



City of Needles

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*Mayor, Janet Jernigan
Vice Mayor Ellen Campbell
Councilmember Tona Belt
Councilmember Jamie McCorkle
Councilmember JoAnne Pogue
Councilmember Henry Longbrake
Councilmember Larry Ford*

City Manager Patrick J. Martinez

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PATRICK J. MARTINEZ, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: WEEKLY MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 10, 2026

City Manager's Weekly Highlights

Economic Development & Tourism

- Announced a record \$602.5 million assessed property valuation, reflecting continued long-term growth in the City's property tax base.
- Promoted Needles' tourism, economic development, and nationally recognized Off-Highway Motor Vehicle (OHMV) Pilot Program at the **Discover SoCal Empire Regional Summit**.

Intergovernmental Affairs

- Continued supporting statewide public agency liability reform through the **Coalition to Protect Community Services**.

Grants & Workforce Development

- Began recruitment for two grant-funded **Maintenance Worker I** positions through the State's **Clean California Community Cleanup & Employment Pathway Program**.

Public Safety

- Recognized the San Bernardino County Sheriff's successful Fourth of July marine enforcement operation, during which no major injury or fatal boating accidents were reported in the Needles area.

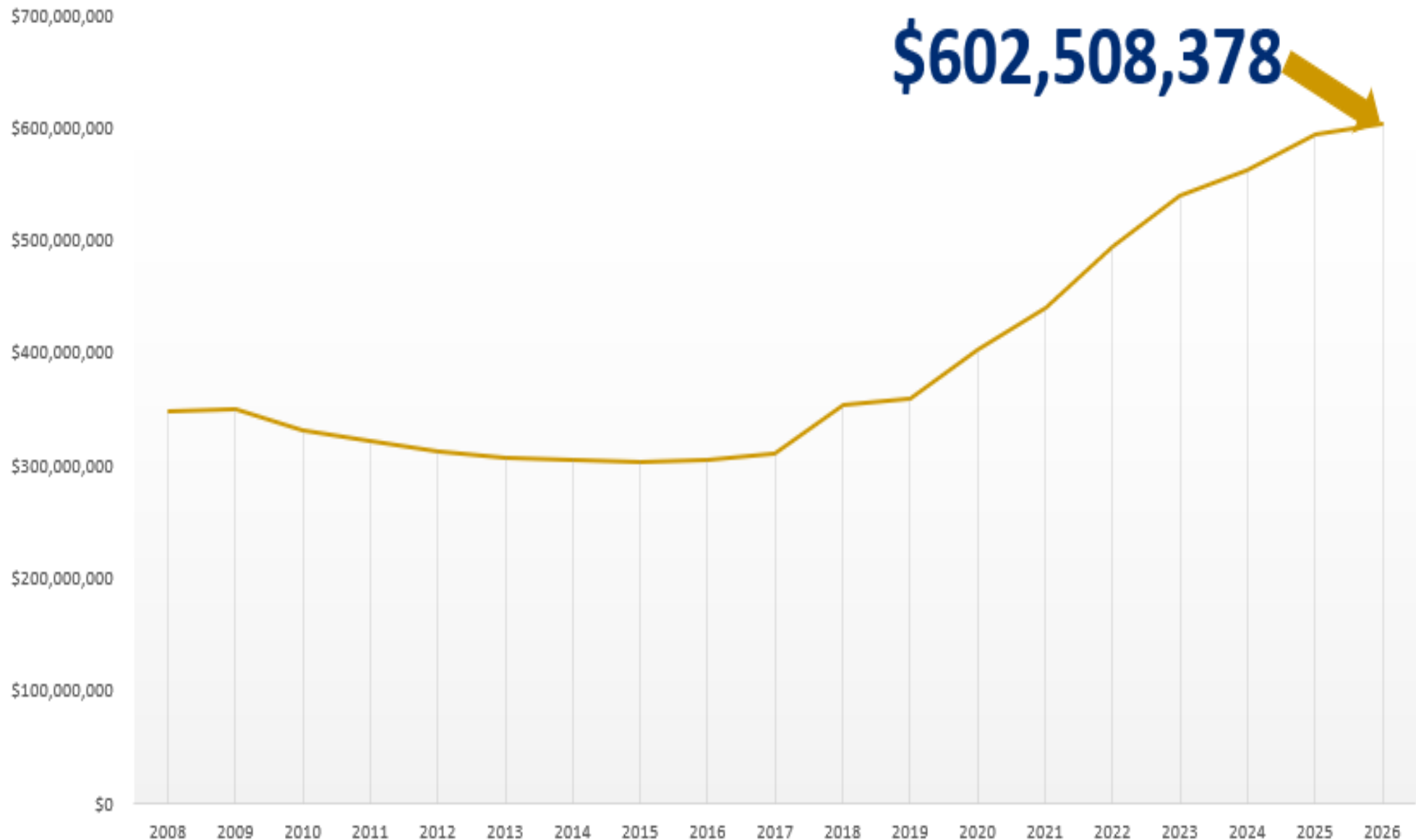
1. **2026 City of Needles Assessment Roll – Continued Growth:** The San Bernardino County Assessor-Recorder-Clerk's Office has released the 2026 Assessment Roll for the City of Needles, reflecting a total assessed property value of **\$602,508,378**, the highest assessed valuation in the City's history. This represents a **1.6 percent increase** over the 2025 Assessment Roll of **\$593,071,256** and an overall **96 percent increase since 2017**. Since 2017, the City's assessed valuation has increased by approximately **\$295 million**, demonstrating the continued expansion of the City's property tax base. The continued growth in the City's assessed valuation strengthens the City's long-term fiscal foundation by supporting property tax revenues that help fund essential public services and infrastructure. Staff has attached a historical assessment roll chart for the City Council's reference.
2. **Discover SoCal Empire Regional Summit:** This week, Mayor Janet Jernigan and Vice Mayor Ellen Campbell represented the City of Needles at the Discover SoCal Empire Regional Summit in Ontario, where the City hosted an exhibitor booth promoting Needles' tourism assets, outdoor recreation opportunities, economic development initiatives, and the upcoming Route 66 Centennial. The summit brought together tourism, recreation, tribal, and economic development leaders from across Southern California and the Route 66 corridor to strengthen regional partnerships and promote destination marketing. **Mayor Jernigan also participated as a panelist, highlighting the City's innovative Off-Highway Motor Vehicle (OHMV) Pilot Program and its role in expanding recreation and tourism opportunities in Needles.** The conference featured **Caroline Beteta, President and CEO of Visit California**, and participation supported the City Council's goal of increasing tourism, expanding economic development opportunities, and raising the City's visibility throughout the region. **The City extends its appreciation to Discover SoCal and Freddy Bi for their continued partnership and commitment to showcasing the Needles community on a regional, national, and international stage.**
3. **Coalition to Protect Community Services:** As previously reported, the City of Needles joined the Coalition to Protect Community Services, a statewide initiative led by the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority (CJPIA) advocating for reforms to California's public agency liability laws. This week, PublicCEO published an op-ed by Margaret Finlay, President of CJPIA and Chair of the Coalition, highlighting the coalition's efforts to advance proportionate liability legislation for local governments. The article discusses the coalition's position that rising public agency liability costs are placing increasing financial pressure on local governments and diverting resources from essential public services, including public safety, infrastructure, parks, libraries, and recreation. Staff will continue to monitor legislative developments and provide updates as they become available. A [link](#) to the article is provided for the City Council's reference.

4. **Maintenance Worker I Recruitment – Clean California Grant:** The City is currently recruiting for two (2) temporary full-time Maintenance Worker I positions in the Public Works Department funded through the State's Clean California Community Cleanup & Employment Pathway (CCEP) Program. These positions are made possible by the City's recent award of a \$169,355 grant for the "**Revive the Desert – Illegal Dumping Cleanup & Community Stewardship**" initiative. The grant will support expanded litter and illegal dumping cleanup efforts while providing local workforce development opportunities through transitional employment. Interested applicants may submit a resume or letter of interest to **Pam Osteen, Human Resources Director, at posteen@cityofneedles.com**. Residents are encouraged to share this employment opportunity with qualified individuals in the community.
5. **Fourth of July Holiday Marine Enforcement:** The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department's Marine Enforcement Unit conducted its annual Fourth of July Holiday Enforcement Operation from July 3 through July 5 along the Colorado River, including the Needles area. During the operation, deputies conducted **105 enforcement stops**, issued **55 citations**, made **10 boating under the influence (BUI) arrests** and **one DUI arrest**, and investigated **one minor injury boating accident**. No major injury or fatal boating accidents were reported during the enforcement period. Staff appreciates the Sheriff's Department's continued efforts to promote safe and responsible recreation along the Colorado River during one of the busiest boating weekends of the year. The Sheriff's Department's holiday enforcement statistics are attached for the Council's reference.
6. **Community Events Calendar Now Live:** The City's new website now features a [Community Events Calendar](#)—a centralized location for community events, public meetings, and civic programs. Local organizations are invited to submit or update events through the City Clerk's Office to help keep the calendar current and inclusive. Residents can subscribe and sync the calendar to mobile devices for real-time updates, making it easier to stay informed about local events and civic activities.

COMMUNITY EVENTS & RECOGNITION

- I. **Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez Town Hall:** Residents are reminded that Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez will host a Town Hall on **Wednesday, July 15, 2026, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at El Garces**. The Town Hall provides community members with an opportunity to engage directly with their State Assembly representative, discuss legislative priorities, and share feedback on issues affecting the Needles community. Staff encourages interested residents to attend. Additional event information, including the RSVP link (<https://asmrc.org/cf/needlesrsvp>) and a QR code for registration, is attached for the Council's reference.

1. 2026 CITY OF NEEDLES ASSESSMENT ROLL



2026 City of Needles Assessment Roll

Josie Gonzales | Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk

arc.sbcounty.gov

2. DISCOVER SOCIAL REGIONAL SUMMIT



3. CJPIA COALITION UPDATE

Op-Ed: Why California needs proportionate liability for local governments



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Article written by Margaret Finlay, President, California Joint Powers Insurance Authority and Chair, Coalition to Protect Community Services

If you follow the news, you are aware that civil jury verdicts against California public entities have been reaching record levels. Large multi-million-dollar awards that once seemed extraordinary are increasingly common, and the trend shows no sign of slowing. What you may not know is how damaging this situation has become for local government agencies and how it hinders their ability to provide local services.

Recent News



Op-Ed: Why California needs proportionate liability for local governments

July 9, 2026



Marina City Council appoints Matthew Mogensen as next city manager

July 8, 2026



Brentwood appoints Captain Walter O'Grodnick as its 13th chief of police

July 8, 2026



California JPIA member City of Monrovia celebrates Park and Recreation Month with Satoru Tsuneishi Park

July 8, 2026



Blythe awarded \$4.6 million for Hidden Beaches Water Quality project

July 8, 2026



3. CJPIA COALITION UPDATE

Under California's joint and several liability rule, a local government agency found just 1% at fault can be forced to pay 100% of a plaintiff's economic damages—when the other responsible co-defendants can't pay. Every dollar consumed by disproportionate liability judgments and inflated settlements is a dollar unavailable for community services that residents rely on: police and fire protection, roads and infrastructure maintenance, parks, libraries, senior services and youth sports programs.

Establishing proportionate liability means that local governments named in lawsuits would be required to pay only their actual share of fault, as determined by the court. Not only is this fairer and more equitable, but it would help to solve a rapidly escalating problem—a fiscal crisis of runaway liability costs that severely limits taxpayer funding for much needed public services.

Here are six key reasons why this reform is both necessary and urgent:

1. Democratic Accountability Over Judicial Taxation

Elected officials, not juries or plaintiffs' lawyers, should decide how limited public tax dollars are prioritized and spent. When a jury imposes a multi-million-dollar judgment, it effectively raises taxes and reallocates resources without any accountability to voters. Local governments already operate under intense democratic oversight through elections, public hearings, and transparent budgeting. Allowing plaintiffs to override those democratic decisions through litigation undermines representative government and the public's right to set its own priorities.



2. Underfunding Not Indifference

Most dangerous conditions on public roads, sidewalks, and in public spaces stem not from willful indifference but from chronic underfunding and limited staffing. When local agencies are forced to pay multi-million-dollar settlements and judgments far exceeding their actual share of fault, those dollars reduce funding for maintenance, road repairs, and public safety programs. This process does not improve safety — it actually depletes the very resources needed to prevent future injuries. Proportionate liability would help break this self-defeating cycle.

3. Private Market Logic Does Not Apply to Public Entities

Private corporations can raise prices, cut product lines, pass costs on to consumers, or declare bankruptcy. Local governments, on the other hand, have none of these options to deal with rising costs. They are legally obligated to maintain roads, operate parks, and provide essential services with constrained budgets funded by taxpayers. Applying the same unlimited liability rules designed for profit-driven businesses to local government agencies, creates a fundamental mismatch that requires reform.

4. Deep Pocket Targeting Under Joint and Several Liability

Each party responsible for contributing to an injury should bear liability in proportion to their actual share of fault—not based on which defendant happens to have the deepest pocket. Local government agencies should not be forced to subsidize damages caused by drunk drivers, underinsured motorists, careless contractors, or criminal actors who bear primary responsibility. An equitable system ensures that responsibility follows conduct, and that no single party is unfairly targeted simply because they have the ability to pay.

5. Law of Diminishing Returns in Public Property Maintenance

Most California local governments operate within significant budget constraints. After reasonable steps have been taken to maintain infrastructure, additional millions spent on marginal claims produce diminishing safety returns. The current system pretends that governments have infinite resources and can guarantee perfect safety — an economic and practical impossibility. Proportionate liability simply acknowledges reality: we must balance ambitious safety goals against what taxpayers can realistically afford.

6. Broad Benefits Over Concentrated Windfalls

Public funds are meant to serve the entire community. When a jury returns a large verdict or a large settlement is reached prior to trial, taxpayer funds are redirected away from the public at large, and concentrated in the hands of one plaintiff, or a small group of individuals and their attorneys. Funds that could have maintained a park, staffed a library, or repaired a road for thousands of residents, instead flow to a small group of people. Joint and several liability not only strains local government budgets, but diverts scarce resources intended to provide broad public benefits into the hands of a few, defeating the purpose for which the tax dollars were originally collected.

California's local governments are not asking for blanket immunity. We are merely asking for sound public policy — proportionate liability that is fair to injured parties and provides them with meaningful compensation, while also ensuring that public funds are protected and used for broad public benefit.

The **Coalition to Protect Community Services** is actively working with the Legislature and the Administration to advance targeted and practical reforms. California residents deserve safe communities and solvent local governments that can deliver the services they expect and deserve.

Margaret Finlay has served on the Duarte City Council for 34 years, including seven terms as Mayor. A dedicated public servant and community advocate, she's expanded senior transportation services and helped reduce local crime rates. Her leadership extends beyond Duarte, with roles including President of the California Contract Cities Association, President of the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority, and Board Member of the Southern California Association of Governments. Margaret holds degrees from St. Mary's College and Cal State Long Beach, completed doctoral work at Claremont Graduate University, and attended Harvard's Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program. An international speaker and adjunct professor, Finlay has also been recognized for her work with the San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust, helping create housing opportunities for underserved populations.

5. FOURTH OF JULY MARINE ENFORCEMENT



Holiday STATISTICS

Total Enforcement Stops =	105
Total Citations Written =	55
Total BUI Arrests =	10
Total DUI Arrests=	1
Non Injury Boat Accidents =	0
Minor Injury Boat Accidents =	1
Major Injury Boat Accidents =	0



*Independence Day
Weekend 2026*



I. ASSEMBLYMEMBER TOWN HALL

Please join Assemblyman
JEFF GONZALEZ
FOR A

Needles
**TOWN
HALL**



Wednesday,

JULY 15

5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

EL GARCES

950 FRONT ST., NEEDLES, CA 92363



**TO RSVP TO THIS EVENT, SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT:
ASMRC.ORG/CF/NEEDLESRSVP**