

IRVINE'S FIRST FEMALE K-9 • GREAT PARK BOARD • BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION ORDINANCE

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IMAGE COMICS AND SKYBOUND ENTERTAINMENT PROMISE BIG THINGS FOR COMIC-CON
BY BRETT CALLWOOD

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OFFICER LINCOLN, IRVINE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S FIRST FEMALE K-9 RECRUIT

AT JUST 15-MONTHS-OLD, LINCOLN, IRVINE'S FIRST FEMALE POLICE DOG, IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SHIFT IN PERCEPTION AS IT PERTAINS TO K-9 POLICE WORK.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

Supporting a playful grin along with a fluffy, brownish-gray coat, Irvine Police Department's newest four-legged K-9 recruit Lincoln is eagerly displaying dedication to local police work. At just 15-months-old, Lincoln has become the youngest K-9 to enlist in Irvine law enforcement and the Irvine K-9 Unit's first female police dog.

In the years to come, the 50-pound Belgian Tervuren from the Czech Republic will also be a first for the department.

Officer Chris Cameron, K-9 Handler with the Irvine Police Department, was able to select Lincoln to be his newest partner. The two will work together for the foreseeable future and Cameron has plans for her to join his own pack of rescue dogs once her tenure is over.

"She'll work with me until I retire. I'll probably stay eight or nine years, now that I have her," he explained. "My hope is to keep the dog healthy, give it a good career. Then once it retires, give it a good three to four years to just be a dog."

Three months into their partnership, Cameron said Lincoln is always happy and ready to work, which is a characteristic he recognized from the start. Recalling her trial run with the department at the

kennel, Cameron said Lincoln's relaxed demeanor and easy going attitude helped solidify an automatic connection between the pair.

"Just watching her walk with the kennel assistant bringing her out – once I got her on the leash, it was easy. She was just like, 'OK, you are my dad, let's go have some fun,'" he said. "It was very much like a tail wag – just kind of this happy disposition about herself."

Having worked with two previous K-9 partners outside of Irvine, Cameron wanted to be deliberate in his selection process. In this respect, size, gender and sociability all played an important role.

"I specifically wanted a smaller dog – having to carry your dog or lift them over a fence, or lift them into an attic – I didn't want to lug an 80 to 90-pound dog," Cameron explained to *Irvine Weekly*.

While the practice of employing female police dogs is not uncommon today, Cameron explained that views were different in the past, adding that misconceptions regarding a K-9's gender and their ability to do police work led to more male dogs commonly used.

"When I started as a handler in 2006, the mindset in the handler community was that if it was a good quality female dog, we want to use that for breeding to



Lincoln, the female
K-9 recruit

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COURTESY OF THE IRVINE POLICE DEPARTMENT

produce offspring. Back then it was kind of unheard of to see departments with female police dogs," he said.

However, things have changed. Now, handlers are able to pick specific attributes from their working dog vendors.

"One of the features of my previous dog that I wasn't too fond of was that male dogs like to mark their territory – so if you're searching an open area, and he's marking every bush he sees – it can be a little frustrating. Females don't really tend to be markers."

While the two may be inseparable for the time being, Cameron is now tasked with developing the young puppy into a working asset for Irvine law enforcement.

"Some of the challenges I faced with her as a handler was that she was 80% police dog and about 20% puppy," he said. "I need to understand that she's a puppy, but on the flipside I feel like we're getting a solid dog at a young age that's going to serve the community a lot longer."

From Cameron's perspective, things are going well.

"She's just a happy dog. She loves coming into the station, she loves when people pet her, she has very much like a lightswitch – if we need to find somebody, she's game," he said. "She's all work."

As the officer and K-9 counterpart continue to develop their partnership, Cameron hopes to hone Lincoln's natural instincts in an effort to bring nuance to local law enforcement.

"Our jobs [as officers] are becoming much more complex and dynamic. In all these critical incidents, it's pretty remarkable how the presence of a police dog, even just seeing my police car show up – tends to de-escalate the critical incidents we're involved in," he explained. "So, having that psychological tool with us is a significant benefit."

Alternatively, Cameron added that K-9s can also help act as a conduit for the community. As just the third K-9 handler to work with Irvine Police, Cameron has a unique role within the community and hopes Lincoln can help erode barriers between the public and law enforcement.

"A lot of people support the police, but they don't know how to break that ice and go up to a police officer, but almost daily, when somebody in the community sees my uniform that says 'K-9,' they want to come up and start talking about dogs," he said. "They want to see the dog and pet the dog, so I think it's an incredible tool to build that bridge and partnership with our community."

IRVINE WEIGHING BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION OPTIONS UNDER FEDERAL RULING

IN AN EFFORT TO CONTINUE TO MOVE TOWARD ITS CARBON NEUTRALITY GOALS BY 2030, CITY LEADERS AGREED TO RESEARCH "LESS RISKY" LEGAL SOLUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT NEW BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

Irvine will seek alternative measures to circumvent a federal ruling blocking the implementation of the city's new building electrification ordinance. In a 4-1 vote on Tuesday, June 13, city leaders voted to study an incentive-based approach that would not eliminate the use of natural gas piping, and would be the least risky under federal law.

Irvine's new building electrification ordinance aims to eliminate the use of natural gas piping in new construction, but has been at a standstill since April after a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that banning the use of natural gas is a violation of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act.

Established by congress in 1975, EPCA states that, "localities could not prevent consumers from using covered products in their homes, kitchen and businesses," Judge Patrick Bumatay wrote in the 3-0 decision.

The decision in the case of *Restaurant Association of California vs. The City of Berkeley* set a precedent in California, when judges ruled 3-0 that the City of Berkeley's new building electrification ordinance – which had many similarities to Irvine's – was in violation of the 1975 law.

While Irvine's ordinance must go through a second reading, city leaders pulled the item from the agenda in April after the Ninth Circuit opinion



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was released. Irvine City Attorney Jeff Melching suggested the council move in a direction that does not violate federal law.

The City of Berkeley has filed a request for a hearing en banc, which would require a set of 11 new judges to hear the case.

However, Melching explained that there is no guarantee the court will grant the request for a hearing en banc, and moved to present different options to the council to move forward with the ordinance as legally as possible.

In order to do so, Melching presented five options to the council, each with

varying degrees of legality as it pertains to the use of natural gas in new construction.

With the first and second option, the city would proceed with the second reading of the ordinance, while enforcing a ban on natural gas in new construction. However, Melching cautioned the council that moving forward with the ordinance's second reading was highly unrecommended.

In his presentation, Melching explained that due to precedent within the federal ruling, Irvine must abide by the law. He also added that both Option 1 and Option 2 were risky, considering the broad

language in the ruling.

In lieu of the second reading, Melching explained that the city could implement a different strategy that would not prohibit natural gas piping within the home, but rather ban the use of natural gas appliances.

"Option 2 would be to come up with a different strategy that doesn't involve prohibiting [natural gas] plumbing to the houses, but does involve outright prohibiting natural gas appliances," he said. "We think that strategy is different, and maybe outside the technical scope of the Ninth Circuit decision, but very risky given the language in the decision."

The city's third option requires the implementation of an incentive-based approach to electrification.

Melching referred to the incentive-based approach to electrification as the "least risky." Melching added that the incentive-based approach would require homeowners that use natural gas appliances would need to "achieve greater efficiencies" with other equipment found in the home.

"In the incentive-based approach, the city essentially is setting efficiency standards for new homes as a whole. So it wouldn't outright prohibit someone from using a natural gas appliance," he said.

Irvine Council member Dr. Kathleen Treseder voted to adopt the incentive-based approach, but added that she wants to use city resources wisely.

"My philosophy on this is if we have an building electrification ordinance, I want it to be done well, and I don't want to invest our resources and time pursuing legal cases that might not hold up," she said.

Melching admitted that this issue comes down to how the court interprets the law. But, despite the court's opinion, Melching said several additional briefs were filed against the decision.

"In the law there's this dichotomy that you have to deal with in appellate decisions – there's what the case was about – in Berkeley it was about natural gas plumbing to homes – and then there's the language – the rationale, the reasoning of the case," he said. "But the thing that everyone is wrestling with is the broad language in the decision and how broadly it can be read."

NEWS

DESPITE "CHECKERED PAST" IRVINE WILL KEEP GREAT PARK BOARD INTACT

ECHOING PAST CONCERNS, IRVINE VICE MAYOR TAMMY KIM PRESENTED AN EFFORT TO DISSOLVE THE GREAT PARK BOARD OF DIRECTORS, EMPHASIZING THAT THE ENTITY IS A REDUNDANT USE OF CITY RESOURCES.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



Calling redundancies in city protocols, on Tuesday, June 27, Irvine Vice Mayor Tammy Kim introduced an item calling for the dissolution of the Great Park Board of Directors. Kim argued that in the decades since its establishment, the Great Park Board of Directors has become a financial burden to taxpayers and a magnet for public confusion and controversy.

Currently, members of the Irvine City Council serve as the Great Park Board of Directors. The board also holds its meetings on the same day as the Council, but at a separate time. In terms of compensation, each Board Member receives an annual stipend of \$10,560.

While Irvine Council Members did not vote on dissolving the board, the topic illustrated the inner complexities of a two-decade old entity with a history of public facing dilemmas.

Kim, who currently serves on the board, added that the Great Park Board has opted for few adjustments to its operational protocol over the years, suggesting its status as a separate entity should be combined with the City Council, given the fact that many topics are discussed in both meetings.

"The Great Park Board has had a checkered past," she said. "The Great Park Board has outlived its usefulness and I believe it's time that the Great Park Board be fully folded into the City Council.

Because the Great Park isn't a distant land, it's not a separate island, it is Irvine."

The history of the Great Park Board can be traced back to 2003 with the development of Measure W which was created to halt more than a decade of efforts to build an international airport at the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in Irvine.

Officially known as the Orange County Central Park and Nature Preserve Initiative, Measure W is closely connected to the Great Park as the measure specifically banned any airport construction at the former MCAS El Toro.

The measure also set aside more than 1,300 acres to create the Great Park.

After voters passed Measure W in

2002, the City of Irvine created the Orange County Great Park Corporation, as a charitable organization, under 501(c)(3) non profit distinction, as the overseeing entity to the project.

The OCGP was officially established in 2003 and enlisted a total of nine directors. The entity was originally composed of five City Council Members, and at-large members appointed by the Council.

However, Kim pointed to the board's less than perfect history.

In a memo addressed to Irvine City Manager Oliver Chi, Kim referenced historical data which included a 2014 Orange County Grand Jury report that revealed major public concerns surrounding the board's internal operations, adding that residents were very concerned with a lack of transparency.

The Grand Jury report also revealed that Great Park residents had become "unsatisfied" with the lack of developmental progress inside the park in the decade since the board had been established.

The board has made only one significant alteration to its governance during its 20-year existence. In 2013, the City Council opted to drop the at-large appointments and limit the Great Park Board to only members of the City Council.

Coming off the heels of approving more than \$1 billion in funding for Great Park Development, Irvine Council Member Larry Agran said there is no reason to dismantle the board, especially now that Irvine is in the driver's seat.

"The fact that we have approved \$800 million in development for the Great Park, and we have a phase 1, and we broke ground on the Veterans Memorial Park and Gardens – we're making extraordinary progress," he said. "It's not broken, we don't need to fix it. I don't want a radical change at this point, we're on a good path."

Speaking to Irvine Weekly via text message, Kim said that she was surprised she did not receive more support for the dissolution of the Great Park Board.

"At some point I would like to dissolve it, but it looks like no one wants to give up their stipend," Kim wrote. "There's no path forward right now."

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IMAGE COMICS AND SKYBOUND ENTERTAINMENT PROMISE BIG THINGS FOR COMIC-CON.

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



Todd McFarlane

PHOTO BY NICK MORGULIS

After a two-year break, San Diego Comic-Con returned last year with, if not a bang, a moderate bump. It was one of those “should we shouldn’t we” situations – comic books fans were craving normalcy and so they congregated as they are apt to do.

This is the first proper post-COVID (*don’t jinx it*) year, and Comic-Con is back again. This time though, it’s the writer’s strike that is playing hell with the schedule (a writer’s strike, incidentally, that we fully support). Marvel, *fucking Marvel*, is skipping it this year, as are Sony Pictures, Universal Pictures, Netflix and HBO. That’s some big names.

The absence of those corporate giants allows us to focus harder elsewhere, however. Todd McFarlane’s Image Comics will be there, and that umbrella also means that imprint Skybound Entertainment (founded by *Walking Dead* man Robert Kirkman) also will be there.

Image has a few panels from Thursday to Sunday, with McFarlane himself speaking at 10:30 a.m., on Friday.

“Those are usually the opportunity to announce new and upcoming projects,” McFarlane says. “Most people already know what’s in the pipeline. For us, it’s about announcing a bunch of new titles and the creative people on the characters that are coming in. In ‘21 it was expanded from the *Spawn* comic book into what I call the *Spawn* universe. We do four books every month now, one a week, we have a book going to the printers. Then, from my point of view, it’s about how we are going to mindfully grow this potential. It took me almost 30 years to go from one book to two books.”

David Alpert is the CEO of Skybound Entertainment and a co-founder, alongside Kirkman. Alpert says that, for

25 years, his whole year was shaped around the San Diego mega-convention so it’s nuts that, due to COVID, he hasn’t been for the past four years. This one, he says, is a big deal for Skybound.

“Skybound itself is 13 years old, so I feel like we’re entering that awkward teenage period but we’re growing,” Alpert says. “We’re feeling ourselves out a little bit, and we separated ourselves a bit. (Previously,) we shared a booth with all the other Image guys. This is the first time that we’re having a full standalone Skybound booth on the floor. So we’ll have a whole big display, screens, a recording studio, and promotions for all of our content. It’s not just that we’ve reached a point where it’s 13 years, it’s also about the fact that is the 20th anniversary of the *Walking Dead* and *Invincible*, our two biggest titles. On top of that, we have a massive promotion around *Impact Winter* – that’s the podcast that we’re doing with Audible.”

Both men agree that despite occasional over-enthusiasm from the attendees, Comic-Con is a place to embrace fandom, geekdom, in all of its forms.

“I like it because it continues to remind me of the magnitude of the group of geeks, and I use that word in a very broad sense,” McFarlane says. “Whether it’s people who like superhero movies, anime, video games, comic books or toys, whatever, I think it’s a big group of people. I think it’s cool to have all of them concierge in one place. When I was a kid and a closet collector, you had to hide it from everybody because everybody thought you were mentally arrested if you were a comic book collector. Fast forward and it’s all gone mainstream, which is kinda cool. It’s good for business, and more importantly it’s good for people to have others they can confer with.”

“I saw Comic-Con go from a gritty grimy fest and then it became really popular and the Marvel movies started happening,” adds Alpert. “You started seeing things like *The Office* and *Parks & Recreation* coming to Comic-Con and it was like, ‘Why are you here?’ It became more of a pop culture fest and then there was a backlash because it wasn’t what it used to be. We reached this modern point where it’s about celebrating fan-



ART BY MARK BROOKS

dom. If you're willing to paint yourself like a Transformer or dress like GI Joe, this is the place for you."

All eyes on Image and Skybound at Comic-Con, then. And, true to form, there's much to be excited about from both. Image's first panel is with "master storyteller" Jeff Lemire (*Fishflies*, *Tenement*, *Cosmic Detective*) on Thursday, before McFarlane on Friday and then a panel with Rick Remender (*Fear Agent*, *Black Science*). Other subjects covered include the intriguing "Massive-Verse," and "Comic characters people love to hate."

"Sometimes it's even hard for me to keep track because it seems like every two months they have a book that's cooler and better, and is gonna top the last home run that they had," says McFarlane. "In all honesty, I usually get the details of what they're announcing pretty close to the announcements themselves. We're not built so that they have to get approval. That's the cool thing about all of it. They just do what they want to with the long, long rope that we give them as part of their 100% ownership."

Skybound's three panels cover the new nostalgia-based *WrestleQuest* video game, the 20th anniversary of the *Invincible* comic book series, and the exciting

new shared universe featuring Transformers and GI Joe.

"Not everything is about how I spent my time after school as a kid," says Alpert. "But it's also not not about that. I would rush home from the school bus to get there ahead of my sisters so I could control the remote control, so I could watch GI Joe and Transformers. In my mind, they were always together. It always bothered me that they never intersected. Why would you keep chocolate and peanut butter separate? So that was the goal here – take Hasbro and make it Reese's Pieces."

Sadly, the Go-Bots are currently not in the plans for that collision of franchises, currently dubbed the Energon Universe. But the GI Joe world popped up at the end of the recent Transformers movie *Rise of the Beasts*.

"I think everybody sees that people want to connect these things," Alpert says. "Everybody has different ideas of how that would work."

On the subject of franchises, a rebooted Spawn movie has been in the works for some time. Production was halted by the pandemic and now the writer's strike, but McFarlane says that hiring a director is the final piece of the puzzle.

"I've taken a step back on (directing)," the Image man says. "I've been

a prisoner of my own success. I got a top flight team. Malcolm (Spellman) and Scott (Silver) writing, who wrote *The Joker* and new *Captain America*. Jaime Foxx starring. As the CEO, are we gonna walk into Hollywood and say that we've got an A team, plus Todd? I wouldn't buy that pitch. So I had a call with some of the people involved and they breathed a collective sigh when I volunteered to get out of the director's chair. I understand."

McFarlane's initial desire to grasp creative control after the 1997 attempt at a live action Spawn essentially flopped (despite an awesome soundtrack). At the present time, he's yet to find a director.

"We want to know what kind of movie we have and take a script to the director," McFarlane says. "We were expecting to be in the studios in June/July and we were on track, until the strike. They had to do what they had to do, which is put the pencils down. My guess is, probably 60 days, 90 at the most, after the strike ends, we'll be in Hollywood studios making the sale. That'll give us time to make the changes, find a director, and then come in with whatever it is that we're selling. There's still a big question of what we're selling. One movie? A series of movies? Or the Spawn Universe, whatever that means?"

Besides the Spawn reboot, McFarlane has a lot of comic books and toys (through his McFarlane Toys company) coming out this year. He teases that the Spawn character will appear in a big AAA video game, though he can't fully spill the beans yet.

"When I put my character into someone else's world, I always say, 'make him the coolest character in that world,'" McFarlane says. "That's how you get approval. I have way more flexibility giving you approval if you're bending the status quo than if I was a big corporation with a multi-billion dollar brand. I'm not that precious. Go have fun, and make him compatible with your current fanbase."

Meanwhile, Skybound will be celebrating season 2 of the Impact Winter vampire-based podcast at Comic-Con, as well as season 2 of the animated *Invincible* show. And there's more.

"We have a TV show in the fall on Freevee called *Classified*, which we shot in South Africa," Alpert says. "We have a whole bunch of games including *WrestleQuest*. There's a ton of comics, and Impact Winter will be huge. It's hard for us to keep up with all the awesome stuff going on at Skybound, but I think it's going to be a pretty big year for us."

Visit comic-con.org for all San Diego Comic-Con information.