



From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



September 21, 2007

City Council Meeting Wrap-up

Tuesday night's City Council meeting was indeed a fairly short session. Of the three basic items of business – the ratification of a traffic survey needed to post speed limits on public streets; the dismantling, relocation and reconstruction of the Butler building used by the Fire Department during the rehabilitation of Station No. 1; the termination of the City's agreement for services with the County of Los Angeles for weed abatement services – only the termination of the County Agreement sparked much discussion.

As described previously, the County has provided weed and rubbish abatement inspections and clean-up for some time. However, the City's Fire and Community Development Departments provide essentially the same service – annual brush inspections in the foothills by the Fire Prevention Bureau and ongoing nuisance abatement in the "flatlands" by the Neighborhood Preservation Division. More to the City Council's point and direction to staff, the City's efforts are consistently executed with significantly more precision and customer service.

The City Council made the policy decision of cancelling the contract with the County, and then directed staff to return in October with the policy infrastructure needed to fully enforce the scope and intent of the abatement program. Although it may seem counter-intuitive to cancel the contract before the necessary protocols are in place, the Agreement for Services with the County necessitated that we take this action prior to September 30 (in other words, we have to give 90 days notice prior to actual termination on January 1) or else allow the contract to automatically renew for an additional year. Obviously, the Council had confidence that staff could construct the appropriate program prior to the final day of the existing County contract.

As always, if you have any questions on any item on the agenda, please feel free to contact me directly.

MAD Town Council Meeting

Prior to Tuesday night's City Council meeting, Mayor Hammond, Police Chief Roger Johnson and I made our way to the Monrovia-Arcadia-Duarte Town Council – or, MAD Town Council – meeting to discuss an interesting regional policing concept developed by the Chief. The MAD Town Council is like a city council for the unincorporated areas to the south of Monrovia. However, unlike a city council they are advisory only. As an unincorporated area – meaning they are not part of a city (even though their postal address may say "Monrovia" or "Arcadia"), these neighborhoods are essentially a no-man's land. In some cases, such as the unincorporated areas of East Pasadena, such neighborhoods can flourish. In other cases, the Monrovia and Duarte areas in particular, these neighborhoods can stagnate or even slide backwards.

Why is any of this an issue for the City of Monrovia?

Because these unincorporated areas border Monrovia. And often problems that have roots in these neighborhoods spill over into our streets. Thus, for example, Monrovia's Community Policing efforts can effectively root out gang and drug problems from a given Monrovia neighborhood; but if the level of effort and resources are not sustained in the County area, then all we are doing is pushing the issue around town like a pawn on a chessboard. Our experience in the past has been that the Sheriff Department will apply significant resources when there is a crisis situation (such as last summer's rash of gang-related shootings), but once the problem subsides it redirects resources elsewhere. This is problematic because gang and drug-related issues are often very complex and multi-dimensional, and must be smothered like a smoldering fire – otherwise the flame reignites.

All this said, Chief Johnson developed a regional policing concept whereby the cities of Monrovia and Duarte and the County of LA Sheriff Department would combine resources and create a task force to deal with blight and crime in and around the County unincorporated area. Monrovia would pledge a police officer, Duarte would commit a code enforcement officer and the Sheriff Department, a sergeant and two deputies. This task force would essentially be a community policing team for the unincorporated area on an ongoing basis.

Initially, there was support for the concept from all corners. However, late last week, the word came down from the Sheriff Department that, although they still liked the concept and were focused on bringing resources to bear in the unincorporated area on a long-term basis, they simply could not commit to do so in a binding and contractual way. Thus, the regional policing concept began to unravel.

The reason the Mayor, Chief and I were attending the MAD Town Council meeting was to update them on the regional concept and represent Monrovia's commitment to these neighborhoods. Truly, what is good for "Monrovia proper" is good for the unincorporated area, and vice-versa. News that the regional concept was not to be, however, changed the tenor of the discussion. The MAD Town Council member who lives in the "Monrovia portion" of the unincorporated area was disappointed and asked, at this point, "Would the City of Monrovia be willing to examine the possibility of annexing portions of the unincorporated area?" The Mayor and I both responded that if Monrovia received a formal request to consider annexation, we would recommend to the full City Council that the study be undertaken.

In the past, whenever annexation has been discussed, folks in the City of Monrovia would generally cringe at the idea of annexing the County areas. Property values are generally lower in these areas, there is no sales tax base to generate revenue to pay for new services, and crime and blight are more prevalent. On the other hand, with the housing boom over the last seven years, property values between the City and County areas are closer than they have ever been. Indeed, the property values in the County are essentially identical to the property values found in the southern third of Monrovia. As for the lack of sale tax base, because the State has reconfigured the manner in which it shares revenue with cities and has locked that revenue-sharing formula into place, sales tax revenue is no longer the City's single largest source of income – property tax revenues are.

Lastly, with respect to crime and blight, many of the County neighborhoods are indeed blighted; and Monrovia currently sends resources into these areas through our mutual aid police and fire compacts. If the County's current level of resources dedicated to the unincorporated area ebbs, as history has shown it will, Monrovia will continue to apply resources over time without receiving anything in return. Truly, one drowning man does not help others – he drags them down too. Alternatively, if Monrovia were to deliver the same intensity of community policing and code enforcement effort as we do in the rest of the City, over time, we can stabilize and significantly improve these areas.

Still, any decision on annexation has to come from the communities – both of them. The residents of the County areas must decide whether they truly want the same level of service offered to Monrovia

residents (and want to pay for it); and Monrovia residents must consider the merits of adding these areas to the City (act decisively to address the problems long term or live with the slow-bleed?).

No doubt this will prove an interesting and exhaustive exercise. I will keep you apprised of the situation as it moves along.

Sawpit Wash Trail Update

This week, the City Attorney's office filed a Quiet Title Action in Superior Court regarding the public's use of the Sawpit Wash Trail. Over the last few months, the owner of the underlying property that the trails run across rejected the City's offers and incentives to resolve this matter amicably. At the same time, the City Attorney compiled declarations and testimonials from members of the public who have used the trail for many, many years. We are hoping to have this matter resolved sooner than later with a solid ruling in the community's favor.

Saturday City Hall Hours

Following through on an idea from Councilman Tom Adams to experiment with additional hours for opening City Hall to the public, this week staff will begin publicizing our first of two semi-annual "Saturday City Hall" events.

The first event is scheduled to coincide with Make a Difference Day on Saturday, October 27. City Hall will open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. All City Hall operations, including Community Development, Public Works, City Clerk, Finance, Human Resources, and the City Manager's Office, will be open for business.

In addition to all of the regular services available at City Hall, the Department of Community Development will offer "do-it-yourself" training sessions on topics such as "Earthquake proofing your home," "Installing a water heater," and "Green Building techniques for new and/or remodeling homes." Also, the Department will be offering FREE yard sale permits for the first 50 customers who come in and apply for one.

This is just one more example of the City Council and staff pushing the envelope in the interest of exceptional customer service.

Library Construction Committee Update

On Wednesday, the Library Construction Committee held its monthly meeting – but please note, future meetings will move back to the regularly scheduled second Wednesday of the month, just preceding the regular Planning Commission meetings. With the City's construction team working feverishly to complete the first of three bid packs (demolition and earthwork), this meeting focused on the temporary relocation of the public library to the Youth Center during the 14-month construction period. October's meeting will focus on the finalization of a handful of design details relating to construction materials, and the final overview of bid pack #1. We are poised to begin demolition of the existing building in late November and grading will commence in December. If you have any questions about this project feel free to contact either project team leader Alice Griselle or me.

Old Town Business Cycle Working It's Course

A survey of Old town businesses this week shows that the vacancy rate has dropped to a very impressive 2% -- of the 13 properties we were tracking as we prepared for the Broker Reception this past July, just three storefronts remain vacant and/or unclaimed.

- *Sweet Garlic* is now the *Chang Thai Bistro*
- *Sinful Souls* is *Blind9Golf*
- *All About Me* has been converted to a banquet room for *Caffé Opera*
- *Valley Hardware* has been leased to *Pinkberry* – the new tenant is paying rent and has an opening planned for April '08
- *Mystic Sisters* is now *Allure*, a women's clothing boutique due to open the end of this month
- *Bella Senta Boutique* is now the *Maranatha Christian Book Store*
- *Amori Restaurant* is reopening soon as *Lutece*, a French bistro
- *Frank & Joe's* site is reportedly finalizing a lease to re-tenant as a Cuban bakery in the vein of the renowned *Porto's Bakery* in Glendale
- *La Petit Salon* has submitted plans for tenant improvements as a *yogurt shop*
- *601 S. Myrtle* is in play with a *pub/restaurant* moving toward development

Remaining to be filled are *Natick Stamps and Hobbies* at 405 S. Myrtle, *Colburn's Candle Shop* at 108 E. Lime, and *Pet's Delight* at 521 S. Myrtle.

Next week we are slated to begin a new round of Old Town marketing to brokers and targeted businesses, with new web pages, e-newsletters, direct mailings, etc., aimed at filling the few remaining spots with "hit list" businesses.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Monrovia Transit Outreach. In efforts to provide superior transit service, Monrovia Transit has begun its community outreach program. The aim of the outreach program is to inform transit riders of the benefits of utilizing the local transit service, and take suggestions on how we might be able to improve our service.

On Tuesday morning, an impromptu meeting was scheduled with a bingo group at the Monrovia Community Center. We were able to discuss options for utilizing the program. Future outreach programs will involve a collaboration of Community Services Department, the Planning Division, and the Director of Operations of Southland Transit Incorporated (transit contractor). These outreach efforts will answer questions and field concerns related to carrying out and improving existing transit services.

Historic Preservation Meeting. On September 26, the Commission will review the following Historic Landmarks/Mills Act Contract:

- Historic Landmark/Mills Act Contract-HL 112/MA-106, 419 W. Lime, Daniel and Susan McClure, applicants for a Folk Victorian home built in 1887.
- Historic Landmark/Mills Act Contract – HL114/MA-108, 214-216 North Encinitas, Frank and Tammy Guarino, applicants for a California Bungalow duplex. A Tifal Brothers built in 1913.
- Historic Landmark/Mills Act Contract –HL118/MA-112, 344 Melrose, Walter, Carol and Helen Milner, applicants for a Tudor Revival style home built in 1929.

Under New Business, the Commission will discuss the following applications:

- Advisory Review – 419 West Lime Avenue for a construction of a 3-car garage.
- Advisory Review – 405-409 S. Myrtle Avenue for changes to the façade.

Emergency Preparedness Training. Three members of the Department attended Earthquake Preparedness Training at the California Specialized Training Institute. The training was an intensive five-day course preparing employees to deal with a major earthquake, and to operate the plans and intelligent section of the Emergency Operations Center.

Filming. The ABC television series October Road will be filming Christmas scenes, including Christmas decorations and simulated snow, on Friday, September 21, 2007, at 243 N. Encinitas, the 100 block of W. Lime and the west side of the 400 block of S. Myrtle. The scenes in the downtown will require a street closure in the 100 block of W. Lime and will be filmed overnight between 12 midnight and 7:00 a.m.

Spooner Productions, Inc. will be filming scenes for a small independent film, "Spooner", at the Aztec Hotel, 311 W. Foothill for three days on September 27, October 1 & 2, 2007. All of the activity will be shot interior of the location (bar, hotel room, lobby, barbershop) and all parking will be contained within the parking lot. Filming hours will be 8:00 a.m. 8:00 p.m.

The Census is coming! Although Census Day is still 2½ years away, efforts are already well underway to make sure that an accurate count takes place in 2010 for the 23rd decennial count of the national population. A big component of the pre-census preparation is the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program. This week the Planning Division participated in another LUCA workshop as the Census Bureau begins the rollout of the program. LUCA gives local jurisdictions the opportunity to review the Census Bureau's address list to help ensure that all housing units are included in the count.

As required by the U.S. Constitution, the census was established for the apportionment of congressional seats. Today, the results not only establish the number of representatives allotted to each state but also is used as the basis for many government funding programs which are based on population, such as CDBG. An accurate count is vital to ensuring that Monrovia doesn't lose out on any potential funding. LUCA is the first step in this effort.

Mark your calendars—the next Census Day is April 1, 2010.

COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS

RECREATION DIVISION

Free - Medicare Made Clear Seminar. On Friday, September 28, Golden Age Entertainment will host a free Medicare informational seminar at the Monrovia Community Center. The program will start at 10 a.m. with refreshments, prizes and entertainment, followed by basic information on Medicare Part A, B, C and D. This program will answer questions, dispel myths and get down to the nitty-gritty of what you really need to know about Medicare. This free program is open to seniors, caregivers, new retirees and family members. For further information and to make a reservation, call the Monrovia Community Center at (626) 256-8246.

LIBRARY DIVISION

New Monrovia Reads and Plays Programs. Monrovia Reads and Plays will be launching *Speak Easy*, a new program for adults on Thursday, September 20. *Speak Easy* is an opportunity for adult English learners to practice speaking English in a relaxed environment in their neighborhood. The program will be presented by Rebecca Diaz, Librarian I and it will take place on board the Monrovia Reads and Plays Literacy Van parked at the corner of Ivy and Los Angeles in Monrovia. While *Speak Easy* is

being presented, Library and Recreation staff will have simultaneous programming for children outside the van.

At the end of September, Adult Services will become involved with programming on the Mobile Van. Librarian II Carol Kampe will present a dog care program. The program is geared for all ages, so the entire family can share in the experience.

Computer Classes. The fall series of Computer Classes started this month after the August hiatus. The September schedule includes three Beginners classes, one Internet class, one Microsoft Word class and one Email class. Interest in the classes continues to be popular. This month, Librarian I Alice Kuo is assisting Librarian II Carol Kampe during a Beginners class and an Email class. Alice is familiarizing herself with the teaching process in order to become a substitute teacher when needed.

FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Personnel responded to 65 emergency calls from 0800 hours Wednesday 9/13, to 0800 hours Wednesday 9/20/07. Significant incidents include:

Strike Team Response- Fire personnel were dispatched on Sunday to the Big Bear Fire. They were assigned to structure protection on night operations. They returned late Wednesday night.

Roll Over Traffic Collision- Just after midnight, fire personnel responded to a reported vehicle off the freeway. Upon arrival, they found a single vehicle that had rolled over into a tree. One patient was transported to the hospital.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

The Fire Department would like to thank Alice Griselle and two of her staff members for their participation in the California State Training Institute (CSTI) earthquake school last week. Alice, Richard Yoder-Edney, and Dan McConnell spent an entire week on campus in San Luis Obispo, learning all of the management practices & principles required to effectively function within an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during a disaster. The skills they learned will be of great value if we have a local emergency requiring the activation of the EOC and feedback from the group was very positive, as evidenced by an email correspondence from Alice stating "I can't say enough about the quality and value of the training."

Along with the in-service training that Alice and her staff received (which will continue for other departments in the upcoming years), the Fire Department is actively encouraging citizens of Monrovia to become involved in the newly formed Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. The first two classes are already filled, with over 80 local residents involved in the program, but we are continuing to encourage participation for future classes. If interested in the CERT program please contact the Monrovia CERT hotline at (626) 256-8144, email us at cert@ci.monrovia.ca.us or visit the City web-site and click on CERT.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

This week is move week for the Fire Department as we pack our bags and boxes and transition back to the renovated Fire Headquarters building. We are one month ahead of schedule and anxious to get back to a sense of normalcy, after having spent nine months in temporary trailers. There are still many things left to complete in the new fire station, such as finalizing the cabinetry and counter-tops in the kitchen and front landscaping, but the building is otherwise ready for occupancy. The builders, GB Construction, along with staff from the Public Works Department did an outstanding job of

renovating the fire station and making the building modern, functional and professional. We will officially be full-service out of the renovated fire station on Friday, September 21, and the temporary trailers will be moved off-site the following week.

ON THE POLICE BLOTTER

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 617 calls for service resulting in 136 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

Misdemeanor Child Abuse. On September 14 at 9:30 a.m., an officer was hailed down by a female subject reporting a woman had slapped her two young children and was yelling profanities at them. The officer found the woman and she was arrested. The mother was booked and released on a citation.

Disturbance. On September 14 at 10:25 a.m., an officer was dispatched to the area of Sierra Vista and Norumbega regarding a fight in the street. Through investigation, the officer was able to identify two subjects who were challenging each other to fight, and both subjects were cited in the field and released.

Armed Robbery. On September 16 at 2:50 p.m., an adult male subject entered a restaurant in the 700 block of East Huntington and ordered an ice cream. The subject gave the cashier money. When the cashier opened the register, the subject produced a small semi-automatic handgun and demanded the money from the register. He then demanded a second employee to open another register and give him the money from it. The suspect fled westbound on foot.

Shots Fired. On September 16 at 4:33 p.m., Monrovia Police Department received several calls reporting shots fired in the area of California and Walnut. The callers stated there were two females running through a park, apparently trying to get away from a male subject with a gun. One caller stated the females got into a car, driven by a third subject and left the area at a high rate of speed. Officers did an area search but were unable to locate the subjects.

Outside Assist. On September 16 at 5:30 p.m., officers responded to the area of Mountain and Huntington on a suspicious person call. The person was described as a transient female. The first officer on scene saw the subject running out of a gas station. The officer tried to contact the subject, but she ran from the officer and crossed the street. The officer chased the subject and attempted to detain her. The subject turned towards the officer and assumed a fighting stance, so the officer sprayed the subject with pepper spray. Additional Monrovia officers and a CHP officer arrived to assist and the subject was taken into custody.

The female subject was actually a male, and this person was identified as a robbery suspect who was eluding Duarte deputies. The suspect was in possession of the \$1,400 taken in the robbery. The deputies did a field show-up, and the subject was positively identified as their suspect. The deputies took custody of the suspect.

Attempted Grand Theft. On September 17 at 9:24 a.m., officers responded to a business in the 300 block of West Huntington on a suspicious circumstance call. Two male subjects in their forties had climbed onto the roof of the business, posing as employees from a fire protection business. The two subjects began cutting the copper tubing from the air conditioning compressor, and attempted to remove the compressor. The subjects were confronted by store employees. The two subjects got off the roof and into a red truck with Idaho plates. There was a female subject in the truck.

Domestic Violence Arrest. On September 18 at 4:29 p.m., day watch officers investigated a domestic violence incident where the suspect had fled and could not be located. A want was issued for the suspect. That evening at 7:05 p.m., an officer located and arrested the wanted suspect in the 800 block of West Olive and took the suspect into custody.

THE PUBLIC WORKS **SCOOP**



OPERATIONS – *Environmental – Facilities – Parks:*

Traffic Detector Repairs. On Friday, September 14, all of the traffic detection loops at the intersection of Huntington Drive and Myrtle Avenue were replaced by the City's signal contractor. Tests were performed in response to several reports of traffic backed up during rush hour, and indicated a high percentage of loops were not sensing vehicles. The intersection has resumed its normal operation.

Library Park. Two picnic tabletops were vandalized beyond repair at Library Park this past week and had to be replaced with new boards.

STREETS:

Weed Abatement:

- Canyon and Huntington Drive northwest corner area.

Raised Sidewalk Repairs:

- 100 block N. Shamrock

Pothole Patching:

- S. Magnolia at parking lot entrance to Rite Aid.
- S. Peck Rd. from Jeffries to Longden

Miscellaneous:

- Work continues on dirt removal from the Mountain Avenue Reservoir site.
- Dirt and Asphalt removal continues per excavation operations.
- Construction work continues on Material and Handling Storage Facility at 2655 S. Myrtle Avenue
- The building of the concrete block retaining walls continues this week.
- Pour new concrete curb in front of fire station.

UTILITIES:

Customer Service

- 2,946 water meters were read and recorded
- 28 work orders were completed
- 1 water meter was replaced
- 19 water services were reactivated

Water Production

- Water consumption is 66.2 millions gallons, a decrease of approximately 7% compared to last week's water usage.

Department of Health Services Required Water Samples:

- 17 water system samplings
- 3 water treatment facility samplings

Utility Maintenance

- 3-1" residential water services were repaired
- 15 underground service alert's utility location requests were completed

Miscellaneous

Utility maintenance personnel have assisted in the construction operation of the new Corporate Yard and Well Field site projects.

Have a great weekend!

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

Thurs., Sept. 27, 7:30.m.	Chamber Networking Breakfast; 700 Huntington Hotel
Sat., Sept. 29, 9 to 3 p.m.	Old Town Car Show, Myrtle Avenue
Tues., Oct. 2, 6:00 p.m.	City Council Study Session
Tues., Oct. 2, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting
Thurs., Oct. 4, 6:00 p.m.	Monrovia Reads Spaghetti Western; Historical Museum
Sat., Oct. 6-7, 9 to 5 p.m.	Monrovia arts Festival; Library Park
Tues., Oct. 16, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting
Thurs., Oct. 18,	2007 Business Showcase; Doubletree Hotel, 924 W. Huntington
Thurs., Dec. 6, 7:00 p.m.	Holiday Parade; Myrtle Avenue