



## COUNCIL DISTRICT 4

### 2016 in Review

**Here are the highlights of 2016 regarding the City of Pasadena and District 4**

**Thank you for being a supporter of District 4,**

**Gene**

### **Pasadena Budget has Balanced Five Years in a Row June 2016**

June, 2016, Pasadena City Council adopted a balanced budget five years in a row. The previous 10 years were unbalanced so this was a great improvement. The budget was \$224 million for 2016 for the General Fund and the proposed budget for 2017 is \$237.8 million. According to the Finance Department, there has been an increase in sales tax, property tax revenue, utility user tax and transient occupancy tax (TOT) charged to visitors by hotels. The TOT continues to improve because of the increase in tourism, business travel and bookings at the Pasadena Convention Center.

Starting 2018, our General Fund Five-Year Financial Forecast shows that we will spend more than we receive in revenues creating a structural deficit. The inevitable conclusion is that we cannot support the existing payroll of 2200 employees indefinitely and a major problem is the city's required contribution to the employee retirement system-CalPERS. Last year our CalPERS payment was \$39 million and it is projected to go to \$46 million in four years. The Council will monitor this issue in 2017 and will need to address the budget going forward and that means making cost saving cuts.

## **Homeless**

**January 27, 2016**

The homeless count was conducted January 27, 2016 and found 537 homeless persons in the City of Pasadena, which showed a 56% decrease in homelessness since 2011. The homeless count is a one night count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons reported by HUD's Homeless Data Exchange. We have a lot of work to still do but many homeless have been successfully placed in permanent supportive housing yet we still have many of the chronic homeless that refuse housing or any kind of help. It requires resources, skill, patience, empathy and in some cases enforcement. Pasadena does not arrest people just because they are homeless and are allowed to use public spaces. Pasadena does a homeless count in order to determine the characteristics they have, like being a veteran, women, mental illness, physically disabled and substance abuse. The homeless count has declined four years in a row. The City of Pasadena has a Homeless Prevention Program, Rapid Rehousing Program, Project House that uses programs for rent subsidies for housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, Emergency Shelters, Basic Services for the Homeless, Mental Health Service & Substance Abuse Recovery Programs, Homeless Outreach Workers, Hope Team (three teams of the Pasadena Police Department) with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health that will intervene when appropriate with a mentally ill homeless person.

## **Council Hikes Minimum Wage**

**February 1, 2016**

Pasadena City Council voted unanimously to increase the city's minimum wage with a series of tiered increases which the first increase was raised on July 1, 2016 to \$10.50 per hour. This July 1, 2017 an additional increase to \$12.00 per hour and to \$13.25 on July 1, 2018. The City will review the impact of those raises to determine a raise to the minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour by the year 2020. Since our increase started, the State of California now has a plan to increase the minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour. So currently Pasadena's timing for minimum wage increases are different from the state but I believe it will all come out to be the same at the end. It is a good thing that people will make more money yet my concern is the impact on small businesses in Pasadena. Local businesses are concerned about how an increase in minimum wage may force them to raise prices resulting in possibly having fewer customers by which they may have to start cutting hours of employees.

## **Gold Line 11.5 mile extension to Azusa and the Grand Opening is**

**March 5, 2016**

There are six new Gold Line stations starting in Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte, Irwindale, downtown Azusa and Azusa Pacific University & Citrus College that extend 11.5 more miles from Pasadena's Sierra Madre Villa Station going east to Azusa. Ridership on this light rail is at historic highs and the next segment going from Azusa to Montclair is going forward since Measure M passed by the voters in November 2016, so there is much to celebrate. The next extension that is being proposed is Phase 2B from Azusa to Montclair so most of the funding will come from Los Angeles County Metro from the Measure M funds.

Construction of the new segment is estimated to start in 2019 and it is estimated to be completed in eight years. The Construction Authority is proud to have completed the first two Foothill Gold Line segments on time and on budget.

### **Rose Bowl Music, Arts Festival April 4, 2016**

Anschutz Entertainment Group(AEG) will put on a three-day Arroyo Seco Festival event at the Rose Bowl and the Brookside Golf Course as a family friendly and multi-generational event including bookstores, art and plays next to big named musical acts at four main stages. The producer for AEG plans to end music at 11:00 p.m. each night and they plan to partner with restaurants, KidSpace, and with local art venues. The bookstore can be a place where people can read books while listening to acoustic music or any other soft music that goes well with reading. The beautiful aspect of this plan is to have a long term agreement that is financially sound instead of a short term football agreement. The Rose Bowl Operating Company(RBOC) is working on a 10 year agreement with a few extensions. The first concert is planned around June of 2017 which at this point is only an estimate but very probable. The revenue from the festival will help pay down debt for the Rose Bowl renovation and for the need of capital improvement in the next five years.

### **Pasadena Bans Polystyrene For Food May 9, 2016**

The Council voted 8-0 in favor to ban of polystyrene (styrofoam) food containers in Pasadena. The restrictions affect restaurants, grocers and caterers that uses this type of material to package prepared food. The ordinance promotes environmentally sustainable practices in the City and prevents the presence of this type of litter in the environment. Implementation of a polystyrene food packaging policy was identified as a

top priority initiative during the development of the City's Zero Waste Strategic Plan. This was really an easy topic to vote on because most of the speakers that attended the May 9th council meeting supported the ban on styrofoam except for the styrofoam manufacturer. The problem with styrofoam is that it presents hazards when released into the environment and it never biodegrades. Styrofoam litter floats easily into our gutters, storm drains, creeks, rivers, wetlands and to the ocean, then consumed by fish. Guess who eats the fish?

### **City Manager is Hired July 11, 2016**

After a national search firm that began in March 2016 for the interviewing process for a new City Manager which many qualified and experienced candidates applied. The search firm held two community meetings in Pasadena, interviewed city employees, representatives from the city's labor unions and each member of the City Council for input on the search and the candidates. The Council held two rounds of personal interviews with the applicants deemed most qualified. After all the finalists interviewed with the Councilmembers, the Council decided to hire Steve Mermell who was serving as Assistant City Manager for Pasadena. Steve has been an employee of Pasadena since 1989, working his way up the ranks from an administrative analyst at Pasadena Water & Power. In the Finance Department, he served as purchasing administrator, budget administrator and deputy director of finance before becoming an assistant city manager. He was by far the best choice and is the ultimate professional with everything that he does.

### **David Reyes hired as the new Planning Director July 25, 2016**

David Reyes has been serving as the interim Planning Director has now been hired as the new Planning Director by City Manager Steve Mermell. Mr. Reyes has around 80 employees that review planning proposals and land use policies for Pasadena. The department includes planning, building & safety, cultural affairs, code compliance, the permit center for new and remodel construction, zoning, code enforcement as well as public art. David brings 20 years of experience in professional planning in public and private and has been the department's deputy director since 2014.

### **Council Approves a Hotel at the former YWCA Building August 15, 2016**

Across the street from the Pasadena City Hall, a 185 room hotel was unanimously approved by City Council but this was by far the most contentious issue of the year because first it is an historic building designed by the famous Julia Morgan and the City of Pasadena would allow the building on some green space (not zoned open space). Criticism came from some residents who urged the Council to approve a much smaller hotel with around 100 rooms. The developer said that a smaller hotel would not be financially viable. The developer, KHP Capital Partners will integrate the building into the design for an upscale boutique Kimpton Hotel. Much of the historic building will be preserved and the Council felt the project was worth our support. As part of the arrangement the hotel will build into 4,000 square feet of grassy land previously open to the public. An opening to the hotel's courtyard, required to be open to the public during the day and rest up to the Jackie and Mack Robinson monument. Pasadena's approval allows the hotel operator to use valet services for all of its parking with approximately 136 parking spaces off-site. The Kimpton hotel is expected to stand six stories tall almost aligning it with the top floor of the City Hall yet the City Hall's iconic dome will still be higher.

**CERT Meeting by Pasadena Fire Department  
October 8, 2016 - Report by Howie Zechner District 4 Media  
Commissioner**

A CERT (Community Emergency Response Training) limited to 100 District 4 residents was held at Victory Park on October 8, 2016. The basics of what to do in an emergency included: disaster preparedness, fire suppression, disaster medical, light search and recovery were the subjects of this four hour special training session organized by Noreen Sullivan, District 4, Field Rep and Lisa Derderian, Public Information Officer of the Pasadena Fire Department.



Vice Mayor Masuda and Chief Washington

Vice Mayor Gene Masuda and Pasadena Fire Chief Bertral Washington welcomed residents and announced the agenda that would start with a thorough two hour class on



wind, rain and earthquakes with almost every kind of disaster scenario reviewed. We moved outdoors where fire fighters taught the audience about fire prevention and what to do in case of a fire. Explanations about burns, broken bones, cuts, deep gashes and tourniquets with a live demonstration on how to care for these injuries followed by a lengthy question and

answer session.



## **California Passes Recreational Marijuana Bill Prop 64 November 8, 2016**

Adult use of Marijuana Act allows residents to possess and grow weed through legal purchase but it may take a year to begin to purchase. California voters passed the Marijuana Act in November 2016, making it legal to smoke marijuana recreationally in the state. To purchase it legally will only happen until dispensaries are properly licensed, but I understand since the passage of prop 64, adults would immediately be allowed to possess and grow marijuana. The state has until January 1, 2018 to begin issuing licenses and would need lawmakers to set up rules necessary to regulate the marijuana industry. The newly passed proposition will allow adults 21 and older to use marijuana in their own homes and in licensed businesses. Citizens may possess up to 28.8 grams of marijuana and grow up to six plants at their private homes. Personally I feel that this is a very bad proposition that passed and there is high potential for abuse. It is a drug just like ecstasy and heroin. Marijuana negatively impact public health and safety.

## **City Manager hires Michelle Perera as new Library Director December 19, 2016**

Michelle Perera was appointed by City Manager Mermell to be the new

Library Director and Information Services Department. Michelle Perera comes to Pasadena from the City of Rancho Cucamonga where she has served as Library Director for two years. Michelle will oversee the department's 108 employees and 10 libraries in Pasadena. Our libraries serve around 1.2 million people annually with 500,000 online customers. Michelle brings more than 20 years of professional public library system experience. She has worked at the Rancho Cucamonga library system since 1997, worked at libraries in San Marino and Glendora.

I would like to thank **Robert Karatsu** for serving as interim Library Director. He was instrumental for making Lamanda Park Library into a pocket park. Thank you Robert for a job well done.

**Most of the following information is from Pasadena Planning Department as of 1-17-17, small projects are not listed.**

Former Acapulco's Restaurant on Colorado Blvd. and El Nido Ave. has an active building permit for a structure that will be 2 stories with five suites and a mezzanine. commercial building.

Former Saint Luke Hospital on Washington Blvd. is in the planning process for medical center use. The applicant has met with staff to discuss a new project that would require a new Preliminary Plan Review application but has not moved forward with a submittal.

On 170 N. Halstead Street, behind Station 37, a developer is in the planning process to build 19 unit multi-family residential project.

3452 E. Foothill Blvd- Preliminary Plan Check to demolish existing Panda Inn restaurant, construct new restaurant and 2 new residential buildings with 258 units and 4 levels of parking at the Panda Inn Building (currently in Preliminary Consultation). Gateway Towers on Foothill Blvd. was sold to Panda Restaurant in 2015. No application as of yet.

3202 E. Foothill Blvd. (Spacebank), next to Kaiser Medical. Planned development application for demolition of all structures on-site and construction of mixed-use project (retail, restaurant, and 550 residential units) arranged in 8 buildings.

2460-2480 Oswego Street, tentative tract map for the creation of 32 air parcels for residential condominium purposes.

Las Encinas Hospital at 2900 Del Mar Blvd. has approval to build a new hospital in the middle of their property to consolidate services. Their Master Plan was already approved. Two new senior living buildings with

underground parking, currently in Concept Design Review.

Rusnak Auto plans to improve the former Chrysler dealership for an Audi dealership on Colorado Blvd. next to Ganahl Lumber.

Starbucks Coffee, a new store at the corner of San Gabriel Blvd. and Foothill Blvd. is currently being built as a Drive-thru and walk up window only.

Community Planning:

Revise development standards for Lower Hastings Ranch (Adopted by City Council on October 2016).

Revised development standards for Transit-Oriented District (TOD). The City Council adopted (9-19-16) the proposed changes, which included provisions to allow more flexibility in the Sierra Madre Villa Station TOD area.

La Salle HS Master Plan, adopted by City Council on 9-19-16.

Walden School Master Plan, project on hold per school.

**Happy New Year! Noreen and I wish everyone good health  
and success in 2017**

