



From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



October 26, 2007

WILDFIRE!

Obviously, this week has been dominated by the enormous effort going into combating the wildfires across Southern California. Winds in Monrovia have been relatively calm, and our little corner of the world has been spared the devastation impacting the Malibu-Castaic area and, especially, north San Diego County. The Monrovia Fire Department is engaged in this event, with three engines out on various strike teams (a strike team is comprised of five engines and a battalion chief). That said, our local staffing is complete and we are in constant communication with our mutual aid partners all along the Foothill Corridor. Additionally, we are focusing police and fire patrols in our foothill areas. For more detailed information on this event, please scroll down to the Fire Department's report.

Public Works Department Moves to Corporate Yard

You may have noticed that the City's Corporate Yard at 600 South Mountain is buzzing with activity. That's because the entire Public Works Department is now housed under one roof at that location. Previously, management and administrative functions were contained in City Hall and all field personnel operated out of the Yard. This has never really been conducive to maintaining cohesion, coordination and communication within the Department. However, it was part of an older paradigm that dictated that engineering and other office functions had to stay in City Hall. Yet, when Public Works' City Hall offices (located in the basement) were being remodeled several years ago and the Department had to temporarily move to the Yard, we did not see, hear or experience a drop off in customer service.

Thus, as we began two years ago to consider the remodel and rehabilitation of City Hall, it became apparent that we could move Public Works to the Yard and put other operations into the basement (most likely Administrative Services and Human Resources). At this point, with Fire Station No.1 essentially done (we are only waiting for the new glass roll-up doors to arrive and be installed) and the Corporate Yard nearly complete, the Council's mandate to cost-effectively maintain all of the City's fixed assets and physical plant is coming into focus.

Keep in mind that although the address has changed for Public Works, all of the telephone numbers and email information remain the same. Similarly, the administrative office hours of operation will mirror those of City Hall – Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and every Friday, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Gold Line Study Proposes Extension to Ontario Airport

Why would the City of LA and Mayor Villaraigosa be in favor of the Gold Line if (and perhaps ONLY if) the line reaches Ontario Airport? Well, I'd like to say it is strictly because it is good urban and transit planning. However, more practical – yet equally compelling – reasons are politics and revenue. LAX badly needs to expand, but local residents in Westchester, Mar Vista, etc. are adamantly opposed to the aggressive expansion plans that have been proposed by LA City over the years. Ontario, on the other hand, has the capability and capacity to expand dramatically – and it is owned by LAWA (Los

Angeles World Airports). LAWA is the City of LA. Thus, from a practical perspective, LA gets what it wants (airport expansion) and all of the cities along the Gold Line alignment get what they want and need – light rail service.

All this said, on Wednesday Mayor Hammond and I attended an event at Ontario Airport to kick off the study that will become the environmental review and feasibility analysis for this proposed extension to the Gold Line. Mayor Hammond addressed the audience of local government officials, the press and stakeholders to detail the importance of the Gold Line, the investment it will bring and traffic congestion it will mitigate. The turnout for the event was very strong, despite the resources and press being dedicated to wildfires. Hopefully, the MTA will recognize that this project simply makes too much sense to ignore.

Open Saturday!!!

Just a reminder that City Hall and the Corporate Yard will be open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, October 27. This is all part of the City Council's efforts to expand services and overall value to Monrovia residents and businesses – we are here for YOU!!! Come in and get a free yard sale permit, learn how to earthquake proof your home, or apply for a passport!

Articles Attached

- **Setting the Record Straight.** Kudos to PIO Dick Singer for creating this innovative fact-finding service. In this age of instant messaging, blogs, etc., it is easy for bad information to get out and become the stuff of urban legend.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Neighborhood & Business Services Division Update. The Neighborhood & Business Services Division is one of three divisions located in the Department of Community Development. It is comprised of three sections: **Business Services** (Business Licenses, Commercial Code Enforcement, Film, Special Events and Yard Sale Permits); **Code Enforcement Services** (all residential Code Enforcement, Inoperable Vehicle Abatement, Reporting of Shopping Cart and Junk & Debris for Removal from the Public Right-of-Way); and **Neighborhood Services** (Housing Grants, and M.A.P., C.P.R. and C.o.E.d. programs). The *Monrovia Area Partnership* (MAP) is a new program designed to combat blight and crime through community partnerships, and increasing citizen activism & volunteerism. The *Community Pride and Resources Program* (CPR) is at-risk owner/family referrals from code enforcement staff to the Neighborhood Services Section for appropriate assistance through existing regional resources. The *Code Education Program* (CoEd) assists neighborhood improvement efforts by “blanketing” areas identified with substantial code violations and/or blight patterns with code education flyers.

Business Services. During the month of September, the following activities were generated:

• Filming Permits Issued:	3
• Special Event Permits	3
• Yard Sale Permits	36
• Revenue Generated	\$41,965.94

Code Enforcement Services. During the month of September, the Neighborhood Preservation Division staff did the following:

- Conducted 521 inspections (including commercial property inspections);
- Opened 55 code cases;
- Closed/cleared 53 cases (Includes commercial code enforcement);
- Referred 3 cases to the City Prosecutor's Office due to non-compliance;
- Abated 4 inoperable vehicles (repaired, removed or stored properly);
- Caused the removal of 191 shopping carts;
- Discarded 134 pieces of items (i.e., appliances, furniture, auto parts and trash and debris) from the public right-of-way;
- Conducted 2 informal code education meetings/hearings with property owners.

Neighborhood Services Section. The following are the statistics for the month of September:

- **Monrovia Area Partnership (M.A.P.)***
 - Applicants 48
 - Applications Processed 2
 - Projects Started 2
 - Projects Completed 3
 - Emergency Grants 0
 - MAP CoED Training Recipients 0

* MAP numbers are running totals to accurately depict this community partnership program.

- **Community Pride Program (C.P.R.)**
 - Cases in Progress 5
 - C.P.R. Cases Opened 1
 - C.P.R. Cases Closed 1
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**
 - Handyworker Grants Available 4
 - Applicants 3
 - Applications Processed 1
 - Projects Started 1
 - Projects Completed 1
- **Neighborhood Pride Award (NPA)**
 - Recipients recognized 2

Special Planning Commission Meeting. The Planning Commission conducted a special meeting on October 23 to review the following Planning Commission application:

700 South Myrtle Avenue Specific Plan, Urban Housing Group, Applicant - The 700 South Myrtle Avenue Specific Plan was originally adopted in November 2005 as part of the entitlements for a mixed-use development on the Neff Property on the southeast corner of Myrtle and Olive Avenues. The original approval was for the development of 136 multi-family units, 11 live-work units and up to 7,800 square feet of commercial space and 370 parking spaces in a four-story parking structure that was wrapped by the residential buildings. In 2006, the City reviewed and approved modifications to the plan. The revised plans called for a replacement of the originally

approved “wrap” development (residential buildings “wrapping” the parking structure) with a podium proposal (subterranean parking structure with the buildings on top at grade level).

At its meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed a third revision to the development that involves the relocation of the parking structure, elimination of the live/work units and an increase in number of dwelling units from 148 to 163. In addition, the development went from a for-sale housing product to a rental housing development.

The City has placed a strong focus on insuring that development in the downtown extension is of high quality and incorporates architecture and design principles that contribute to the overall success of the area. The Planning Commission and staff feel that this project accomplishes these goals. The Myrtle Avenue commercial component, the reconfiguration of the street and the extension of the street furniture is intended to integrate the project into the existing Myrtle Avenue environment. The residential component on Olive and Walnut Avenues provide pedestrian linkages to the downtown and furthers the City's goal of providing more housing in the downtown area to support the economic and social vitality of the downtown. The proposed mixed-use development also provides an additional 75 parking spaces for visitors to the downtown above and beyond what is normally provided for in this type of development.

The City Council will conduct a public hearing on this application at its November 20 meeting.

Development Review Committee. At the October 24, 2007 meeting, the Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed the following applications:

- **Signage for “Tobacco Emporium” at 112 S. Myrtle – B&H Sign Company, applicant.** The Committee approved the signage and concluded that it is appropriate for the Downtown.
- **Minor exception to encroach into the east side yard setback with single family addition located at 706 E. Palm Avenue, Leo Wu & Associates, applicant.** The application was approved on the basis that the development was not exceeding 50% and did flow with the existing building's side yard setback.
- **Review of determination of intensification of non-conforming use at 114 N. Magnolia Avenue, Kevin Parshotam, applicant.** The Committee continued this application for two weeks to clarify whether previous changes/additions received proper City permits and approval.

Historic Preservation Commission Recap. At their meeting of October 24, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the following Historic Landmark and Mills Act Contract applications:

- 354 North Magnolia—Stucco sided bungalow built in 1929 in an Eclectic style. The house shows influences from the Spanish, Storybook and English Cottage styles.
- 217 East Greystone—This two-story Craftsman Bungalow was built in 1911. The house has Swiss Chalet elements and also features wood shingle siding and extensive granite work. The property owner has already done significant restoration work over the past year.
- 257 Melrose—Built in 1912, this single story Craftsman Bungalow features wood shingle siding and cut granite work on the porch and chimney.

COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS

RECREATION DIVISION

Screamin' Skeletons. The Monrovia, Department of Community Services would like to invite all residents to attend the annual Halloween Carnival and Costume Contest, "Screamin' Skeletons" October 31 from 3 to 6 p.m. at Library Park. Activities include a carnival, costume contest, teen area, toddler area, concessions and haunted house. This year's event is sponsored by the generous donations of Jodi Breneman of Dickson Podley Realtors, Monrovia Youth Baseball League, Sierra Autocars, Inc., Kim's Hapkido Karate, Monrovia Old Businesses and Centre Stage. Ghostly fun is guaranteed for all who attend this year's event. For program information please contact the Department of Community Services at 626.256.8246.

Seniors Hop on the Gold Line. On Friday, October 19, Mayor Rob Hammond hosted a Gold Line trip to downtown Los Angeles. Twenty-five seniors representing the three senior clubs were treated to ride the Gold Line and for a lunch at the Famous Philippe's Restaurant. The ride was a relaxing adventure for the seniors who never knew it was so easy to use the Gold Line. Traveling to Los Angeles without parking worries and traffic has opened a new door for the seniors and they are already planning a trip to Long Beach via the Gold Line with a connection to the Red Line. The seniors had nothing but positive comments and can't wait to travel again!

LIBRARY DIVISION

Murder Mystery. Thirty teens attended Teen Scene's *Murder Mystery* in the Library last Monday. All attendees had parts in the play and the mystery was written to promote intermingling and communication between all the participants. It was a creative way to bring teens together and promote socializing around a fun event.

Halloween Spooktacular. The Youth Services Department presents its annual Halloween Spooktacular on Saturday, October 27 at 11 a.m. and again at 2 p.m. The event will be held at the YMCA Child Care Building at 555 S. Mountain Avenue, Monrovia.

FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Personnel responded to 71 emergency calls from 0800 hours October 17 to 0800 hours October 24. Significant incidents include:

Brush Fire. Early Sunday morning firefighters responded to a brush fire in Malibu Canyon. Monrovia firefighters were assigned to a structure protection group just off of Pacific Coast Highway. Tuesday the engine was re-assigned to the Santiago fire in Orange County where they remain.

Brush Fire. Monday evening, firefighters responded with the State Office of Emergency Services engine to the brush fire in San Diego County (Ramona). Firefighters were assigned to structure protection in a large development of homes.

Brush Fire. Wednesday evening, firefighters responded to a brush fire in San Diego County (El Cajon). Firefighters were assigned to structure protection in a large development of homes.

FIRE PREVENTION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Deputy Fire Marshal Alice Robin attended meetings for Make A Difference Day. The Fire Department focus for this event is the installation of smoke detectors in the homes of seniors and homes that are

part of the MAP program. A USFA topical research paper titled "Smoke Alarm Performance in Residential Structure Fires" indicates that each year there are an estimated 405,000 residential fires, which cause 3,600 fatalities, 18,600 injuries and \$4.7 billion in property loss.

In 2006, with figures in up to just October 15, there were 412,500 fires with 2,620 fatalities, 12,925 injuries and \$6.99 billion in property loss. In 75% of residences where a fire fatality occurred, there were no smoke alarms present or they were inoperable. Conclusions drawn from this study indicate that with the presence of an operable smoke alarm, risk of death is reduced substantially and property losses are significantly less. So, if you do not have operable smoke alarms on every level, including basement, in every bedroom, and in the hallway(s) outside sleeping areas, go out and get them. It's the cheapest life-saving device you can own!

FIRE STORM UPDATE

As the first of now 17 wildland fires (as of the writing of this entry) started in Malibu last Sunday morning, Monrovia E101 was dispatched to the "Canyon Fire" incident for structure protection. Engine 101, as part of strike team 1204A, was on scene by 6 a.m. and began assisting the fire suppression efforts by protecting homes in the Piyuma area. They were then assigned structure protection in the Sumac area and worked until their release from the incident on Tuesday afternoon. Instead of returning home, E101 was re-assigned to the "Santiago Fire" incident in Orange County for structure protection, where they remain. Assigned to E101 are Captain Dover, Engineer Libra and Firefighters Towns and Faulk.

In addition to E101 being deployed, our Office of Emergency Services (OES) Engine 228, as part of Strike Team 1801A, was dispatched to the "Witch Fire" incident in Ramona Monday evening. They have been working a 24-hour operational period performing structure protection in the area. Assigned to OES Engine 228 are Captain Patrick, Engineer Mellinger and Firefighters Lambert and Huson. As with all of the firefighters assigned to the myriad of fires burning the southland, our thoughts and prayers for their safety and safe return home are with them and their families.

Finally, Wednesday afternoon a request for a third engine deployment out of Monrovia was requested and authorized with Engine 202 assigned to the "Harris Fire" incident in El Cajon. Engine 202, as part of strike team 1207A, are performing structure protection along Joe Crossing Road in El Cajon and have Battalion 10 (Chief Dave Dennis) as their strike team leader. Assigned to Engine 202 are Captain Sandona, Engineer Arellano and Firefighters McDaniel and Kaliman.

Locally, we have taken the proactive step of augmenting our normal staffing by adding an engine company to the normal deployment of resources. Given the large amount of resources deployed out of the area and the lack of air support, should a local fire start, it had been determined that having the extra engine company was a tactically prudent decision. The extra engine, along with all fire apparatus, has been heavily patrolling our foothills. Wednesday evening, a decision was made to deploy the third engine in town on strike team 1207A due to a significant change in the local weather pattern and the reports of local fires in Malibu and Canyon Country 100% contained. Monrovia is under normal staffing with two engines, one truck, one squad and one Battalion Chief and will continue to do hillside patrols until all of the major fires subside.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

As Southern California experiences one of the worst fire storms in recent history, those of us living and working in communities with significant urban-interface threats need to pause and consider the efforts that have been made and will be advocated in the future related to protecting lives and property from the ravages of fire.

The City of Monrovia has always taken a proactive stance relative to the prevention of fires in our foothills. Aggressive weed abatement strategies are deployed every spring which include 200' of separation between homes and brush (thereby creating a defensible space should a fire burn toward homes); disking vacant lands to create additional "buffer zones" in the foothills; goat grazing; the chipper program to remove cuttings; grading of the lower clam shell truck trail for emergency vehicle access should a fire start and educational brochures/pamphlets/neighborhood talks to better inform and prepare our homeowners should a fire occur. However, given the devastation seen on television over the past week, it reminds us that more can always be done.

The Monrovia Fire Department will continue to advocate for aggressive weed abatement in the foothills and will continue to champion education and preparedness for those residents living in the very high fire hazard zones. Part of that education process should include an evacuation plan, if a fire were to occur. That plan ought to include evacuation routes with alternatives, important documents to remove from the home (pictures, deed, insurance information, medications, etc.) and a location to go to should an extended evacuation period be ordered. The assistance of our residents through continued conformance with weed abatement regulations, education, vigilance and orderly, timely evacuation should the need to leave arise, has proven to be one of the most effective methods to help the firefighters protect homes and eliminate injuries in those neighborhoods impacted by fire. As we continue to monitor the fires our thoughts and prayers are with the firefighters battling the blazes, the residents who have been impacted by fire and the evacuees that wait to return to their homes.

ON THE POLICE BLOTTER

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 544 calls for service resulting in 113 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

Burglary. On October 18 at 2:01 p.m., one female and two male adult subjects entered a business in the 500 block of West Huntington. The store loss prevention officers observed the female gathering clothing items and handing them to the male subjects. One of the male subjects stuffed items inside his pants and the other male subject walked out of the store with items without paying. The loss prevention officer confronted the female and one of the males at the front of the store and the third suspect ran and hid in the area. Officers responded, located the suspect who was hiding, and based on the investigation, arrested all three for burglary. Two of the suspects had wire cutters in their pockets which they possibly used to cut off security tags. They were charged with possession of burglary tools, as well.

Burglary. On October 19 at approximately 7 p.m., officers were contacted by a witness who observed three juveniles entering parked vehicles in a parking lot in the 500 block South Myrtle. Bike patrol officers and officers working the Family Festival conducted an area search and located the three male juvenile suspects. The investigation revealed the three suspects burglarized a parked vehicle. All three suspects were arrested, booked at Monrovia Police Department, and cited out to their parents to await their court appearances.

Burglary / Contributing to the Delinquency of Minors. On October 19 at approximately 7:30 p.m., an officer responded to a business in the 500 block of West Huntington regarding two suspects in custody. The investigation revealed that two female adult suspects entered the business with their juvenile daughters, ages 12 and 14 years old. The suspects placed stolen merchandise into their daughter's purses and left the store. They were detained by loss prevention officers. The two adult female suspects were arrested and booked at Monrovia Police Department. The two juveniles were released to their fathers, who were called to the location.

Vehicle Burglary. On October 22 at 7:39 p.m., an officer responded to a business in the 500 block of West Huntington regarding a burglary. On arrival, the victim told the officer her vehicle had been

broken into and luggage had been taken from it. One of the smaller windows in the passenger side door had been smashed. Investigation continuing.

Burglary / Forgery / Possession of Fraudulent Identification. On October 22 at 7:43 p.m., an officer was dispatched to a business in the 1600 block of South Mountain regarding a subject being detained for attempting to pass a fraudulent check. The officer determined the above listed crimes had occurred and arrested the suspect.

Vehicle Burglary. On October 22 at 11:52 p.m., an officer went to a business parking lot in the 600 block of West Huntington regarding a vehicle burglary. On arrival, the victim told the officer that a laptop computer and Ipod were taken from the trunk of the vehicle while the victim was shopping in a business. Investigation continuing.

Grand Theft Auto Recovery. On October 23 at 3:31 a.m., an officer located a vehicle parked in the 100 block of East Evergreen. This area is posted "no parking at any time." The officer ran the plate and it returned stolen out of Baldwin Park. The vehicle was recovered.

Battery / Grand Theft Auto Recovery and Arrest / Parolee at Large. On October 24 at 7:36 p.m., officers went to the 300 block of South Madison regarding a fight in progress. The suspect had fled prior to the officers' arrival. The victim told officers that a female friend of a neighbor came to her door, and when she opened the door, the female suspect began punching her and then fled the scene.

That evening at approximately 11:34 p.m., an officer was patrolling the location where the battery occurred looking for the suspect, when he saw a black Chevy Tahoe leave the area and followed it because it had no plates attached. The officer intended to stop the vehicle at Monterey and Colorado, but the vehicle sped away. When the vehicle reached Mayflower, the driver stopped the vehicle and fled on foot. A short foot pursuit ensued, and the driver was taken into custody without further incident. A DMV check of the VIN number indicated the vehicle was stolen out of Pasadena. Burglary tools, false IDs, checks, etc. were located inside the vehicle. The suspect was found to be a parolee at large and was booked on a number of charges and held.

At 11:56 p.m. that same evening, an officer responded to a local hospital regarding a female subject claiming she was battered in front of Monrovia High School. Through investigation, the officer determined the female was the suspect from the battery reported earlier. The officer arrested her, and this female was found to be an associate of the suspect that was arrested in the Grand Theft Auto. Further investigation continuing.



ENGINEERING:

Colorado Commons Street Improvements. The plans and specifications are complete and out to bid. The bid opening is set for November 7.

Grading Plan Check Projects

- 486 Patrician Way, Resubmittal of plan check corrections

Approved Grading Plans:

- California/Monrovia/Duarte - 20 Planned Unit Development Project, Permits Issued.

Public Works Inspections:

- Colorado Commons: Alley retaining wall foundations.

- Duarte Road between 5th and Encino - AT&T cabinet and electrical panel installations, underground conduit inspections
- 911 Royal Oaks, Curb, gutter and sidewalk removal and replacement. Sewer main connection scheduled for 10/26/07.
- 1825 10th Avenue, Preparation of project punch list
- 1402 S. California, Erosion control measures for site demolition activities.
- California/Monrovia/Duarte, Grading operations have begun, water and sewer utility abandonment are progressing
- 1419/1425 S. Myrtle, Grading operations have begun

Construction Documents:

- Chantry Flats Road Repair - Professional service agreements mailed to consultant for design services
- 5th and Huntington Wash Cover - design work commencing with subsequent preparation of construction documents
- Handicap Access Ramp Construction - Preparation of plans and specifications for the construction of 20-30 handicap access ramps, sidewalk repairs and audible pedestrian signals

OPERATIONS – Environmental – Facilities – Parks:

Free Composting Workshop. On Saturday October 20, 20 individuals attended a free composting workshop at Library Park sponsored by Environmental Services and presented by Smart Gardening. For additional free workshops, log onto www.smartgardening.com and click on *Workshops and Schedules*.

Free Household Hazardous Waste/E-Waste Event. On Saturday November 3, Los Angeles County will host a free household hazardous waste/e-waste (HHW/E) event at the South El Monte Community Center (1415 Santa Anita Avenue, South El Monte). The event accepts household hazardous waste and e-waste items including batteries, fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, fertilizers, household cleaners, paint, old computers, televisions, game systems and other items.

For additional information, log onto www.888cleanLA.com then scroll down to *Household Hazardous and Electronic Waste Collections Events*. Informational fliers are also available at the City Hall front lobby, the Public Works front counter, Fire Stations 1 and 2 and the Police Station.

Tree Planting for Make A Difference Day. Parks staff and volunteers planted 150 street trees along South Peck Road this past weekend for Make a Difference Day. The Streets Division enhanced the planting project with much needed side-walk repair and adding tree wells to accommodate new parkway trees. Kudos to the Parks Staff who volunteered their hours working at the Make a Difference Day event!

Recreation Park. The Park's oldest drinking fountain, clogged due to a tree root, was repaired this week and a new drain was installed.

STREETS:

Traffic Signs:

- Install street name signs at Starlit Lane

Miscellaneous:

- Grading operations for new asphalt parking lot at 600 S. Mountain Ave.
- Peck Rd. from Jeffries to Longden reconstruct sidewalk and curb & gutter areas.
- 411 E. Greystone Ave reconstruct driveway apron as part of 50 / 50 program
- Relocate paint shop from Metric Building to new yard

- Olive and Ivy remove red curb around parking lot
- 600 S. Mountain Ave. - install five Customer Only parking stalls
- 100 block W. Lemon stripe 200 ft. of 4 in. white line
- 427 E. Greystone – a/c ramp sidewalk.
- 100 block E. Colorado reinstall fallen sign pole.
- Respond to code enforcement call for discarded refrigerator

UTILITIES:

Customer Service

- 1,757 water meters were read and recorded
- 46 work orders were completed
- 7 water services were reactivated
- 5 water meters were replaced

Water Production

- Water consumption is 50 millions gallons, a decrease of approximately 3% 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

- 80 water main system valves were inspected and operated
- 19 underground service alert's utility location requests were completed
- 1,200 feet of sewer mains were cleaned
- 300 feet of sewer mains were video inspected

Have a great weekend!

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

Sat. Oct. 27, 8 -3 p.m.	“Make a Difference Day”
Sat. Oct. 27, 2 to 7 p.m.	2nd Annual “Girl Power” Conference, Community Center
Mon. Nov. 5, TBA	All Commission Dinner, TBA
Tues., Nov. 6, 6:00 p.m.	City Council Study Session
Tues., Nov. 6, 7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
Tues., Nov. 20, 7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
Thurs., Dec. 6, 6:00 p.m.	Tree Lighting Ceremony, Library Park
Thurs., Dec. 6, 7:00 p.m.	Holiday Parade; Myrtle Avenue

CMO ATTACHMENTS:

Setting the record straight

Rumor Control site helps stop spread of misinformation in Monrovia

By Emanuel Parker, Staff Writer
Pasadena Star-News

MONROVIA - Their origins are often murky, and in small towns especially, they can grow and spread like viruses that, once loosed, are difficult to corral or correct.

That's often how rumors work, but Monrovia officials are working to fight the spread of local misinformation.

This past summer, the city added a regularly updated feature to its Web site: Rumor Control.

It lists the latest rumors circulating around the city or swirling about City Hall. Then the posting tries to set the record straight.

Rumor Control columnist and seven-year city spokesman Dick Singer said he saw huge potential for including such an item on the city's Web site, which has receive 300,000 hits so far this year.

"I thought, why not use it like any other publication. It's a great way to correct Internet rumors," he said. "Sometimes these rumors make their way into history and into newspaper articles. We need to establish the record, set it straight, and do it in a place anybody can find.

"It's easy to do," he added. "We deal in information, but let's deal with correct information, make sure citizens get the facts."

Rumor Control actually came about after an incident last year involving U.S. Rep. Gary Miller, R-Diamond Bar, and the sale of 165 acres of land in Monrovia.

Miller told Internal Revenue Service officials that the city forced him to sell the land, which allowed him to shelter the property from capital gains taxes for more than two years. The city said it never forced Miller to sell.

"I was getting constant calls from all over the country," Singer said. "I put our side up on our Web site, invited the press to read it, and the calls stopped."

This summer, "an outrageous rumor" appeared on an Internet blog saying that Monrovia's revised General Plan was really a conspiracy to shut down Old Town, he said.

"That had to be responded to," Singer said. "Rumor Control does what public relations does - get the facts out there in times of limited resources."

Other rumors the column has quelled in recent months include the myth that the Krikorian Premiere Theatre was not making any money and was up for sale; that the city had halted an expansion project at the local Trader Joe's; and that the city was behind the pending closure of the Spire's Restaurant.

"Rumor Control is like that Internet site that lets you check out urban legends," Singer said. "It's a fast way to check out the truth behind local rumors.

"People say they notice it and appreciate it," he said. "Once you put something up about a rumor it goes away and you don't hear about it. But they never die, that's why we leave (responses) up, to take the wind out of their sails."

ON THE NET

To view Rumor Control, visit www.ci.monrovia.ca.us and click on the Rumor Control box.

emanuel.parker@sgvn.com (626) 578-6300, Ext. 4475