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Parole hearing for killer of Ojai teen postponed for 5 years

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At his nearly hourlong parole hearing on Jan. 19, held via videoconference, David Ramiro Alvarez, 46, who is serving a sentence of 25 years to life with the possibility of parole, for murdering 14-year-old Nordhoff freshman Kali Manley in 1998, was granted a five-year postponement. He will be up for parole again in 2028.

Appearing on camera at Calipatria State Prison, starting at 10:30 a.m., Alvarez ac-

cepted the recommendation of the commissioners for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for the postponement, through his attorney. That time would allow him to continue to take classes and address his substance-abuse addictions, which his attorney said would make him suitable for release in the future.

The recommendation for a five-year postponement was made by Commissioner Patricia Cassidy and approved by her, in consultation with Deputy Commissioner Kate

Iwanami. By Alvarez accepting the postponement, Commissioner Cassidy said that he "is saying he is unsuitable" for parole currently. She noted that the stipulation is "no guarantee of parole" in the future, "just another hearing."

Alvarez's attorney, Diane Letarte in San Diego, had requested a three-year postponement, but that was rejected by the commissioners.

Deputy Attorney General Seth McCutcheon, who also attended the video conference

hearing, objected to the three-year postponement request "based on the record before us," telling commissioners: "A 10-year denial is more appropriate. I could go into it for several reasons." Among the reasons he listed, before being interrupted by Commissioner Cassidy, was "the callous and cold-blooded nature" of Kali Manley's murder.

Alvarez admitted before his sentencing on March 30, 2000, to strangling the teen-

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Teachers' union votes 'no confidence' in superintendent

■ OUSD told to cut \$2.3 million

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Ojai Unified School District's teachers' union announced a "vote of no confidence" in Superintendent Tiffany Morse at the Jan. 18 school board meeting. The vote was announced amid the backdrop of county and state agencies demanding the school district cut \$2.3 million from the current year's budget or face insolvency.

The school board set two more meetings, one at 6 p.m., Friday, Jan. 20, to consider budget cuts, and another at 6 p.m., Monday, Jan. 23, to discuss school consolidation.

Dozens of teachers and supporters stood each time a teacher spoke during public comment at the Jan. 18 meeting. Loud applause filled Matilija Middle School Auditorium again and again as teachers, staff, parents and community members expressed their lack of confidence in Morse, past board members and district administration.

No confidence vote

"We, the members of the Ojai Federation of Teachers, respectfully present to you this official letter of a majority Vote of No Confidence in Superintendent Dr. Tiffany Morse," said Richard Byrd, president of the Ojai Federation of Teachers and Meiners Oaks School teacher, reading to the school board from a three-page letter. The entire letter is posted online with this article. It lists several reasons the teachers' union has taken this position, including points from the state's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team report, including the district's failure to address "any deficiencies the county Office of Education has identified in its oversight letters in the most recent and two prior fiscal years."

In an email, Byrd told the Ojai Valley News that, of the 97 members of teachers' union, 60 supported the no-confidence vote, and there were zero "no" votes. Ten members abstained and 27 members were not present at the vote.

Citing the "slow, steady and complete erosion of my trust in our superintendent," Lisa Patsch, a Mira Monte School teacher, said she has been watching the district's "financial struggles," and "somewhere along the way, our past board forgot that our superintendent works for you and not the other way around."

Katie Austin, a second- and third-grade teacher at San Antonio LEADS Academy, said: "I can't sleep at night because I'm so stressed about getting pink-slipped any day now and whose fault will that be? Certainly not mine, but yours, Dr. Morse, the previous and returning board trustees, the district office."

Teachers and classified staff also expressed the need to raise pay, based on available state funds. The district continues to negotiate with teachers regarding their contract.

Several speakers also referenced past school board members, Jane Weil, Michael Shanahan and Kevin Ruf, and returning board members, Shelly Griffen and Rebecca Chandler, as holding responsibility for the current situation.

"The board has been made a fool of time and time again based on



Ojai Unified School District teachers stand in Matilija Middle School Auditorium in support of colleagues speaking during the Jan. 18 OUSD school board meeting.

her misrepresentations," said Philip Bagley of Ojai, an OUSD parent, referring to the superintendent. He asked that she be replaced.

He referenced an Oct. 27 email from Ventura County Superintendent of Schools César Morales, recommending the district certify its interim budget as "negative" to activate assistance from the county.

Instead, Bagley pointed out, that email was not provided to the public until just last week.

Also, at the board's December meeting, Morse recommended a "positive" budget certification. "This lack of transparency has had drastic consequences for our district," he said.

Fiscal insolvency

OUSD's budget has been "downgraded" to "negative" by the Ventura County Office of Education, based on findings that the district

PLEASE SEE OUSD ON PAGE A5

'I am sorry. I am sorry that we are here. I am sorry that the issues we are facing are as dire as they are and I'm sorry for my part in that.'

— Shelly Griffen, Ojai Unified School Board member, Area 4

Ojai Valley News photo by Laura Rearwin Ward

Ojai gets new chief of police

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Ojai will welcome its new chief of police, and express its gratitude for its outgoing chief, at the next Ojai City Council meeting on Jan. 24.

Chief Trina Newman, a 25-year veteran with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office, will replace Chief Jose Rivera, who became Ojai's chief of police in January 2020.

Rivera has been promoted to assistant sheriff by newly elected Ventura County Sheriff Jim Fryhoff, who on

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Frost follows record rain

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No rain is on the immediate horizon for Ojai for at least the next several days, forecasters said.

Instead, mostly clear and dry weather, with near- or sub-freezing overnight temperatures are expected in the Ojai Valley through the weekend and into next week, according to the National Weather Service.

The dry spell follows two weeks of back-to-back storms that brought record rainfall to the region, includ-

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WATER LEVELS

SEASONAL YEAR-TO-DATE

RAINFALL TOTALS FROM OCT. 1

Matilija Canyon	41.69"
Soule Park	21.05"
Casitas Dam	26.54"
Oak View	23.79"
Upper Ojai	30.87"

LAKE CASITAS VOLUME

Oct. 1, 2022	72,973 acre-feet
Jan. 19, 2023	98,851 acre-feet
Current volume	42.0 percent

Lisa Marie Presley's happy years at Happy Valley School

By Mimi Walker
Special to the Ojai Valley News

Being the daughter of a legend as seismic as Elvis Presley could hardly be construed as a cakewalk. Lisa Marie Presley handled all the hurdles that come with great fame under that legacy in her own way, reflective of the many wildly eclectic experiences in her life before her untimely passing on Jan. 12 at age 54.

For a brief interlude, she lived one of the closest experiences to normalcy in her life right here in the Ojai Valley. From 1983 to 1985, she spent her sophomore and junior years at Happy Valley School (now the Besant Hill School), at last having a chance to do that which usually eluded her: blend in with her peers.

"I think she was so overwhelmed by the notoriety that she didn't invite, that she just wanted to quietly slip into the school ... she just wanted to take a deep breath," said Dennis Rice, former Happy Valley School headmaster.

Her classmates welcomed her as she was, and were often very protective of her if anyone dared attempt to pry, as one of her closest friends from HVS, Jake Rupp, shared.

Rupp recalled a situation with a former boyfriend of Lisa Marie at that time. It was discovered that this particular boyfriend from Los Angeles was tipping off paparazzi to Lisa Marie's whereabouts.

As soon as Lisa Marie broke it off with him, "We were all gathered together ready to get the pitchforks out" if he ever returned to the valley, Rupp joked. But, he added, that's just the kind of community the HVS student body was: "I have a lot of friends from Happy Valley that I could go for years without talking (to), but I know that if anything ever happened, I could call them and they would be there for me. ... I think we were able to help

PLEASE SEE PRESLEY ON PAGE A3



A teenage Lisa Marie Presley, left, embraces friend Jane Burn in an undated photo in the mid-'80s of a Happy Valley School camping trip across the Sierras and throughout the Sespe.

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