

Some of those decisions are being second-guessed today as customers of water authority member agencies are experiencing rising rates with no end in sight.

Part of a lawsuit filed by the water authority is over the \$24.5 million in exit fees set by the agency that also

approved of the districts’ departure — the Local Agency Formation Commission. The water authority contends the appropriate figure is \$140 million.

In addition to the two districts, LAFCO is named in the lawsuit, in part, because the water authority says the commission failed to abide by the California Environmental Quality Act in its ruling.

LAFCO rejected that claim and in a statement said it “followed the CEQA statutes to a tee...”

In any case, the “divorce,” as it has often been called, is not a done deal yet.

Regardless, the outlook for the water authority, its members and their customers doesn’t look pretty.

That future of rate increases had received growing attention in recent years, but it hit with a jolt in March when the water authority announced that member agencies should prepare for a 14 percent increase in the cost of wholesale deliveries next year.

“I heard several gasps in the room as the rate amount came up,” said then-water authority General Manager



SAMMY ROTH LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Westside Main Canal carries Colorado River water through the farm fields of the Imperial Valley.

Sandra Kerl, according to The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Water managers pledged to try to roll back the rate hike and, depending on variables, the actual increase may drop below double digits. Already, some water customers had been struggling to pay their bills.

Why this is happening is a now-familiar story. The water authority, like other agencies, years ago underestimated the willingness of customers to conserve.

Efren Lopez, a water resource manager with the authority, told KPBS last

month that over the past 35 years, San Diego had reduced water use by nearly 50 percent.

“Those are incredible numbers and that is what keeps us really reliable,” Lopez said.

The flip side is the infrastructure and supply-building created fixed costs that don’t go down when less water is used — a source of frustration to average consumers and district managers alike.

All that proactive work was launched long ago on the assumption that the water authority would be

selling much more water than it is to pay off the debt.

Sales will take another hit when wastewater recycling operations come online in San Diego, Oceanside and East County.

In these days of drought projections and concern about the future health of the Colorado River, it seems odd that an abundance of water over the long term is a concern for any agency.

For some time, the water authority was lauded for its aggressive effort to build a reliable and diverse water supply. In particular, its agreement with the Imperial Irrigation District to pay farmers to conserve — by helping fund more efficient technology — has been viewed as a model across the western United States. That water saved from the Colorado River comes to San Diego.

But the decision to build a desalination plant in Carlsbad, which some criticized from the outset on environmental and cost grounds, has increasingly come under scrutiny. That produces some of the most expensive water anywhere and San Diego is saddled with it, at

least for now.

There is a potential positive development on the horizon, however.

The trajectory of rate hikes could be lowered for a while by a water-trading plan being considered by the San Diego water authority, the Los Angeles-based Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Imperial Irrigation District, according to the Voice of San Diego.

Whether that agreement can be reached and what effect it may have on water rates is uncertain. It also would be a temporary arrangement, but water managers suggest it could be a framework for the future.

Meanwhile, the cost of water will continue going up in most of San Diego County.

### What they said

Jeremy B. White (@JeremyBWhite) of Politico on plans to take part of a dog park for a bike path in Los Angeles.

“Dog Twitter v Bike Twitter: this should be good.”

michael.smolens  
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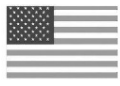
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DEL SÁBADO 11 AL VIERNES  
17 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2023

The San Diego



# Union-Tribune

EN ESPAÑOL

GRATIS

## LÍDERES PIDEN DINERO PARA MÁS ALBERGUES, POLICÍA

Otras prioridades son la compra de vivienda para rentas medias

DAVID GARRICK

### SAN DIEGO —

El Ayuntamiento de San Diego quiere gastar más dinero en refugios para personas sin techo, en ayudar a los inquilinos a evitar el desalojo, en aumentar el arbolado de la ciudad, en contratar agentes de policía y en esfuerzos para atra-

er eventos deportivos de alto nivel.

La larga lista de prioridades presupuestarias que el Consejo envió el lunes 30 de octubre al alcalde Todd Gloria también incluye asistencia a los compradores de vivienda de renta media, más salvavidas nocturnos y dinero para preservar las viviendas de renta baja no subvencionadas.

La decisión del Consejo sobre sus prioridades inicia oficialmente el proceso de elaboración de un plan de gastos de unos \$2 mil millones para el año fiscal que comienza el próximo mes de julio. Será el pri-

mer presupuesto municipal en cuatro años que no dependa de la ayuda federal para la pandemia.

Las prioridades, que el consejo podría actualizar y ajustar en febrero, ayudan al alcalde a elaborar el proyecto de presupuesto que debe presentar cada mes de abril. El consejo y el alcalde negocian el presupuesto definitivo a mediados de junio.

La lista de prioridades incluye todas las propuestas apoyadas por al menos cinco de los nueve miembros del consejo.

Muchas de las propuestas es-

tán relacionadas con la vivienda y las personas sin hogar. Entre ellas, exigir a los propietarios que notifiquen por adelantado a la ciudad los desalojos, transformar la antigua biblioteca del centro en un centro de apoyo a las personas sin hogar y ampliar la capacidad de los albergues, posiblemente incluyendo más estacionamientos seguros.

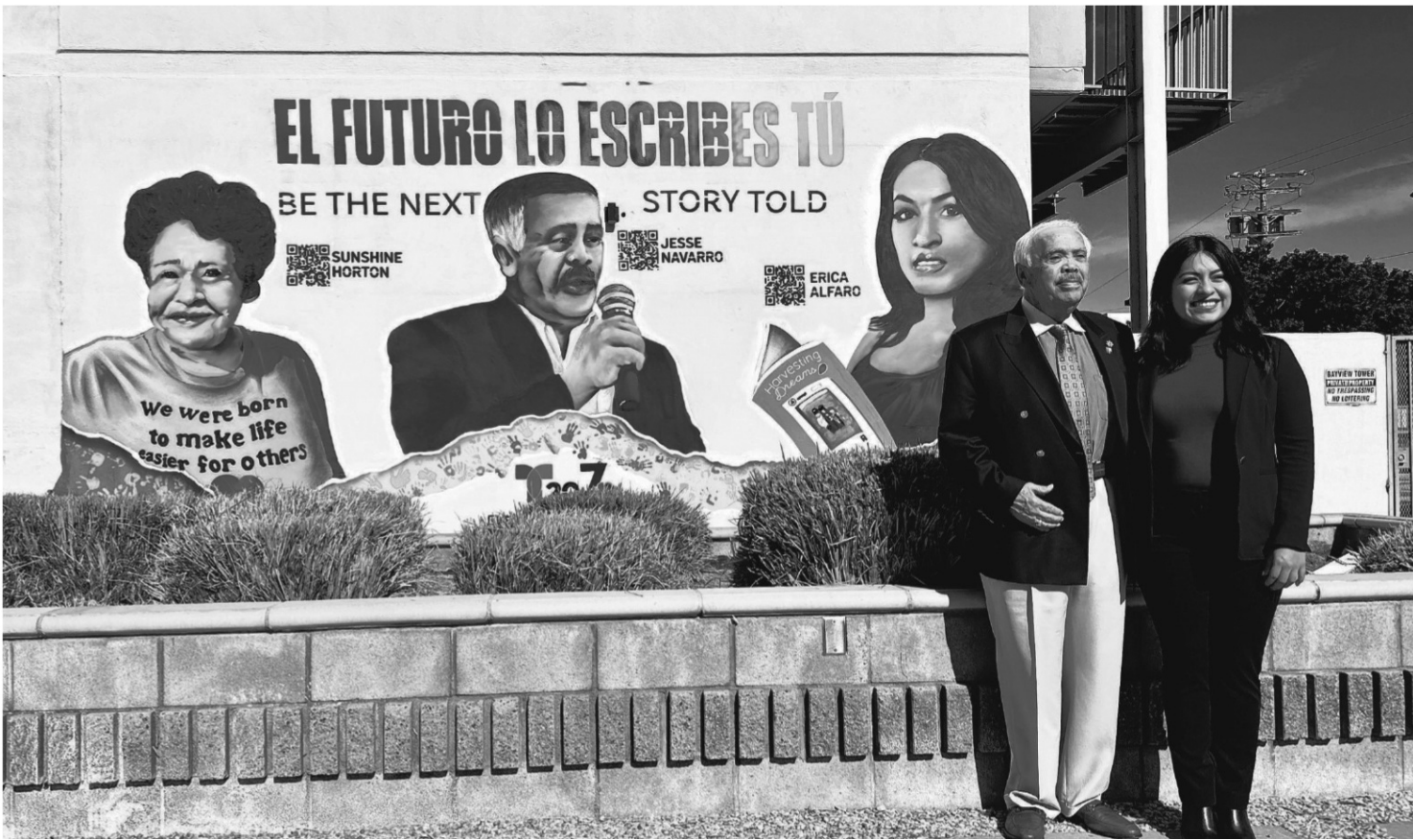
Los concejales también quieren dinero para conservar las viviendas de renta baja existentes, sobre todo las más antiguas que no están subvencionadas, y para ayudar a

los residentes con rentas medias a comprar una casa.

Este es el segundo año consecutivo en que un incentivo a la compra de vivienda para las rentas medias figura entre las prioridades del Consejo. El pasado mes de junio, se excluyó del presupuesto para el año fiscal en curso durante las deliberaciones de última hora.

“Los ciudadanos de San Diego con ingresos medios están luchando por encontrar la manera de comprar una casa, y esencialmente no tienen ninguna ayuda”, dijo

VER DINERO • 2



## MÉXICO ABRE MÁS LÍNEAS PARA ALIVIAR EL TRÁFICO

Autoridades dicen que se abrirán más carriles, aún hay demoras hacia el sur

ALEXANDRA MENDOZA

Es claro que los tiempos de espera para cruzar la frontera en un vehículo de San Ysidro a Tijuana han estado más largos de lo habitual.

Esta semana, autoridades mexicanas anunciaron la apertura de más carriles en la aduana mexicana de El Chaparral en un intento por aliviar el creciente tráfico en horas pico.

El cónsul general de México en San Diego, Carlos González Gutiérrez,