



# From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



April 18, 2008

## ***Mayor Hammond Recuperating***

You might have heard that Mayor Rob Hammond was hospitalized on Tuesday morning; unfortunately he was. The good news, however, is that he did not suffer serious injury or ailment. Indeed, en route to the hospital, during the battery of tests conducted, and while “resting” at home on Tuesday afternoon/evening, he was his usual self – answering residents’ calls, concerns and addressing issues. In fact, by Wednesday, he was working the phones negotiating details of the Gold Line Foothill Extension with the members of the MTA Board. He is resting comfortably and is doing well. No doubt, he’ll be back at work before the dust settles on his desk. We wish him well; but we wish him rest too.

## **Brush Season Gets a Head Start**

On Sunday afternoon, we received a bit of a scare as a brush fire ignited just behind Foothill Middle School in Arcadia. A number of resources were immediately deployed to combat the blaze and it was quickly beaten down. Monrovia units were among the first to arrive on scene and combat the blaze – mutual aid at its finest, to be sure.

However, this brush fire is just one more reminder of the threat that exists in our hillsides. We have escaped serious brush fires for quite some time. A major component in this safeguard is Monrovia’s aggressive brush clearance efforts.

To this end, brush clearance letters were mailed to property owners in Monrovia’s high-fire zones this week. Proper annual brush clearance can be expensive and cumbersome, but it is surely a worthwhile investment among hillside homeowners. It is perhaps the single best deterrent such property owners have against the very real and awesome threat of wildfire. If you have any questions about Monrovia’s brush clearance regulations, please feel free to contact the Monrovia Fire Department.

## **City Council Recap**

Although actual agenda items focused primarily on improvements to the Monrovia Police Station, the provision of real tools to Monrovia police officers, and the details of Monrovia’s new Public Library, the story that received the most attention was the *lack of a story* regarding City Council and City Manager benefits. Specifically, the feeble attempt of some folks (animated by the legal team representing the MPOA) to cast a shadow on the compensation the Council receives (or does not receive); and the details of the housing loan made to me by the Monrovia City Council in 2004. Again, the mud covering these issues stems from the ongoing disagreement between the City and the MPOA – and its attorney – over salary and benefit issues.

To summarize, City Council compensation and benefits are largely governed by State code. The City Council – as the governing body of a municipality governed by the general laws of the State of California – does not, has not ever, and could not ever receive auto allowances and/or lifetime medical benefits. The confusion over this issue stems from a numeration error in the City’s Personal

Rules & Regulations. Under item AR-4, the Council acted to clarify the language to reflect the reality of the situation, without a doubt.

As for the housing loan made from the City to me back in 2004, the public record is completely documented and reflects the discussions and actions taken by the Council. Essentially, when the City Council offered the position of City Manager to me, they also expressed that it was important that I live in Monrovia. At the time, my family and I lived in Los Angeles and housing prices in Monrovia were significantly higher than in LA. I demonstrated my commitment to Monrovia by moving my family here; the Council demonstrated its commitment by offering me a second mortgage to ensure that our home in Monrovia was comparable with the home we had in LA. Make no mistake, each month my wife and I make a payment to Countrywide...and to the City of Monrovia. Apparently, the controversy over an alleged "sweetheart" deal between the City and me emanated from a coding error in the County Recorder's office (see the attached news article). Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, some folks attempted to seize on this issue. Once again, however, there was no "there" there. As Julius Caesar once observed, "Men willingly believe what they wish." And the world continues to turn...

As for the substance of the meeting, the Council approved an architectural contract to design the reconstruction of the Police Station's roof, bought a new police vehicle, bought new Tasers for officers, clarified their own compensation benefits, approved the Library Park Master Plan, approved the interior design program for the new Library, approved a contract for the roofing of the new Library (which came in under budget), and opposed a deceptive ballot initiative that would effectively kill redevelopment programs throughout the State. As always, if you have any questions about the meeting, please feel free to contact me directly.

### **Jasen Lewis Moving On**

This week, we received notice that Jasen Lewis, Executive Director of KGEM, is moving on to a new position with Disney Resorts. I wish him well and thank him for the professionalism and expertise he infused into KGEM. He truly was a difference-maker.

### **Articles Attached**

- **Monrovia council responds to bloggers' allegations** – "...sound and fury signifying nothing," to borrow from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting. The following applications will be reviewed at the regularly scheduled meeting on April 23, 2008:

- Historic Landmark HL-121/Mills Act Contract MA-115 , 123 S. Heliotrope Avenue, Ann L. Reynolds, applicant
- Historic Landmark HL-122/Mills Act Contract MA-116, 236 E. Foothill Blvd., Nathan H. Tilleman, applicant
- Certificate of Appropriateness, CA2008-04, 329 Melrose Avenue, Sabin Gray & Bryan Gerber, applicants
- Certificate of Appropriateness, CA2008-05, 419 West Lime Avenue, Dan and Susan McClure, applicants
- Demolition of 637 West Olive Avenue – a pre-1940's house
- Façade Remodel of 419 S. Myrtle Avenue
- Review of Non Compliance of Mills Act Contract Conditions

- MA-15, 336 N. Ivy Avenue
- MA-60, 123 Melrose Avenue
- MA-87, 164 N. Encinitas Avenue

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS**

### **Spring Break Field Trips for Monrovia Reads and Plays**

Monrovia Reads and Plays participants earn points for academic achievement, good behavior and regular attendance in the program. The top 12 point earners were treated to two field trips during their spring break from school. On Friday, kids went to the Fire Department for a tour, got lunch in Old Town, including dessert donated by Sierra Cup, and a movie. Firefighter Towns gave a wonderful tour of Fire Station 1 and let all the kids try on firefighter uniforms. He has an excellent rapport with children and we greatly appreciate his time and energy; several kids felt that his tour was the best part of the field trip. We also thank Sierra Cup for their generosity. The incentive program not only motivates MRP kids to do well in school and behave well; it also integrates them more into the Monrovia community.

### **Library Literacy Services Honored by Literacy Network**

Literacy Network of Greater Los Angeles has honored Monrovia Public Library's Literacy Services as their Service Provider Partner of the Year. Literacy Network partners with numerous literacy programs around Los Angeles County to provide marketing, training and support. Literacy Network feels that Monrovia's Literacy Services excels in trainings, daily management needs, and publicity. We will be honored at Literacy Network's Day of Gratitude gathering on May 3.

### **Librarians "Race" and Read**

On Tuesday, April 15, Youth Services librarians helped children of all ages celebrate National Library Week by *Tag-Team Reading*. Using a race car theme, librarians dressed as Nascar drivers, entered the room with special Nascar music playing loudly and proudly in the background, and pantomimed driving a car around the room. The "laps" around the room came complete with home-made sound effects (mouth music) and a real steering wheel courtesy of Sierra Mazda. Each librarian, upon completion of lapping and reading, would "tag" the next librarian, who then lapped the room and read his or her favorite story. *Tag-Team Reading* was the culmination of *Monrovia Reading 500*, a racing-themed reading club that runs April 1 through April 19. Although this was the first time Youth Services has planned and presented a reading club outside summer, it has proved to be quite popular with parents and children.

### **Art in Library**

In celebration of National Library Week, Adult Services staff is hosting a week long celebration full of fun activities and giveaways. On Monday and Tuesday, Staff gave away books, library card holders, coin purses and magnetic poetry sets. Also on Tuesday, staff hosted a demonstration of plein air painting presented by Mary Archibald. Mary is a local artist who teaches at the Monrovia Adult School. She brought out the artist in 39 participants of all ages who all created paintings to take home. Mary shared some of her paintings with us, including two paintings of Library Park that are now considered nostalgic.

### **Senior Excursion to the Fabulous Palm Springs Follies**

The annual Palm Springs excursion is scheduled for Thursday, May 15. The \$50 per person fee includes a 9 a.m. continental breakfast, bus transportation to Palm Springs, driver tip and admission to the Follies (floor level seating). Once you arrive in Palm Springs you can shop, have lunch (on your own) or visit the local casino. There is so much to do within walking distance of the follies theatre! The world famous, Broadway celebration of music, dance and comedy will begin at 2 p.m., returning to Monrovia at 6 p.m. Call 256-8246 for further information or to purchase your advance tickets.

## **West Nile and Lyme Disease Presentation at Canyon Park**

On April 15, 24 Canyon Park volunteers and staff received valuable information regarding West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease. The presentation, at the Park's monthly volunteer meeting, was conducted by the Los Angeles County Health and Vector Control Department. Topics included species identification, life cycles, transmission hosts, and prevention.

## **FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Personnel responded to 81 emergency calls from 0800 hours April 9, to 0800 hours April 16. Significant Incidents include:

### **Brush Fire**

On Sunday, April 13, at 1400 hours, Monrovia Fire units assisted Arcadia Fire Department in containing a two-acre brush fire behind Foothill Junior High School. Engine 101, Engine 102, Water Tender 101 and Battalion 10 responded to the incident. Monrovia Firefighters were on scene for over three hours assisting with extinguishment and mop-up. The fire was the result of arson and is being investigated by the Arcadia Fire Department.

### **Fire Prevention And New Construction**

In all of the previous articles about home safety, the assumption was that a fire occurred while an adult was home. Be sure any **babysitters/caretakers** in your home know all escape routes and plans in case of a fire. It cannot be emphasized enough: **Teach children the facts about fire.** Unfortunately, many kids will hide from a fire, often in a closet, under a bed, or in a corner. But, if they're taught basic fire facts, they'll be better prepared to protect themselves. Teach your child that fires spread quickly, that most fire-related deaths are not from burns but from smoke inhalation, and that dangerous fumes can overcome a person in just a few minutes.

Kids should learn to:

- cover their mouths and noses with a **moist towel** or an article of clothing to keep out dangerous fumes while evacuating
- crawl **under** the smoke to safety, staying as low to the ground as possible (smoke always rises)
- touch any door (not the doorknob) to see if it is hot, and if it is, **not** to open it — find another exit
- locate the nearest stairway marked "Fire Exit" if they live in an apartment building, or a fire escape if the stairway isn't accessible — kids should know to always avoid elevators during a fire
- never stop to take personal belongings or pets or to make a phone call (even to 911) while evacuating
- **never** go back into a burning building once safely outside
- **stop, drop, and roll** to extinguish flames if an article of clothing catches on fire

Kids should also always be dressed for bed in flame-retardant sleepwear.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

Brush letters have been mailed out this week and property owners should find all necessary information required to start their annual routine brush maintenance. The Fire Department continues to advocate for a fire safe community and is taking steps this year to improve our brush inspection process. Additionally, with the support of City Council, we have a few changes in the brush inspection requirements and have added the Administrative Fine Ordinance process for those very few property owners who are unwilling to comply with the requirements of keeping their home and neighborhood clear of brush. If you receive a brush packet this year and you do not understand the new requirements please feel free to visit our city website at [www.cityofmonrovia.org](http://www.cityofmonrovia.org) and click on the Fire Department. You can also call the brush hotline at (626) 256-8109 or the Fire Department general

line at (626) 256-8181 and we will be glad to answer any questions you may have. What is most important to remember is that the Fire Department continues to advocate for life safety and has taken these new steps, related to brush mitigation, to ensure we have a fire safe community for those residents living in the very high fire hazard zone.

The brush chipper program has been an extremely effective method of reducing the brush and providing more defensible space between homes and the urban interface. Experts agree that in the event of a brush fire, a defensible space is one of the greatest advantages given to firefighters in protection of homes from destruction. The Monrovia Fire Department is proud to announce the 2009-2010 Chipper Grant has been increased and is now funded by the California Fire Safe Council at \$67,500. These funds will start being used for the program beginning April 21, 2008 and will allow the Fire Department to provide more chipping service to our property owners located in the Very High Fire Hazard Zone. It should be noted that this is an 18-month rolling allocation, so we don't have the entire \$67,500 to spend this year, but we will certainly work hard to offer the service to as many residents as possible.

### **ON THE POLICE BLOTTER**

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 572 calls for service resulting in 108 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

#### **Residential Burglaries**

On April 11, at 9 a.m., officers responded to the 200 Block of East Scenic regarding a residential burglary. The victim came home to find her house ransacked. While officers were investigating the burglary they discovered the next door neighbor's home had also been burglarized. During the officers' investigation they received another call of a residential burglary that had taken place in the 200 Block of Highland Place. Officers developed suspect and vehicle descriptions from witnesses, which are very similar. The time frame and the other similarities suggest these three burglaries were committed by the same suspect. Investigation is continuing.

#### **Felony Driving Under The Influence Arrest**

On April 11, at 4 p.m. a suspect who was involved in a traffic collision was being released from the hospital. The collision had occurred on March 28, in the 1300 Block of South Mountain. A traffic collision report was taken. The officer's investigation revealed the driver was under the influence of alcohol when she crashed her car, seriously injuring her passenger. She was not arrested at the scene because of her injuries. The suspect was cleared and released from the hospital and taken to the Monrovia Police Jail to be booked.

#### **Outside Assist**

On April 13, at 2 p.m., dispatch received numerous 9-1-1 calls reporting a fire north of Ralph's Super Market in Arcadia. The officers on the shift responded to the area of Madison/Hillcrest to organize an evacuation if needed. Officers were quick to respond and the fire was brought under control.

#### **Assist / Search Warrant**

On April 14, at 1:31 p.m., San Bernardino Sheriff's personnel requested assistance in the 800 Block of West Walnut with serving a search warrant. During the search, a controlled substance was located at the residence with a quantity amounting to sales. One male suspect was arrested. The suspect is currently on parole and a parole hold was obtained.

# THE PUBLIC WORKS **SCOOP**



## **ENGINEERING:**

### **Rule 20A, Underground Utility Project - Royal Oaks and Mountain**

The Edison transmission line conduits have been installed, trenches repaved and striping completed. Staff received the construction plans for the AT&T lines and have forwarded the plans to Edison for coordination. Construction is scheduled to start by early Fall 2008.

700 S. Myrtle - Urban Housing Group. The grading/drainage plans have been returned for corrections. The grading permit is expected to be issued within the next few weeks.

Colorado Commons - Decorative Features. The archway will be installed by April 18, and the kiosk is scheduled to be installed by April 25.

### **Public Works Inspections:**

- Colorado Commons Street Improvements
- Bus Shelter Construction
- 911 Royal Oaks
- California/Monrovia/Duarte Project
- 1419 S. Myrtle
- 714 Norumbega
- 335 Genoa
- 705 Norumbega
- 214 N. Madison
- 753 E. Foothill
- 1128 S. Myrtle
- 110 E. Colorado
- 184 N. Canyon
- 371 N. Alta Vista
- 258 Valley Vista
- 123 Sunset
- 139 E. Olive

## **OPERATIONS – Environmental – Facilities – Parks:**

### **Potable Water Discharge General Permit**

On Wednesday, our Water Division and Environmental Services staff, including representatives from the Metropolitan Water District, several area water agencies, and the California Department of Public Health attended a meeting regarding the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board's (LARWQCB) *Draft* Potable Water Discharge General Permit requirements and discussed its potential impacts to water agencies. Currently, these types of discharges are covered in the City's General Permit for wellhead discharges and the Municipal Stormwater NPDES Permits.

### **Earth Day Educational Booth**

On Friday, April 18, in conjunction with the Family Festival, our Environmental Services will be hosting an educational booth to show how the City of Monrovia is becoming greener, and will have conservation activities. The first 50 people to stop by the booth will receive a reusable water bottle or reusable "Monrovia Recycles" shopping bag.

## **On-going Projects**

- Historical Museum Roof Replacement Project.
- Fire Station 102 Butler Building Project.
- Weed Abatement – Cypress Avenue.

## **Lighting**

Facilities staff replaced several stadium lights at the Barney Glen Ball Field this week, and also changed out 230 Old Town lights.

## **Vandalism**

The Colorado Commons Parking Structure was vandalized this week. A fire extinguisher was discharged along the stairwells, and several extinguishers were stolen. Staff arranged clean-up and replacement extinguishers will be ordered.

## **Tree Trimming at Oak Tree Inn**

Last week our Environmental Services staff received a complaint regarding excessive tree trimming at the Oak Tree Inn. Two of the trees trimmed were City parkway trees. Though the trimming is considered extreme by our City Standards the trees should be fine. The Community Development Department will contact the owner and work with our Parks staff in determining which trees are private or city owned.

## **STREETS:**

### **Traffic Signs**

- Graffiti was removed from 40 traffic signs.
- Replaced the No-Dumping placard on the storm drain at Encinio and Duarte Rd.
- Replaced School Crossing sign in the 100 block of E. Palm.
- Replaced a 3-Hour Parking restriction sign at the southwest corner of Palm and Ivy.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Trip hazard mitigation throughout the city.
- Sidewalk rehabilitation at 371 N. Alta Vista
- Remove palm branches from 431 N. Canyon Blvd.

## **UTILITIES:**

### **Customer Service**

- 2,959 water meters were read and recorded
- 61 utilities work orders were completed
- 160 shut-off notices were distributed
- 27 backflow notices were sent out
- 8 water meters were replaced
- 8 water services were reactivated

### **Water Production**

Water consumption is 8.9 millions gallons, an increase of approximately 15% compared to last week's reported water usage.

### **Department of Health Services Required Water Samples**

- 17 water system samplings
- 6 water treatment facility samplings

## Utility Maintenance

- 1 - 4" new fire Service was installed
- 1 – 2" new water service was installed
- 1 fire hydrant was replaced
- 20 Fire hydrants were maintained and flushed
- 57 water system valves were inspected and operated
- 47 underground service alert's utility location requests were completed
- 11,271 feet of sewer mains were cleaned
- 370 feet of sewer mains were video inspected

Have a great weekend!

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## FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

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| <b>Sat., April 19, 8 a.m. to Noon</b>  | <b>Earth Day, Canyon Park</b>  |
| <b>Sat., April 19, 4 to 8 p.m.</b>     | <b>The Monrovia Station Classic Car Cruise, Park &amp; Ride Lot (1 blk South of 210 FWY on Myrtle)</b> |
| <b>Thurs., May 1, 11:30 a.m.</b>       | <b>Annual Volunteer Luncheon, Community Center</b>   |
| <b>Mon., May 5, 5:00 p.m.</b>          | <b>Monrovia Reads Cinco de Mayo Event, Krikorian Premier Theater</b>                                   |
| <b>Tues., May 6, 7:30 p.m.</b>         | <b>Regular Council Meeting</b>   |
| <b>Sat., May 10, 7 to 11 a.m.</b>      | <b>Fire Department Open House/Pancake Breakfast, Fire Station 101</b>                                  |
| <b>Sat., May 10, 11 to 1 p.m.</b>      | <b>MAP 2 Block Party, 400-600 Walnut</b>   |
| <b>Sun., May 11, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.</b> | <b>MOPHG Mother's Day Tour</b>   |
| <b>Sat., May 17, 9:00 a.m.</b>         | <b>Monrovia Day Parade</b>   |
| <b>Tues., May 20, 7:30 p.m.</b>        | <b>Regular Council Meeting</b>   |
| <b>MONDAY, MAY 26</b>                  | <b>MEMORIAL DAY, CITY HALL CLOSED</b>  |

## **CMO ATTACHMENTS:**

### **Monrovia council responds to bloggers' allegations**

By Melissa Pamer, Staff Writer

Article Launched: 04/16/2008 04:51:00 PM PDT

MONROVIA - In response to allegations made in recent weeks by local political bloggers, the City Council on Tuesday sought to show that there was no improper compensation for council members or for the city manager.

At its regular meeting, the council moved to clarify the city code that describes council member compensation, which is set by state law. Unclear language in the code had incorrectly indicated that council members were due a \$400 monthly car allowance and lifetime medical benefits.

Councilman Tom Adams also sought to explain a \$275,000 home loan that the city had made to City Manager Scott Ochoa as part of the latter's 2004 employment contract.

Questions had been raised about the two topics on the Foothill Cities Blog, on which mostly anonymous posters write about politics in a dozen local municipalities. "The Internet people have come up with somehow that this is some big secret," Adams said of the loan to Ochoa. "There seems to be some grand conspiracy about Mr. Ochoa's home."

The bloggers' questions had been raised in part as a response to the recent battle over police compensation in the city, which last month implemented a unilateral contract that the police union had opposed. Officers had wanted a larger raise.

Earlier this month, the blog had posted parts of the city code that described council member's benefits and referred inaccurately to another section that applied to city department managers' benefits. The language was fixed in a 4-0 vote Tuesday night. Mayor Rob Hammond was ill and absent from the meeting.

In a blog post this past weekend about Ochoa's loan, a "sweetheart deal" was alleged. Loans from cities to city managers are not uncommon and are often used as a contract enhancement, especially if a municipality requires that city residence for its manager, a local government expert said.

"It's just one more form of compensation," said Steven Frates, a senior fellow at the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College.

The blog had posted information about Ochoa's Madeline Drive house from a real estate listing service. The document showed a \$275,000 second mortgage from a "private individual," along with a larger primary home loan from a conventional lender. The document also listed the property as "government owned" and "municipal property."

The "private individual" label raised concerns among bloggers that a council member had loaned the money to Ochoa. That was flatly denied by the council.

Adams, a Realtor, said the "private individual" holding the loan was the city of Monrovia, which had agreed to offer assistance to Ochoa as part of his initial city manager contract. He said some listing services will state "private individual" for any home loan that's not from a traditional source, such as a bank.

On Wednesday, a spokesman for the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office said the "government" listing for the property was an error on the county's Web site, which feeds information to some real estate listing services.

"It's probably just an oversight in terms of coding," said spokesman Robert Knowles, after checking the physical records that showed the property listed as a "single family residence." Knowles added that the county's Web site would soon be updated with accurate information.

As part of Ochoa's four-year 2004 contract, which is up for renewal in coming weeks, the city agreed to pay a second mortgage on the Madeline Drive home he and his wife purchased at the time, Ochoa said in an interview.

The council offered the second mortgage to ease the Ochoas' transition to a Monrovia home from a less expensive house in Los Angeles, he said.

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