



From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



May 29, 2007

Monrovia Day Parade Steps Off

Despite the abridged Monrovia Day festivities this year, it appeared that everyone who turned out for the parade had fun and enjoyed the varied parade entries, which included equestrian units, bands, community groups and customary assortment of dignitaries.

Much has been made by some about this year's event – that the Monrovia Day Association (a grassroots non-profit organization) did not have the ability to conduct full day of activities in Library Park, etc. However, I believe that the MDA deserves credit and thanks for the job they were able to do. They have proven a stalwart group of volunteers committed to one basic purpose – to help the community celebrate its birthday. Over the years, this group has succeeded amply.

It is being suggested by some folks, however, the time has come for the City to completely take on the job of organizing and orchestrating Monrovia Day. Over the years, the City has indeed supported the event through the Police, Fire, Community Services and Public Works Departments. Yet the current suggestion seems to go to beyond this level of staff support and for the City to wholly and completely absorb Monrovia Day, with the MDA simply winding down.

With all of the pressure and competition for sponsorship dollars in this community (from service clubs, the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, the City itself, PTA's, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc. etc.), this suggestion does not come as a total surprise. To be sure, fundraising is the double-edged sword of a dynamic and engaged community – we have many local residents involved in many community affairs and civic groups, and they all need local funding support; most every cause is worthwhile, but folks only have so many sponsorship dollars in their pockets. Thus, the City Council has directed staff to explore this possibility of taking on Monrovia Day, and they are already considering carving out funding in next year's budget. All this said, I think this year's Monrovia Day organizers and sponsors deserve many thanks from us all.

100+ Stakeholders Attend General Plan Amendment Meeting

On Monday night, more than 100 residents, property owners, business owners and other stakeholders filled the Monrovia Community Center to hear about the City's proposed General Plan Amendment for the West Huntington Drive Corridor, South Myrtle Avenue Corridor, and the Station Square Project Area. This was the third community meeting that has been held on this process (counting last fall's Transit Summit).

The presentation focused on two elements of the City's General Plan (the General Plan is the planning document comprised of several "elements" ranging from land use to traffic circulation to safety; altogether, these elements form a framework for development in the City) – the Land Use Element and Circulation Element.

With the Land Use Element, the City's consultant discussed the proposed changes in existing planning and zoning regulations, design guidelines and development densities. In essence, the plan is to continue the current theme of protecting Monrovia's traditional single-family neighborhoods by focusing new development along existing transit corridors and major thoroughfares. Thus, in all three project areas common themes include mixing uses (residential & retail and residential & commercial office) where appropriate, reorienting new buildings to the street in order to create a more attractive pedestrian experience, and developing strict design guidelines that will ensure the architectural integrity of Monrovia's unique sense of community.

With the Circulation Element, the consultant presentation was mostly an update of the extensive traffic studies that are currently underway. The study also seems to be indicating – or rather, confirming – that Monrovia's current traffic challenges are dominated by the east-west commuter traffic that impacts not just the 210 freeway and Huntington Drive, but also Foothill Boulevard and Duarte Road. Most in the audience decried this situation – some hopeful that the Gold Line will alleviate the problem; others resigned that traffic is quickly joining “death and taxes” as the things that are unavoidable in this life.

My take on this situation is little different, and focused on long-term and comprehensive strategies. Early in the last century, when automobile traffic was paralyzing the streets of Manhattan, the thinking was that more bridges and highways would help alleviate traffic congestion. Obviously, this was not the solution – as we have seen most recently with the extension of the 210 Freeway, it still is not the solution. In fact, the opposite has happened. In short, there is no panacea for this issue; and in reality, the “answer” is probably a combination of answers. The vexing part is that these answers are really like ingredients in a recipe – you cannot simply add salt or sugar, you have to add the right amounts. Moreover, the “right amounts” will vary from place to place and region to region. Thus, you can have an armada of buses and trains, but if you don't have a proper land use plan or development densities/designs to create transit-oriented neighborhoods, few will ride them. And that is what this General Plan Amendment is all about – changing yesterday's outdated framework for development in our town to better deal with the challenges, resources and opportunities of tomorrow.

I thought the meeting was extremely useful for identifying key issues and “hot buttons” among residents and business owners. I also thought it was useful for folks to hear from their neighbors – for example, one resident was concerned about traffic on Greystone and Hillcrest; another wanted to see a stop light at California and Foothill. Well, if we place a stop light at California and Foothill, then that is sure to impact east-west traffic on streets to the north. In another case, a man located in the South Myrtle Avenue Corridor told me that we was against any new development in his area. A few seats away from him, another man who owned property just down the street said, “wait a minute, I *want* to do something else with my property.” In other words, I think stakeholders began to realize that this wasn't a fight against City Hall, or even a fight against their neighbors; it is an opportunity for all of us to come together and speak honestly about problems and solutions. As I concluded my comments at the meeting, I took a moment to remind folks that for each argument they could pose, there usually is an equal and opposite argument from someone else. In short, as long as we remain honest and respectful, we should be able to reach some level of consensus.

In terms of next steps, we are only at the beginning of a long and exhaustive public process that will take us through the summer and into the fall. If you would like more information about the process, upcoming Planning Commission and City Council meetings, etc., please contact Planning Division Manager Steve Sizemore.

Gang Activity is Again Surfacing in the Community

You may have noticed from the “Police Blotter” section of previous Weekly Reports that gang activity in Monrovia is becoming an issue again. As we saw last summer, gang members opportunistically

seek out areas and situations that give them cover to undertake any number of criminal activities. Over the last few months, we have seen several gang-related incidents take place primarily in the southeast quadrant of town. The problem that we face is multi-faceted – gang members that we arrest seem to be returning from incarceration sooner, the LA County Sherriff's Office lacks the resources to sustain operations against gang members in the unincorporated areas south of Monrovia, and neighborhood support and information to aid Police is inconsistent in some neighborhoods.

The good news is that our Police Department – aided by other City departments such as the Monrovia Redevelopment Agency, Community Development and Public Works – is fully engaged in solving difficult neighborhood problems. From seeking gang enhancements on sentencing in order to keep criminals off the streets for long periods of time to purchasing problem properties that are hubs of gang activity, the City of Monrovia is wholly focused on and committed to abating the scourge of gang activity in Monrovia.

Even the most complex problem we face – getting additional long-term support from the County – has some silver lining. Chief Johnson and his command staff have developed a plan to partner with the Sheriff's Office to jointly patrol the unincorporated areas. Hopefully, the County will mirror our commitment with meaningful and significant financial support. Failure to do so, however, will likely lock us into a cyclical game of “whack a mole” whereby Monrovia smothers out the gang problem in our town, only to see it live on and regenerate across the street in the County areas, and then return to re-infect our neighborhoods. Long-term, the only real answer to this problem may be to annex the unincorporated areas and bring the level of service in these neighborhoods up to Monrovia's standards.

“Trail-gate”

There was quite a stir created this week when hikers and walkers observed that a Monrovia property owner who lives along the Sawpit Wash at Norumbega Road installed a gate that could potentially prevent trail users from making their way all the way up to Canyon Park. Although this trail has been used for many, many years, this portion of the trail does indeed exist on private property. Yet it has been accessed by the public under the auspices of the LA County Flood Control District (LACFCD) easement, which has existed since the channel was constructed. In this particular case, the LACFCD easement on this property exists for “maintenance purposes” only and does not mention recreation. Still, this easement has historically been used by the public for hiking and walking.

Apparently, the property owner installed the gate to address privacy and vandalism issues. The Monrovia Department of Public Works has for a time attempted to work with the property owner to create a mutually agreeable compromise and long-term solution. However, a complete and final agreement has been elusive. Discussions on this matter basically broke down early this year.

Because the gate was constructed without the authorization of either the LACFCD (their easement gives them this authority) or the City, the property owner would have had to take the fence down and attempt to obtain the necessary permits. Unfortunately, it seems that another local resident took it upon himself to remove the gate. While I understand that folks are frustrated, these types of actions only serve to exacerbate the problem. I believe that this issue has its roots in a larger neighborhood dispute. And while the City is trying not to insinuate itself into the various civil lawsuits swirling around the property owner and his neighbors, we are equally committed to ensuring that the community is not short-changed.

The Mayor and City Council will be discussing this matter on the upcoming June 4 agenda. In the meantime, if you have any questions on this please feel free to contact either Operations Division Manager Dan Iwata or me.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Development Review Committee Meeting Recap

- A minor exception was granted to allow a condenser unit to encroach into the minimum side yard setback for a remodeled home at 2030 Peck Road. No one showed to speak on this noticed item.
- Paper Shredders, located at 428 West Chestnut, requested an amendment to their existing conditional use permit to allow outdoor collection bins and a major variance for a reduction in parking. The DRC recommended approval to the Planning Commission with conditions addressing improvements to the property and a provision for removal of the outdoor bins and restoration of the parking if traffic or parking problem occurs in the future.
- A new home and circular driveway located at 2 Hidden Valley Road were approved. Four neighbors spoke regarding the development and spoke with approval for the circular driveway as it will provide for more parking off of Hidden Valley Road.
- A sign was approved at 325 West Huntington for the clothing store Forever Modern. Forever Modern is moving from the Huntington Oaks Shopping Center to this location as Trader Joe's is expanding into their former retail space.
- The Chevron Station at 854 East Huntington Drive is upgrading to match the new corporate image and staff is working on this with them.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Recap

The Historic Preservation Commission had another full agenda at its meeting on May 23. The Commission rendered the following decisions:

- Continuation of Historic Landmark designation and Mills Act Contract for the property at 138 Poppy Avenue to allow the owner to complete the restoration.
- Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace two incompatible louvered windows at 124 May Avenue
- Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace aluminum windows with wood windows, new wood French doors, and replacement of stucco with wood siding on a Bungalow at 311 Wildrose Avenue
- Advisory review and approval of a small addition to the rear of a potential landmark at 217 East Greystone Avenue
- Time extension on a Mills Act condition for a seismic retrofit
- Review of Mills Act Contracts that are out of compliance

COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS

RECREATION DIVISION

Senior Tea & Fashion Show. Thursday, May 17, the Monrovia Providers Group hosted a free Tea & Fashion show for seniors at the Monrovia Community Center. The "Seniors with Style" event was a great success with 150 seniors in attendance. Tables were elaborately decorated reflecting different countries and cultures. Germany, Japan, Spain and many other countries were represented. This is the second Tea & Fashion show hosted by the Monrovia Providers Group and attendance doubled from last year.

Tile Project Scheduled at the Community Center. The Community Center will undergo floor improvements June 3 through the 12. The existing carpet in the entry way and hallways will be replaced with decorative tile. Although the improvements will take place during regular business hours the Community Center will remain open to the public for referrals and program registrations. Patrons visiting the Community Center will be redirected from the main office entrance the off of the parking lot to the entrance off of Palm Avenue.

Canyon Park Volunteers at Monrovia Day Parade. More than a dozen Canyon Park Volunteers came out to show their volunteer pride during the Monrovia Days Parade on May 19. Some volunteers marched in the parade with trail maintenance equipment while others rode bikes, walked their dogs and carried live reptiles, animal furs and animal taxidermies.

FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Personnel responded to 70 emergency calls from 0800 hours May 16 to 0800 hours May 23. Significant Incidents

Fire Reported Out with Patient. On Monday, May 21 at 0906 hours, E102 responded to a fire reported out at 930 S. Fifth. Upon arrival, firefighters were met by the hotel manager who advised them of a female resident that had burned trash on the stove. Firefighters investigated and found the female resident had burned the trash to get rid of "demons." She then left the water running to "wash away the demons." Firefighters confirmed that the fire was out and then medically assessed the patient who was subsequently taken by Monrovia PD to a hospital for observation.

Seconded Alarm House Fire. Engine 101, Truck 101 and Battalion 10 responded on a reported house fire in Arcadia. The home was fully involved with fire upon first arrival. The roof of this 4,000 square foot home collapsed prior to interior operations. Firefighters fought and contained the fire.

TRAINING AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Captain Dover and his crew conducted a home fire safety and emergency preparedness class for City employees this week. The class focused on how City staff should prepare for a possible disaster. In addition, the class emphasized the importance of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. A fire extinguisher demonstration was also conducted

FIRE PREVENTION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Weld inspections of sprinkler overhead piping for the Colorado Commons have started. There will be two more weld inspections for the piping going in for the garage structure.

Engine company brush inspections continued this week. Residents in the fire zone are cooperating and reducing the hazardous vegetation around their homes. Many residents are using the chipper program to assist with the removal of cut vegetation. This is a first come first serve program and all residents are encouraged to use the program before the grant funds run out.

ON THE POLICE BLOTTER

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 599 calls for service resulting in 159 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

Vehicle Burglary. On May 17 at 7:05 a.m., an officer responded to the 900 block of Monterey regarding a vehicle burglary. The victim reported that her vehicle was broken into and her IPOD was taken. Investigation continuing.

Stolen Vehicle Recovery. On May 17 at 10:09 a.m., an officer on patrol located a stolen vehicle in the 400 block of Montana. It had been reported stolen out of Baldwin Park. The vehicle was recovered.

Stolen Motorcycle Recovered. On May 17, an officer observed a motorcycle in the 600 block of Euclid. He ran the license plate, but it returned to a different make of motorcycle than the one it was on. A check of the VIN number revealed the motorcycle was reported stolen out of San Bernardino. The motorcycle was recovered.

Armed Robbery / Assault with a Deadly Weapon. On May 18 at 1:55 a.m., a male subject in his forties approached a male customer at a donut shop. The suspect demanded money from the victim and pointed a shotgun at him. The victim complied and gave him what money he had. The suspect then went to the walk-up window and demanded money from the employee at the donut shop. When the employee said there was no cash accessible, the suspect shot at him once with the shotgun, causing glass to break and the victim to be struck by one shotgun pellet and broken pieces of glass. The male suspect fled the area. A containment was set up and a search for the suspect was made with the police canine unit, but the suspect was not located.

On May 19, officers conducted an extensive follow-up investigation to this case and were able to positively identify the suspect. A want was immediately entered into the computer system. Approximately four hours later, officers located and arrested the wanted suspect without incident.

Grand Theft. On May 18 at 12:15 p.m., a victim in the 100 block of Mauna Loa reported two male suspects in a small blue vehicle with a battery operated Sawz-All. He said the suspects went under his vehicle and removed a part from it. He thought it was the catalytic converter. The suspects had fled the scene prior to police arrival.

Criminal Threats. On May 18 at 5:25 p.m., a female subject reported her husband was trying to kill her. The husband disconnected the phone while she was calling 911. There is history of prior domestic violence. Through investigation, officers determined there was enough to arrest the husband.

Disturbing Subjects. On May 19 at 11:31 a.m., the manager of an apartment complex in the 200 block of West Lemon reported the occupants of a unit were yelling and a strong odor of marijuana was coming from inside. When officers arrived, a witness said one of the occupants inside had a gun. Officers heard yelling inside and believed a possible assault was imminent. When officers knocked on the door, they were confronted by two confrontational, intoxicated males and a juvenile. Officers checked the residence for possible victims, but none were located. While the subjects were outside, they were yelling at officers as a crowd of concerned residents with children started to gather. The two adults were arrested for public intoxication, and the juvenile was arrested for disturbing the peace.

Domestic Violence / Assault with a Deadly Weapon. On May 19 at 12:34 p.m., an officer was dispatched to a possible fight inside a residence in the 100 block of North May. When the officer arrived, he saw a male victim with a severe head wound in the driveway. The victim told him he was assaulted with a knife by his live-in boyfriend, who was still inside the residence. The suspect was ordered out of the residence and arrested without incident. The victim's injuries were not life threatening.

Grand Theft Auto. On May 20 at 9:57 a.m., an officer responded to the Monrovia Police Department lobby regarding a vehicle theft. The victim told the officer the vehicle was stolen from the street in

front of his apartment complex in the 800 block of West Duarte. The vehicle taken was a 1989 Toyota Camry.

Burglary Arrest. On May 20 at 3 p.m., officers were dispatched to a burglary alarm call at Monrovia High School. The alarm covered the snack bar. As officers approached the building, they were confronted by a suspect exiting a window. Two other suspects fled out the back door while officers were taking the first suspect into custody. Additional units responded for assistance, but were unable to locate the additional suspects. A second suspect was arrested the following day. Investigation is continuing.

Shooting. On May 20 at 8:50 p.m., the Monrovia Police Department received numerous calls of shots fired in front of a residence in the 400 block of Monrovista. When officers arrived, three victims stated they were standing in front of a residence when a dark colored SUV and a white SUV drove onto Monrovista, without lights. When the vehicles were within 20 feet of the victims, five to ten gunshots were heard. The victims did not see the actual shooters. An independent witness said he only saw the two SUVs drive westbound on Monrovista at a high rate of speed, blacked out. Officers recovered shell casings at the scene. The three victims were not struck. An area search was conducted for the suspects and additional victims, but met with negative results. Investigation continuing.

Prowling / Resisting & Delaying a Peace Officer / Battery on a Peace Officer with Injury. On May 23 at 11:15 p.m., an elderly man called police to report a male subject trying to get over his fence. As the officer arrived on scene, he saw the suspect by the fence and attempted to contact him, but the suspect fled. Containment was set up, but the suspect was not located. Witness information led the officers to believe the suspect managed to get out of the containment.

At approximately 11:20 p.m., the officer saw the suspect in the 100 block of West Olive. The officer gave chase, and was joined by an assisting officer. As the officers attempted to take the suspect into custody, the suspect kicked and clawed at the officers. The officers were finally able to control him and take him into custody. The suspect has been arrested by Monrovia Police Department several times for prowling, and is currently on parole. A parole hold was obtained.



ADMINISTRATION:

Southern California Edison is giving residents an opportunity to replace their inefficient halogen and incandescent light fixtures for new, Energy Star labeled lamps at the following event:

Saturday, June 2 and Sunday June 3, 2007
9 am – 2 pm
3250 Big Dalton Ave, Baldwin Park

The exchange is one inefficient lamp for one new lamp, and up to six lamps per family. For more information, go to www.scelampexchange.com.

ENGINEERING:

Street Resurfacing Project. Street paving is complete. A total of 4,365 tons of rubberized asphalt was placed in the three days of paving. Alley paving is scheduled for the week of June 11.

Traffic Signal Installation - Royal Oaks and Bradbury. The signal is working and the timing modifications are scheduled to be completed next week. Staff will monitor the intersection and traffic flow over the next several weeks.

OPERATIONS – *Environmental Services – Facilities – Parks:*

Bear Resistant Barrels Update. Due to the positive responses from residents who have participated in the Bear Resistant Barrel program, and the unsuccessful attempts of our local bears breaking into the barrels, our Environmental Services staff sent out a second round of letters and contracts to interested residents living north of Foothill Boulevard.

The success of this program was featured on KCAL 9 News' Monday, May 21, 2007 morning telecast. If you would like to participate in the Bear Resistant Barrel Program, please contact our Environmental Services Section at 626-932-5553.

Roadside Trimming. The City's contractor, TruGreen, will complete the roadside trimming on Norumbega, up to Cloverleaf and Hidden Valley by the end of next week.

STREETS:

50/50 Driveway Approach Rehabilitation:

841 Oakglade Drive

Concrete Rehabilitation:

200 Block of West Lemon and the 200 Block of South Alta Vista

Graffiti Removal:

Removed graffiti from 36 traffic signs
1420 South Alta Vista

Traffic Sign and/or Painting Installation/Replacement:

18 feet of red curb was painted at 1535 Venice Ave.

Miscellaneous:

Excavation work continues on the east side of the Mountain Ave. water reservoir.

UTILITIES:

Customer Service

- 2,045 water meters were read and recorded
- 46 work orders were completed
- 9 water meters replaced
- 2 water services were reactivated

Water Production: Water consumption is 60.6 millions gallons, a decrease of approximately 2% compared to last week's figure.

The following weekly water samplings were collected by staff per the requirements of the Department of Health Services:

- 17 water system samplings
- 3 water treatment facility samplings

Utility Maintenance

- Three one-inch residential water services were installed
- 60 water main system valves were inspected and operated
- 15 underground service alert's utility location requests were completed
- 4,800 feet of sewer mains were cleaned

2006 -2007 Water Main Replacement Project Update. The contractor has completed base paving the trenches at Stedman Place, Oaks Avenue and Highland Place. The next stage is constructing asphalt capping. The project is on schedule and on its final stage of completion.

Have a great weekend!

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

Monday, May 28

MEMORIAL DAY, CITY HALL CLOSED

Tues., May 29, 2:00 p.m.

Department Budget Presentations, Council Chambers

Tues., June 5, 7:30 p.m.

Regular Council Meeting

Tues., June 19, 7:30 p.m.

Regular Council Meeting