



Santa Monica Daily Press

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THE BREAKING NEWS ISSUE

Teacher was warned in past

Santa Monica Police Department investigated molestation suspect in 2006

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

AIRPORT COURTHOUSE A Lincoln Middle School teacher charged on 14 sexual molestation counts was investigated in 2006 following similar allegations, according to a document made available by the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District on Wednesday.

Thomas Beltran, a teacher at the middle school for the past two decades, was interviewed by Santa Monica Police Department investigators stemming from claims of inappropriate physical conduct but was never charged because there was insufficient evidence to tie him to a crime, according to a statement by the district on Wednesday. Beltran teaches English as a

second language at the school.

The claims from the 2006 investigation have since been filed as criminal charges and are included in the current case, according to Sandi Gibbons, spokeswoman with the L.A. District Attorney's Office.

Beltran, a veteran public school teacher in the district for 30 years, was arrested in Culver City on Saturday, a day after Santa Monica police investigators interviewed a 12-year-old student who claimed she was sexually abused. During the interview, detectives concluded that there could possibly be other victims, according to the SMPD.

The district on Tuesday was notified of the March 2006 investigation by the SMPD, receiving a correspondence between former Lincoln Principal Kathy Scott and Det. Lloyd Gladden.

According to the document, a student reported to Assistant Principal Francis Costanzo on March 14, 2006 that she was uncomfortable remaining in Beltran's class because of the way he was touching her. The letter is dated March 30, 2006.

School officials removed the student from Beltran's class and talked to the teacher about his contact with students.

"I met with Mr. Beltran ... to inform him of (the student's) complaint," Scott states in the letter. "Mr. Beltran was shocked at the accusation and was upset that his actions had been interpreted as inappropriate."

The letter concludes by stating that Scott instructed the teacher not to touch any of his female students in his classroom to "protect himself from any further misinterpretation."

"Mr. Beltran was in total agreement with

my request," Scott said in the letter.

Scott left the school in June of that year because she moved out of the area.

"This is all new to us," Mike Matthews, the assistant superintendent for human resources, said in an interview on Wednesday. "We're calling some previous employees to see what their awareness was of the issue."

The 2006 investigation is the only one made aware to the district thus far, Matthews said.

He added that the district was able to disclose the letter because it came from police files, not the school's, which would've made it a confidential personnel matter.

Beltran, a Los Angeles resident, was

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TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Janitors with the Service Employees International Union Local 1877 held a rally outside The Water Garden on Wednesday after contract talks with commercial real estate management companies stalled. Janitors on the Westside of Los Angeles are asking for the same pay and benefits that their counterparts make in Downtown Los Angeles and other areas. Members of the union voted to go on strike Wednesday and plan to stage rallies throughout the Westside, including Santa Monica, which is home to a number of large, high-rent commercial developments.

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Solar equipment may be getting more affordable

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE Pricy solar panels, green in both cost and sustainability, could soon be more attainable under proposed state legislation that would allow cities like Santa Monica to provide financial assistance to interested property owners.

A bill authored by state Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, D-Woodland Hills, would authorize cities to form assessment districts through which they can provide property owners loans to finance the upfront costs of installing solar panels. The loans would be paid back with long-term repayments added to the property tax bill. Loans would be offered either through a floating bond or third-party source, such as a bank, in which case the interest would probably be higher.

The proposed legislation, known as AB 811, has caught the attention of Santa Monica city officials who have expressed interest in merging the law with the Solar Santa Monica program, a City Hall initiative

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Teacher was instructed not to touch students

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charged and arraigned at the Airport Courthouse on Tuesday on 14 counts of molestation, including eight counts of a lewd act on a child, three counts of continuous sexual abuse and three counts of sexual penetration with a foreign object on a child under 14. He is being held on \$3.3 million bail.

Detectives had interviewed five girls at the time of Beltran's arraignment and more charges are possible as the case is still under investigation. Authorities believe at least one of the girls was molested for more than a year.

During the arraignment, the prosecution said it has videotape evidence of one of the alleged instances of molestation.

**AT THE TIME
THE CASE WAS
PRESENTED THERE WAS
INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE
FOR FILING.”**

Sandi Gibbons,
Spokeswoman, L.A. District Attorney's Office

Beltran is scheduled to appear back in court on June 6 for a preliminary hearing.

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New law would authorize cities to offer loans for solar panels

FROM LOANS PAGE 1

that assists residents and businesses through the photovoltaic panel installation process, from choosing a contractor to applying for permits. Since the program launched in 2007, approximately 350 kilowatts worth of energy-generating panels have been installed.

“The primary advantage is they would need no money up front,” Susan Munves, the Energy and Green Building Program administrator for City Hall, said.

Payments would be made back to City Hall over a 20-year period and if the property transfers hands within that time, the balance of the loan would get passed on to the new owner.

The bill comes several years after the passage of SB 1, which established the California Solar Initiative (CSI), a program that aims to install 3,000 megawatts of solar electricity by 2017 with a budget of roughly \$3.3 billion. The program provides financial incentives for property owners to install photovoltaic panels, all with the goal of eventually creating a solid solar industry in California by the end of the initiative, making solar panels far more affordable.

While the program makes solar panels more affordable, they are still cost prohibitive for many homeowners considering that CSI only covers a portion of the upfront costs, Levine said during an interview on Wednesday.

Solar panels run about \$20,000 for the average single-family home and the investment is slowly paid back over the years through energy savings.

“A lot of people don't have \$20,000 laying around to pay for solar panels,” Levine, who is running to replace Santa Monica state Senator Sheila Kuehl, said.

The bill was drafted as a supplement to SB 1, further assisting with the progress of

the California Solar Initiative.

While green building materials have become more affordable with the increase in demand, solar panels have remained unaffordable for many property owners, according to Ruben Aronin, the director of communications for Global Green USA, which runs the Green Building Resource Center on Main Street.

That wasn't the case just 10 years ago where green building products weren't mass produced and the cost per unit was much higher, Aronin said.

“We're seeing a growth trend in our Green Building Resource Center, in traffic and in consumer demand for products,” Aronin said on Wednesday.

Mary Luevano, the policy and legislative affairs director for Global Green USA, said consumers shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the solar panels do reap savings in the long term, which can come in handy during times when energy prices are uncertain.

“You buy a system that you know is guaranteed to last for 20 years at least and the pay back ranges from seven to 10 years and then you're home free,” Luevano said. “If energy prices are spiking because natural gas is scarce and global warming considerations are causing us to use less in fossil fuels consumption, the solar owner is going to be in a very good spot.”

The bill is currently sitting in the Senate Local Government Committee and is scheduled to be heard on June 4. Santa Monica city officials hope the law goes into effect by this summer.

“It will provide people who are interested with the opportunity to get solar without having to lay out that investment,” Munves said. “That might make all the difference between just wanting them and actually doing it.”

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