

upwardly mobile jobs; low median incomes and a prominent economic gap between its highest and lowest income earners (see “Feeling the pinch”, page 12).

“Sure, there are problems here, but they’re not issues that can be solved by the city of Chico without help from the state government, which has created most of these issues,” he said. “If you want to talk about why housing is so expensive in the state of California, I’ll talk all about it ... but if you want to lay that blame at my doorstep after being in office for one year, that’s false.”

Coolidge asserted that past City Councils—

particularly the panel that held office before a flip to a conservative majority last November—are largely responsible for the severity of these particular issues. He noted the current council in April hired a new deputy city manager, Jennifer Macarthy, who is charged with economic development and “has already made great strides in bringing new businesses to Chico.”

Referring to affordable housing, Coolidge said, “It feels like the city took a two-year vacation from working on this issue under the last council. Since day one, affordable and lower-income housing has been at the top of

the list for this council. We’ve been moving ahead in a very methodical and fact-based way to make sure this housing comes online as soon as it can.”

Coolidge said that, in part due to large developments on the horizon, there is “more affordable housing in the works than there ever has been in the city of Chico.” He also said that business owners have regularly expressed to him that workers at the mid-management level have trouble finding housing in their price range and that the Barber Yard development will specifically address that need.

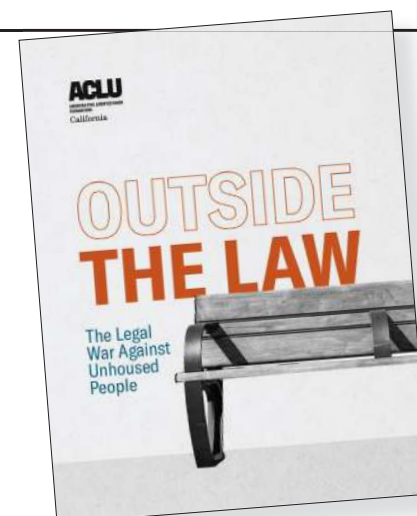
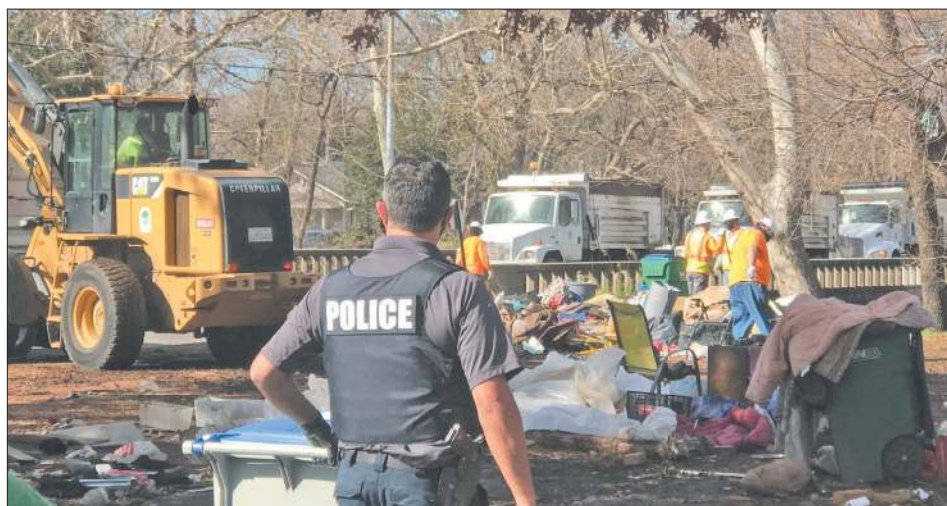
However, another of Chico Voters’ grounds for the recall effort is that Coolidge and Morgan are beholden to monied developers behind the same projects. Kennedy said those projects may result in the creation of some affordable housing but fall far short of meeting massive demand and that the focus remains on building higher-cost homes.

“I take more value in Coolidge’s history than his words,” Kennedy said. “That history indicates a bigger desire to attract high-priced buyers from out of the area than benefiting low-income people.”

Coolidge said one thing on the topic of

Chico city officials conduct a sweep of the “Triangle” homeless encampment on Feb. 4.

PHOTO BY KEN SMITH



housing that those behind the recall effort might commiserate with: “I know Chico has problems with affordable housing. I’m worried about a place for my children to live in this town someday, and that’s part of the reason I ran for office.”

Kennedy, while defending herself and her cohorts against the notion they are “extremists,” expressed a similar sentiment: “Wanting the unhoused to be treated like human beings is not extreme. Wanting affordable housing is not extreme. Wanting a secure future for our children is not extreme.” □

NEWSLINES CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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