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County districts to stay mostly the same

By Sam Morgen
The Bakersfield Californian

The Kern County Board of Supervisors have locked in their new district boundaries for the next 10 years.

In a 4-1 vote with Supervisor Leticia Perez dissenting, the board approved a map labeled Draft Plan A3 that makes only slight changes to the current boundaries. They made the selection over an alternative that would have drastically altered all districts in an effort to supposedly better represent local communities.

Discussion during Tuesday's meeting centered on

ethnicity and its ongoing place within local politics. The proceedings took place in the shadow of a 2016 lawsuit, which resulted in a federal court ruling that Kern County had illegally split the Latino vote among multiple districts.

The result of the lawsuit was the creation of a new District 4, meant to give Kern County's historic farmworker communities a voice on the board. But the question of whether the districts drawn by the Board of Supervisors in 2018 fairly represents the local population persisted through this year's redistricting process.

Supervisor David Couch, who had represented the old District 4, won two subsequent elections to remain on the board. In both elections, he was victorious over Latino candidates, and some members of the public brought up the lack of diversity on the board at Tuesday's meeting.

"My daughter and unborn child shouldn't have to look at this board in Kern County and not see more than Leticia Perez," said Mercedes Macias during public comments. "This board is filled with white men and that is not a reflection

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Rajaratnam speaks on redistricting

By Darla A. Baker
The Daily Independent

This story first appeared on ridgecrestca.com on Friday, Nov. 12.

Ridgecrest City Councilmember Solomon Rajaratnam spoke to the Rotary Club last week about the hearing held Nov. 8 before the Kern County Board of

Supervisors to discuss the redistricting process to redraw the district lines so that each district is substantially equal in population.

Every 10 years, local governments use new U.S. Census data to redraw the district, a process called re-

See SOLOMON, A8



Participants in the ceremonial wallbreaking for the 13th construction project of the \$2.7B MILCON Earthquake Recovery Program to build the Michelson Laboratory Complex on Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake on November 8., from left, RQ Construction executive Kevin Kurz, Ridgecrest Council Member Solomon Rajaratnam, OICC China Lake Commanding Officer Capt. Laurie Scott and NAWCWD Deputy Technical Director Brad Harlow.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVFAC

NAVFAC breaks ground on Michelson Lab rebuilding

News release

CHINALAKE – Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Officer in Charge of Construction (OICC) China Lake hosted its ninth groundbreaking ceremony on November 8, for the \$220 million Michelson Laboratory Complex aboard Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake, as part of the \$2.7 billion Earthquake Recovery Program.

The Michelson Laboratory Complex project encompasses the replacement of three industrial and testing facilities and the restoration and modernization of two of the eight wings that make up Michelson Laboratory. In all, over 188,000 square feet of new, state of the art, development, testing and production facilities and 50,000 square feet of restored and modernized work spaces will support a the

continued advancement of weapons research aboard NAWS China Lake. The estimated move in date of the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD) staff into the Michelson Laboratory Complex is fall 2023 and the restoration and modernization of the two wings is expected to be completed in summer 2025.

OICC China Lake Construction Manager Lt j.g. Ramya Shah served as the master of ceremonies and provided welcoming remarks before introducing the speakers for the ceremony RQ Construction Executive Kevin Kurz, NAWCWD Deputy Technical Director Brad Harlow and OICC China Lake's Commanding Officer Capt. Laurie Scott.

"The existing facilities were originally built in the mid-1940s and have

See NAVFAC, A4



OICC China Lake Commanding Officer Capt. Laurie Scott delivered closing remarks during the groundbreaking ceremony held November 8 at the site of the Michelson Laboratory Complex.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVFAC

Packed agenda for SSUSD board meeting

By John V. Ciani
For the Daily Independent

The Sierra Sands Unified School District Board of Education will meet Thursday at 7 p.m. to conduct a public hearing on a resolution to establish temporary interfund transfers. The board will act on the resolution later in the meeting.

The board will also conduct a hearing and act on a resolution regarding a short-term employee to perform specified service between Nov. 19 and Aug. 2, 2022.

The board will also consider approval of a handheld laser welding and cleaning system for Metal I, II, and III Courses at Burroughs High School as well approval of a commercial grade CO2 laser engraver and cutter for introduction to engineering, principles of engineering, and digital electronics courses at Burroughs.

Also on the agenda is an Educator Effectiveness Funds draft plan presentation.

Personnel administration items include a request to approve increased pay rates for daily and long-term substitute teachers.

The board will consider requests to authorize an agreement with BSK for inspection services associated with earthquake repairs to Sierra Vista Education Center as well as authorization to approve an agreement with West Coast Air, Inc. for design and preconstruction services for HVAC upgrades.

Business administration items include a request to adopt a resolution authorizing the superintendent to determine the amount and request release of monies in settlement of pending litigation.

The board will also consider nomina-

See SSUSD, A5

NAWS bans drone use within 5 miles of base fence line

Staff report

Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake has banned flying personal drones throughout nearly the entirety of the Indian Wells Valley.

According to a release from NAWS public affairs officer Hannah Moore, no drones are allowed within five miles of the base's fence line. This five mile buf-

fer would extend across Highway 14 to the west, and past the Wagon Wheel off-highway vehicle area to the south.

All of Inyokern, the Brown Road area, and Pearsonville would fall under the ban. A look at a map with the five-mile distance drawn shows that the only areas in Ridgecrest that are outside the prohibited zone are Jarvis Avenue west of

College Heights Boulevard, the athletic fields at Cerro Coso College, or the homes to the west of China Lake Boulevard south of Catalina Lane.

The GUNS4US and Sage gun ranges are also outside the zone.

"Recreational drone use is strictly prohibited within NAWS airspace and base perimeter under UAS Flight Restriction and prohibits those

flights 24 hours, seven days a week. If you are flying your drone outside of the base perimeter but within the local area, remember that you must fly the drone at least five miles away from the NAWS base fence line," Moore said in the release.

The release also recommended drone flyers use the FAA's B4UFLY app to check for re-

stricted airspace, but B4UFLY only shows a five-mile radius from the China Lake airfield, rather than the entire fence line.

For more information on drone operations aboard the installation, contact NAWSCL public affairs officer Moore at 760-939-1683.

How much will you need to retire? Let's talk.

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