

# Coachella Valley

## Palm Desert delays ranked-choice voting

**Sherry Barkas** Palm Springs Desert Sun  
USA TODAY NETWORK

An amended settlement agreement has been reached between the city of Palm Desert and two residents, who sued over its at-large voting system, that delays implementation of a ranked choice voting system until 2022.

The new agreement also includes a map outlining the boundaries for the Civic Center Core voting district and has been accepted by the plaintiffs, city attorney Bob Hargreaves said.

Ranked-choice voting allows voters to rank up to three candidates by preference. It is a system used by many cities, including San Francisco, but would be new for Riverside County.

The system can be difficult to explain, and council members sought an extension for implementation, saying it would be unfair to roll out such a change at a time when voters are dealing with the stress of the coronavirus pandemic.

The city also must pay for the software used to do ranked-choice voting and had set aside \$350,000. But Palm Desert, like other cities throughout the valley, is bracing for millions of dollars in lost revenue due to the pandemic, which has resulted in the cancellation or postponement of major tourism-driven events.

"I want to enthusiastically, on behalf of the city, thank the plaintiffs for collaborating to assess the appropriate implementation date for ranked choice voting," said Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Kelly. "They've shown true interest in what's best for the community and we are highly appreciative."

Plaintiffs were not immediately available for comment.



**Karina Quintanilla, left, a plaintiff in a lawsuit against Palm Desert, talks with Doug Johnson, president/founder of National Demographics Corp. Looking on are Palm Desert resident Charles Ara and City Clerk Rachel Klassen.**

SHERRY BARKAS/THE DESERT SUN

The lawsuit was filed in June by the Malibu-based law firm Shenkman & Hughes on behalf of plaintiffs Lorraine Salas and Karina Quintanilla, accusing the city of violating the California Voting Rights Act with its at-large system.

CVRA requires that cities switch to districts, grouping "communities of interest" to ensure that protected minorities have a better chance for representation.

The amended settlement agreement culminates months of public meetings and hearings to draw input from residents, some of whom submitted their own maps for consideration. In the end, the council approved one drawn by the city's demographer with Glendale-based National Demographics Corp. and titled "NDC 7."

The "Civic Center Core District" – initially called the "Downtown District" –

includes Civic Center Park and City Hall, and surrounding neighborhoods.

The area was found by demographers to have the largest concentration of Latino residents – about 26% of the city's population of 48,443 based on 2000 Census results.

The district is bounded by Highway 111 on the south; Deep Canyon Road on the east; and Monterey Avenue on the west to Fred Waring Drive where it extends further west to include neighborhoods on Vista Bonita Paseo Way, Fleetwood Circle and Gloriana Drive.

The northwest boundary is a jagged line that includes Park View Drive and a portion of Magnesia Falls Drive. The boundary then extends northeast across the Whitewater channel to include an area within Rebecca Road,

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## Report: Valley jobless rate to hit nearly 32% in May

**Melissa Daniels** Palm Springs Desert Sun  
USA TODAY NETWORK

About one in three Coachella Valley workers are out of a job this spring, according to a new economic report.

The Coachella Valley Economic Partnership said Monday the region's unemployment rate is projected to be nearly 32% in May, more than four times the approximate 7.2% unemployment rate that existed before the coronavirus pandemic hit.

CVEP, a valley-focused economic and business advocacy group, released the figures in an economic impact report detailing the effects that the pandemic could have on the region's workforce and economy.

In a region where tourism supports one in four jobs, the area is worse off than many other places, said Laura James, CVEP's vice president of innovation. "We're getting hit harder but we're absolutely not alone," she said.

About 53,795 people are expected to have lost their jobs from December to May, the report says. That leaves around 133,424 working people in a region with about 463,000 permanent residents.

The estimated unemployment rate figure doesn't include entrepreneurs, small business owners, or independent contractors who may have also lost work during the pandemic.

### Sales, food service and service sector hit hardest

Nearly two-thirds of the occupations that are anticipated to be lost

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# Jobless rate

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during the pandemic are in the following categories:

- Sales and sales-related jobs: 14,523
- Food preparation and serving jobs: 11,787
- Personal care and service sector: 7,550

James said sales is likely the hardest-hit category due to the way the pandemic and associated shelter-in-place orders have quashed retail operations, which are a significant presence in the valley and rely heavily on spending from tourists.

But it’s unclear how fast those jobs would be regained, with stores that do re-open likely to ramp-up up slowly, and consumers developing new online shopping habits during the shelter-in-

place orders.

The sales category also could include hotel or tourism-related positions, or business-to-business sales, James said.

The timing of the pandemic is “lethal,” the report said, with many businesses relying on the busy March and April tourist months to get them through the slow, hot summer.

“We’ve essentially extended their bad season over several months,” James said.

Typically the region has more than 17,000 people working in restaurants, bars and dining establishments, but the estimated job loss is around 69% due to the restrictions that keep people from dining out.

## Low-paying jobs get wiped out

The report notes that the hardest-hit job categories typically pay less than jobs that are not as impacted by the

pandemic. Statewide, sales jobs have median salary of under \$30,000, with food and personal care sectors paying between \$30,000 and \$49,999 annually, the report says.

“The most vulnerable members of society are bearing the highest burden of job losses,” the report said.

James said that having a high unemployment rate can exacerbate other issues, such as food insecurity and mental health problems.

Job categories that aren’t as hard-hit, like legal occupations, engineering, and computer and mathematics, are also some of the valley’s smaller occupations. CVEP’s mission is to diversify the local economy with different kinds of jobs, and ease the economy’s reliance on tourism, James said.

“There were no surprises,” in seeing which jobs were lost and which weren’t, James said.

The report lands as Gov. Gavin New-

som announced that the state could take small steps toward re-opening by Friday with certain restrictions. But it’s unclear how fast those steps will proceed, and how many jobs will be brought back even when those businesses are able to re-open.

So far, local officials have convened multiple groups to discuss a way forward and help the region recover economically, including a Riverside County task force that launched recently and is expected to convene for the next 18 months.

Previously, the Coachella Valley Economic Recovery Team was formed with multiple representatives from industry and trade groups to discuss the economic future of the region.

*Melissa Daniels covers business in the Coachella Valley. She can be reached at (760)-567-8458, melissa.daniels@desertsun.com, or on Twitter @melissamdaniels.*

# Voting

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42nd Avenue and Cook Street.

District voting goes into effect with the November City Council election.

Only one current council member, Susan Marie Weber, lives within the Civic Center Core district. She is up for re-election this year.

“This has been a long process and a difficult and challenging process,” Councilmember Sabby Jonathan said Thursday, just before the City Council unanimously approved the map and resolution delaying implementation of ranked choice voting.

“I want to thank all the residents that came in and offered their input and their opinions and perspectives,” Jonathan said, adding it helped shape the final result.”

Many questioned the creation of two voting districts over five, which other valley cities such as Palm Springs and Cathedral City have adopted to comply with the California Voting Rights Act, saying it seems unfair that the smaller, “Civic Center Core” district have one representative on the council elected every four years. The larger district has four representatives on council, all elected at-large, two every two years.

“I think this was a situation where there were a lot of competing pros and cons and benefits and downsides and upsides,” Jonathan said. “And, at the end of the day, I’m hopeful, and I believe, that we crafted a method for moving forward that brings tremendous balance for all of the concerns that have been expressed.”

*Desert Sun reporter Sherry Barkas can be reached at sherry.barkas@thedesertsun.com or (760) 778-4694.*



**Victor Alberto Arenas Bustamante**

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of our dad, Victor Alberto Arenas Bustamante. He passed away peacefully on April 27th, 2020 at the age of 76 surrounded by his son John Arenas, daughter in law Darcie Arenas, and his grandsons Sebastian and Rowen Arenas. He is also survived by his wife Estela Castillo, daughter Audrey Warmington, son in law Michael Warmington and his grandchildren, Isabella and Matthew Warmington.

Dad was a loving and giving human being who was known for his joy in his grandkids, his love for reading, knowledge and typing in capital letters on Facebook. He loved to talk and share stories, but most of all he enjoyed people living life to the fullest. He leaves a lasting legacy with his family and all of those fortunate enough to have known him, he will be missed dearly. Online condolences may be made on adobecreekfuneralhome.com.

TODAY'S OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES				
Name	Age	Town, State	Death Date	Arrangements
*Bustamante, Victor Alberto Arenas	76	-	27-Apr	Adobe Creek Funeral Home
*Hubbard, Randall Dee	-	Palm Desert	29-Apr	-
*Lucia, Gloria	80	-	21-Apr	Forest Lawn
*Simrell, Craig A.	71	Memphis, TN	26-Apr	Dignity Memorial
* Additional information in display obituaries				
Obituaries appear in print and online at www.DesertSun.com/Obituaries				

## Craig A. Simrell

MEMPHIS, TN - Craig A. Simrell, 71, passed away peacefully at his home in Memphis, TN, on Sunday, April 26th, 2020. He was born in Chicago, IL, and at the age of 9, his family moved to South Fulton, TN. He graduated from South Fulton High School and earned a Bachelor’s degree from Christian Brothers University in Memphis, TN. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army reaching rank of Specialist Five served during the Vietnam War Era. He was assigned to aid the Adjutant General and the Adjutant General Sergeant Major in Kaiserslautern, Germany, where he earned the Army Commendation Medal. He was a Partner in the Jiffy Steamer Co. in Union City, TN, originally started by his father in Chicago, IL, in 1940. Craig is survived by his spouse Mark Greganti. Craig was preceded in death by his parents, John and Estelle Simrell both of Union City, TN. He is also survived by family members in Union City, TN, including nieces and nephews. Craig’s sense of humor and generosity will never be forgotten. Craig supported many organizations including the Arts in Memphis, TN, and organizations in Palm Springs, CA, where he was also a part-time resident. He was an avid traveler and visited almost every country over the years.

There will be no public visitation or services held. Any memorials may be made to the American Cancer Society or an organization of your choice.

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## Gloria Lucia

On Tuesday, April 21, 2020, Gloria Lucia, loving wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, passed away at the age of 80.

Gloria was born on February 23, 1940 in San Miguel el Alto, Jalisco, Mexico to Maria Jimenez Loza and Jose Loza. She married the love of her life, Frank Lucia, in 1961 and settled in The Coachella Valley. They raised two sons, Jess and Frank Jr and one daughter, Nathaleen.

Gloria was a phenomenal woman with a strong drive and determination that she instilled into her family. She worked hard to provide and to ensure her family was never lacking. Faith in God and family were her foundations in life.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Maria, her father, Jose and her husband, Frank. She is survived by her sister, Maria Guadalupe (Linda), her three children, Jess, Frank, Nathaleen, her grandchildren, Jennifer, Delone, Jess, Danielle, Ryan, Alyssa, her great grandchild, Emma, and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

An intimate viewing was held at Forest Lawn in Cathedral City and an intimate service was held at Coachella Valley Cemetery on May 1, 2020.



*Those we love don't go away,  
They walk beside us everyday.  
Unseen, unheard, but always near,  
Still loved, still missed and very dear.*

## Randall Dee Hubbard

PALM DESERT - Randall Dee Hubbard 6/13/1935 - 4/29/2020

Mr. Hubbard, “R.D.” or Dee Hubbard as many knew him, passed away peacefully at his Palm Desert, CA home within BIGHORN Golf Club late Wednesday evening surrounded by family and friends.

Born into a hard-working family during the depression era, he was the youngest in a family of eight children. He worked hard as a young boy in his family’s ice house in Smith Center, Kansas before going on to work the wheat fields during his summer breaks. He stayed close to home and after high school attended Butler Community College where he received his Associate Degree in order to become a teacher and basketball coach. Soon leaving teaching to better provide for his growing young family, he became a glass salesman. A move that would be the catalyst to huge business success in the glass field. He became President of Safelite Auto Glass and was so proud of the fact that still today you see Safelite trucks going about repairs and service all over the U.S. He formed his own glass company - AFG Industries - which he lead to become the 2nd largest flat glass manufacturer in North America. Selling the glass company in the early 1990’s, he concentrated his efforts in the horse racing world - having purchased Ruidoso Downs Racing, Inc. in 1988 and initiating a take-over of the declining Hollywood Park Racetrack soon after. He added Turf Paradise in Phoenix, and The Woodlands in Kansas City, Kansas, and Multnomah Kennel Club to his portfolio-at the peak of his racing endeavors. He built the Zia Park racetrack in Hobbs, New Mexico in 2003 after being granted the license to build. He left a huge legacy as a breeder, horse owner, and forward thinker and innovator in the Horse racing world. As the 1990’s drew to a close - he concentrated more of his time and efforts to growing BIGHORN Golf Club - a golf and real estate paradise situated at the foot of the Santa Rosa mountains in the Southern



California town of Palm Desert. What started out as a group of investors joining together to purchase the golf course in order to preserve their quick play and tee times - became one of the most successful business endeavors that he undertook during his lifetime.

He worked hard, played harder, and loved being around people - whether it was a caddie on the golf course- or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, he treated them both with the same level of respect and interest. Mr. Hubbard expected a lot -but he also gave a lot - always leading by example. He and his wife, Joan Dale Hubbard formed The Hubbard Foundation in 1986 which has a concentration on funding scholarships to young people across the United States. To date, they have distributed over \$47MM to fund educations and better lives primarily in Kansas, New Mexico and California. He helped form The Shoemaker Foundation - set up for ailing jockeys. BIGHORN Cares and BIGHORN Golf Club Charities were established to help those in the Coachella Valley and to give a leg up with education to his employees and their families at BIGHORN. He was honored with numerous awards - including The Phoenix Award in the glass business; he was inducted into the American Quarter Horse Association Hall of Fame, and one of his proudest moments - he was a recipient of The Horatio Alger Award. The one thing that eluded him was winning the All American Futurity - the #1 spot was the only one he never cashed in on.

Mr. Hubbard was preceded in death by his parents, Miner and Loese Hubbard; brothers Derrol, Dick and Jack, and sisters, Donna, Marge, Melba and daughter Teri. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Joan Dale, sons Derrol (Kim Casler) and Bret (Dan McGeary), daughter Shana Hubbard, his sister Ella Sparks, 6 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren; 3 nieces he adored and friends across the world. He will be sorely missed.

A celebration of life will be scheduled this summer. Memorial donations may be made to The Hubbard Foundation - P.O. Box 2498, Ruidoso, NM 88355