



From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



July 20, 2007

City Council Meeting Re-cap

Tuesday night's City Council meeting went a little bit longer than I would've guessed. Although we had some very nice acknowledgments of retiring commissioners Karen Sutherland and Hany Malak, as well as the recognition of the retirement of 50-year Police Department employee Jane Millet, we only had four items of business on the agenda.

All four items were public hearings; two were related to brush clearance and weed abatement, and two were related to City assessments. Mayor Hammond took item PH-2 out of order and placed it first on the agenda.

This public hearing was in regards to the Fire Department's 2007 Brush Clearance Program for the high fire zone located in north Monrovia. Fire Chief Chris Donovan outlined our aggressive program and steps taken in the interest of public safety to create 200 feet of defensible space around every structure located in Monrovia's foothills. Monrovia's City Ordinance is unique from most communities in that the burden of brush clearance falls on the owner of improved property, as opposed to the owner of vacant property. The rationale is that the owner of the improvements (i.e. a house or some other structure) has the investment worth protecting, the obligation to obtain fire insurance, the need to protect their investment, etc. In other words, they have a much more vested and real interest in ensuring adequate fire protection for their homes. Monrovia's ordinance also allows property owners doing the brush clearance to go onto their neighbors' property (via an encroachment permit, of course) in order to ensure the 200-foot clearance.

After hundreds of letters and more than 900 inspections conducted by Fire Department personnel, PH-2 was set to have just 11 properties in Monrovia's foothills slated for brush abatement orders. However, over the last week, each and every one of these properties came into compliance and we were happy to report to the City Council that there is no need to issue abatement orders for any of them.

There was one gentleman who got up to speak about the aggressiveness of Monrovia's brush clearance program, especially with respect to his palm trees. However, I think the Mayor and other Council members were very eloquent in explaining that Monrovia's fire hazard grows in risk with each year. It's been a generation since Monrovia's hillsides have burned and, especially during the middle of a drought, we have to be aggressive in ensuring the safety of our residents and our firefighters. On the positive side, it was obvious through Chief Donovan and Battalion Chief Haberle's comments and familiarity with the property in question, that all of Monrovia's property owners – this gentleman included – received the highest level of customer service and personal attention that hopefully translates into a sense of empathy for those having to do the brush clearance. As there was no action to take – because there were no abatement orders needed (again, we had 100% compliance) – the Council simply moved back to item PH-1.

Item PH-1 was the Los Angeles County weed abatement protest hearing. Essentially, the County of Los Angeles Department of Agriculture makes annual inspections of vacant properties located in cities across the County. The cost for this inspection is \$38.47, and this is passed on to the owners of the vacant lots that are inspected. Following the inspections, there is a public hearing (usually in February) where the County lists all of the properties it has inspected and which require some level of abatement to remove leaves, rubbish and debris. This process is somewhat similar to the Monrovia Fire Department's brush clearance program; however, the County's efforts focus primarily on code enforcement-type nuisances. In other words, many of the properties on this list are located in the flatlands of Monrovia, in addition to the hillsides.

As the Council indicated with its questions during the public hearing, there is a level of duplication between what the County does in Monrovia's foothills and what the Monrovia Fire Department does with its brush clearance program. We did have one speaker get up and address the Council at the podium. She was upset with the County process because, although she has owned the property in question for five years, this was the first time it ever been inspected. Moreover, she had received a bill from the County only this month that stated that if she did not comply with the brush abatement order, that the County would assess an estimated \$7,650 to do the abatement itself. This property owner was puzzled because she, apparently, was in compliance with the Monrovia Fire Department's brush clearance program, yet somehow out of compliance with the Los Angeles County weed abatement program.

The City Council empathized with her position because they, too, were confused by the list being offered by the Los Angeles County personnel who were in attendance at the meeting. For example, some of the parcel numbers located on the abatement list were properties actually located in the City of Duarte; others were government property. In essence, the Council felt there was too much confusion with respect to this list to allow them to make a reasonable decision about which properties to allow the County to abate and assess.

Ultimately, the Mayor asked the Council to consider holding this item over for a period of 90 days so that some of the duplication could be worked out between the two jurisdictions and to verify the list itself. The representative from the County indicated that taking this step, and forgoing the adoption of the requested resolution at the Council meeting, could endanger the City's contract for weed abatement inspection services with Los Angeles County. The Mayor answered that statement by indicating that the Monrovia Fire Department currently does brush clearance inspections in the foothills, does more actual inspections with Monrovia property owners, and has a higher level of success (referring back to the 100% compliance in the previous public hearing). Moreover, Monrovia's code enforcement officers regularly inspect and cite vacant properties in the built-out parts of town that are overgrown with weeds and debris. The citations require, through the City Prosecutor's office, that property owners maintain their properties appropriately. Thus the question becomes, "Why do we need this contract with the County of Los Angeles?" The rest of the Council concurred with this logic and the item was held over for 90 days, while staff was directed to investigate the need for the County contract and also to address impacts associated with canceling the contract.

The last two public hearings were PH-3 and PH-4, the annual Citywide Lighting and Landscaping Assessment District and the Park Maintenance Assessment District, respectively. The Citywide Lighting and Landscaping assessment is a funding mechanism that pays a significant portion of the money that is used to maintain street trees, parkways and medians, traffic signals and traffic lights. This assessment has remained unchanged since 1997, at a rate of \$56.23 per year, per typical single-family dwelling unit. The Park Maintenance assessment was enacted in 1995 by a vote of Monrovia residents. This assessment contains a built-in CPI adjustment factor. For FY2007-08, this adjustment factor indicated an increase of \$.49. This increase would bring the total park maintenance assessment to \$9.59 per year, per typical single-family dwelling unit. Both of these assessments

were discussed in great detail during the budget adoption process last month, and these two public hearings were held in order to allow any assessment payer the opportunity to protest the assessment. Seeing and hearing no one in the audience to protest the assessment, and having received no protests prior to the hearing, the City Council unanimously approved the assessments.

As always, if you have a question about any item that was on the agenda please feel free to contact me directly

Articles Attached

- **Students Getting Work Experience in Monrovia.**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Development Review Committee Recap for July 18, 2007 Meeting

- Signage and canopy change was approved for the Chevron Station at 854 W. Huntington Drive.
- The Committee recommended approval to the Planning Commission of a Variance to construct a barn at 325 Parkrose Avenue to the Planning Commission.
- The Committee recommended approval to the Planning Commission of an amendment to a current conditional use permit to allow an art design school at 101 East Huntington Drive locating a portion of the building that Mt. Sierra previously occupied.
- A wholesale business was permitted with conditions at 425 West Duarte Road.

COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS

Library Board Meeting July 26

The following agenda items will be reviewed by the Library Board at the July 26 Regular Meeting;

- Library Building Project Update – This report will update the Library Board on the status of the Library Building Project and its timeline.
- 2007-09 Budget Key Initiatives – Staff will present the Library budget's key initiatives and performance indicators for 2007-09.

RECREATION DIVISION

2007 Concerts in the Park: Moondance Swings in Library Park. On Sunday, July 15, approximately 1,000 participants enjoyed the swing, jazz and big band sounds of Moondance. Community Services Commission Vice-Chair Paul Larsen, was on hand to present a plaque of appreciation to the Los Angeles County Arts Commission for their generous grant which offset the costs of the concert. This is the third year the Department of Community Services was awarded this grant. King Ranch Market, Scratch Bakery and Wing Stop were available to satisfy the refreshment needs of the concert participants. Get ready for some great entertainment at the July 22 concert which features the surf and 60s music of Instant Replay. All concerts begin at 6:30 p.m. and are held in Library Park. For more information please contact the Department of Community Services at 626.256.8246.

Seniors Dance and Dine in the Park. That same Sunday, 50 senior citizens participated in the Fourth Annual Concert & Picnic in the Park. The senior group enjoyed a delicious dinner including Lasagna, Italian Green Salad, Garlic Bread and French Vanilla Ice Cream with a splash of crème de mint. Big

Band sounds provided by "Moondance" brought back memories to the seniors. Many of the seniors enjoyed some easy dancing and Margaret Siragan (in her 90s) danced with her walker. The evening was cool, the music was great and everyone had a wonderful time!

LIBRARY DIVISION

Teen Scene. "Science Slime for Middle School Students" will be presented next Thursday, July 26, at 3 p.m., at the Library. Grades 6-8 will learn the fine art of mad science through gross and amazing experiments that astound the mind! Supplies are limited, so registration is required for this program; call the library to reserve a spot.

Dinner Theater. The Library's second Dinner Theater in the Park will be held on Thursday, July 26 at the Library Park Bandshell. Be sure to come see "Danza Azteca", amazing and entertaining dancers in multi-hued headdresses and costumes accompanied by live music played on authentic wind and percussion instruments. Picnic at 6:30 p.m.; show begins at 7 p.m.

YES Interns. Morgan Quinn, the Library Division's YES! Intern, has enjoyed working at the Library so much that he asked to stay in his spot for the second rotation. He is learning many different aspects of library work and keeping up with the hectic pace of the Summer Reading Club. Also, for the second rotation, the Division welcomed its second Yes! Intern Corina Moncada, a senior at MHS, who plans to become a librarian.

Filming. On Thursday, July 19, a Kaye Jewelers commercial was filmed on Lime Avenue and in the southeast portion of Library Park. The film company used only two parking spots during the day, keeping the rest of the lot open to the public. When the Library closed at 5 p.m., the film crew then used the parking lot as its staging area throughout the night.

FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Personnel responded to 48 emergency calls from 0800 hours on July 11, to 0800 hours July 18. Significant incidents included:

Strike Team Response (Brush Fire). On Monday, July 9, Monrovia firefighters responded with the State O.E.S. Engine 228 to a brush fire on Highway 154 in Santa Barbara. Monrovia Fire responded as the Strike Team Leader placing them in charge of engine companies from Arcadia Fire, Sierra Madre Fire, Montebello Fire, and La Habra Heights Fire. The Strike Team was originally scheduled to protect homes in the area; however, following a change in the Unified Command Management structure, a strategic decision was made to cancel the assignment. The entire Strike Team returned to their home agencies the following afternoon.

TRAINING AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Fire Department completed three days of fire shelter training this week. Fire shelters are designed to protect firefighters from smoke, heat and flame in the event that they become entrapped during wildland firefighting operations. The fire shelter is obviously a last resort form of protective equipment, but a necessary safety tool. Our firefighters were trained in the specifications, construction and rapid deployment techniques of these shelters. This training was conducted as part of our annual wildland compliance training and in preparation for the heavy brush fire season anticipated.

FIRE PREVENTION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

The grant funded chipper program is winding down this brush season. The Department is finalizing a few more parcels that are in progress and the program will discontinue later this week. This successful program mitigated more than 1,000 cubic yards of hazardous vegetation. This was a direct savings to residents of over \$30,000.

The grant-funded goat fuel reduction program is still working in the Norumbega area. The goats are rapidly approaching 50 acres and still eating. Surrounding communities have contacted the prevention bureau and requested information and conducted site visits to investigate the success of our program.

The prevention bureau attended the Southern California Fire Prevention Officers meeting this week. The topic was the amendment to Title 19 regarding the maintenance of sprinkler systems. The State has increased the maintenance requirements and the department is working to stay on the forefront to assist business owners in maintenance compliance.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

The Department is concluding its brush inspection program. Eleven properties entered the abatement process and each worked with the department to complete the requirements before the property was abated by the City. We appreciate the homeowner's compliance and support during this brush season. In addition, we would also like to acknowledge homeowners that reduced the dead palm fronds as they are, at times, problematic to mitigate. The residential brush program is in 100% compliance at this time.

ON THE POLICE BLOTTER

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 546 calls for service resulting in 107 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

Shoplifter / Drug Arrest. On July 16 at 10:34 a.m., officers responded to a business in the 1600 block of South Mountain regarding a suspect being detained for shoplifting. A search of the suspect revealed drug paraphernalia and methamphetamine. While officers were still in the store, another unrelated suspect was arrested for shoplifting. The second suspect was a wanted parolee. Both suspects were taken into custody.

Shoplifter / Parole Violation. On July 16 at 1:34 p.m., officers were dispatched to the area of Sherman and Cherry regarding a manager from a business following a shoplifter. Prior to the officers arriving, the suspect tried discarding the stolen property in the 1200 block of Sherman. The suspect was arrested for the theft and a parole violation.

Domestic Violence / Criminal Threats Arrest. On July 16, an officer received a report from a female victim who received death threats on her cell phone from her ex-boyfriend. The victim was also battered by the suspect two weeks earlier and had pictures of her injuries. The suspect admitted to the death threats and was arrested.

Displaying a Weapon in a Threatening Manner. On July 18 at 9:53 p.m., an officer was flagged down by two victims at Myrtle and Huntington reporting a passenger in a vehicle had pointed a gun at them. A crime broadcast alerted the field units and an area check located the vehicle northbound on Myrtle. The vehicle turned eastbound on Lime, and a high risk stop was made. The three occupants were detained and positively identified by the victims. The officer determined one of the passengers was

not a party to the crime. A female adult and female juvenile were arrested. A search of the vehicle uncovered a freshly painted toy gun.

Shooting at an Inhabited Dwelling. On July 18 at 11:09, officers went to the 200 block of West Cypress regarding shots being fired in the area. Witnesses gave several different descriptions of vehicles and suspects. There were even witnesses who claimed the shots were firecrackers, but a detailed search by officers on the shift discovered what appeared to be bullet impact marks on a front door to a residence. The investigation is continuing.



OPERATIONS – *Environmental – Facilities – Parks:*

Compost Bins. Compost bins are once again available from Environmental Services! The bins are available for \$20 from the Public Works Department located at 415 South Ivy Avenue. Information on composting and other smart gardening techniques is also available. To purchase a bin, please call Environmental Services at (626) 932-5553 or (626) 932-5556 so we may have a bin and information ready for pick-up.

Bear-Resistant Barrels Update. The second round of the bear-resistant barrel orders concluded this week. Athens Services will be delivering the barrels to our newest 18 program members within 3-4 weeks.

STREETS:

Concrete Rehabilitation:

Trip hazard prevention: Sidewalk grinding throughout City.

Graffiti Removal:

- 52 traffic signs

Traffic Sign Painting, Installation, Replacement:

- Replaced 3 hr Parking sign at 220 S. Myrtle with 90 min. Parking.
- Installed 90 min. Parking sign at 112 S. Myrtle
- Relocated 90 min. Parking sign from 134 S. Myrtle to 128 S. Myrtle
- Relocated Loading Zone sign from 404 S. Myrtle to 410 S. Myrtle
- Painted "Slow School Xing" at all school locations.

UTILITIES:

Customer Service

- 2,897 water meters were read and recorded
- 41 work orders were completed
- 13 water meters were replaced
- 3 water meter lids were replaced
- 26 water services were reactivated

Water Production

Water consumption is 69 million gallons, which is the average weekly water usage during this time of the season. 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

Well No.3 motor is being service by General Pump. This well will not effect water production to our customers.

Utility Maintenance

- Two 2” residential water services were installed
- Two 6” Fire Hydrants were installed
- 30 water main system valves were inspected and operated
- 23 underground service alert’s utility location requests were completed
- 11,000 feet of sewer main were cleaned

Colorado Commons Fire Service and Water Connection –City construction crews completed the installation of two 6” fire service connections and one 2” water service to the Colorado Commons Development.

2006 -2007 Sewer Main Replacement Project Update (*Canyon Boulevard, Colorado Boulevard, and Primrose Avenue*). Trench excavation/pavement removal will begin on the week of July 23. The intersection of Colorado Blvd. and Primrose Avenue will experience traffic delays during the full week of July 23 to 27. The Contractor will complete the work by Friday, July 27. Temporary No Parking signs are posted. The MTA has been notified to relocate the existing bus stop at Primrose Avenue. Businesses and residents have been notified.

Have a great weekend!

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

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| Sun., July 22, 6:30 p.m. | Family Concert Series, “Instant Replay”, sponsored by Jodi Breneman, Dickson Podley Realtors; Library Park |
| Tues., Aug. 7, 7:30 p.m. | Regular Council Meeting |
| TUESDAY, AUGUST, 21 | CITY COUNCIL MEETING CANCELLED |
| MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 | LABOR DAY, CITY HALL CLOSED |
| Tues., Sept. 4, 7:30 p.m. | Regular Council Meeting |

CMO ATTACHMENTS:

LEARNING THE ROPES

Students getting work experience in Monrovia

By Emanuel Parker Staff Writer, Pasadena Star-News

MONROVIA - If not for a unique city employment program, Bianca Torres would be spending her summer break from high school chumming up to "Oprah," or the cast of "The View." "If I weren't here, I'd be at home watching television," said the 16-year-old Monrovia High School junior.

Instead, Torres is learning how to file documents, operate a switchboard and perform other office duties.

The tradition of the summer job is fading away. Only 49% of American teenagers ages 16 to 19 were working - or even seeking a job - last month, down from 60 percent, according to the U.S. Labor Department. But at Monrovia City Hall, 27 students from Monrovia High are learning the ABC's of work this summer, along with some basic life skills, as paid city interns.

The Youth Employment Services program - which debuted this summer, is costing the city \$80,000 to operate, and runs for nine weeks - pays the students \$8 an hour. But it also serves to encourage them to graduate and go on to college, said city spokesman Dick Singer.

The students were picked for the program by their school counselors and local YMCA officials, who referred students they believed would benefit from the work experience and just needed a gentle push to egg them on to college.

Some of the students would be the first in their families to attend college, Singer said. While some of the interns also are attending summer school, city officials adjusted their work schedules around school, he added.

The interns are all over City Hall - in the finance department, human resources, the city manager's office, in the community development department and at parks, Singer said. "We've got a whole bunch of kids helping out with the Summer Extravaganza Recreation Program, taking care of younger kids," he said. "We have kids interested in engineering, so we got them some time in public works so that they can see what an engineer does."

Alexis Newel, a neighborhood services specialist for the city, said the interns assigned to her office have helped on smaller projects that have had to wait because of a shortage of manpower. "They've been really helpful going out in the field, doing different projects, helping with some of the stuff that's gotten backlogged," he said. "They're learning a whole lot and catching on very quickly."

Edgar Rodriguez, 16, is learning the functions of the city manager's office. "I do a lot of work with various programs and the Redevelopment Agency. I'm learning a lot of office skills and how to manage my time wisely," he said.

Intern Kevin Kerbabaian has managed to overcome much of his natural shyness while tending the public counter at the city's community development department. The 16-year-old said he hopes to attend UCLA and major in business. His ultimate goal is to open his own restaurant some day, he said.

"I've gained a lot of confidence just working the counter. Before, it was really hard for me to talk to people," Kerbabaian said.

Monrovia Mayor Rob Hammond said the city decided to invest in its youth "to ensure that we have the best educated workforce out there." "What we have learned through national statistics is that students who have summer jobs tend to stay in school longer, graduate and go on to post-high school education," he added.

And more elite colleges are beginning to take notice of applicants who have held down a steady job, according to a recent article in the Boston Globe, which interviewed several admissions deans at elite colleges.

Solid work experience is scarce, even among students from lower- income backgrounds, said Lee Coffin, dean of undergraduate admissions for Tufts University in Boston. "The people who typically would've worked a fish-and-chips stand or scooped ice cream are gone," Coffin said. "When we read an (application) folder with work experience we usually comment on it in a very favorable way."

After the conclusion of the Monrovia's teen work program on Aug. 18, officials will hold a ceremony for the interns during the City Council's Sept. 4 meeting. "We plan to make (the program) an annual event," Singer said. "Everything that we're doing this year is in preparation for next year. ... It's just a matter of how are we going to tweak it."

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