

## **Claremont Community & Human Services Commission**

League of Women Voters of Mt. Baldy Area

Observer Report by Barbara Rugeley

June 5, 2019 to May 6, 2020

### **Purpose of the Commission**

The Claremont Community and Human Services Commission advises the City Council on matters of maintenance of City property and on programs for its citizens.

### **Commission Members:**

Nancy Brower, Chair (2021); Rachel Forester, Vice Chair (2022); Lee Kane (2023) Phyllis Munson (2021); Chris Naticchia (2021), Dirk Silva (2020); Deborah Scott Toux (2022).

### **Staff**

**Human Services Anne Turner, Director** 2014-

**Community Services Jeremy Swan, Director,** Apr. 2019-

**Michele Gonzalez, Sr. Administrative Assistant**

### **Attendance**

Regular meetings are held the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday monthly in City Council Chambers. Of the 9 meetings held, I attended 8. Some were canceled due to the Covid-19 virus restrictions. One was held via Zoom online software.

### **Overall Assessment**

Commissioners regularly impress me with their probing questions, but did so especially on the 115-page Draft Urban Forest Management Plan. They had read it and with discernment. The agency is following good government standards, operates transparently, and welcomes public input.

## **HUMAN SERVICES**

Because the structural deficit continues, and the sales tax increase failed, the 2020-2021 budget was reduced by \$2 million: Claremont's "first budget that necessitates reducing programs and services" (Anne Turner, May 6, 2020). That proposed budget was established even before the effects are known from the economic recession due to Covid-19 "shelter-at-home" restrictions.

### **Homeless Services**

By partnering with Inland Valley Hope Partners, Claremont did receive funding from the Measure H homeless funds for 2018 and 2019 providing motel vouchers, a navigator, and 2 beds at the homeless shelter.

### **Community Based Organization Grant Funding Canceled**

The 2020/2022 budget cancels the grants for Community Based Organizations (\$86,650) and Homeless Programs (\$30,000), putting that money back into the General Fund. "Once Measure H funds are over, our safety net is eroding" (Anne Turner, May 6, 2020).

### **Senior Programs**

The bustling Joslyn and Blaisdell Community Centers closed March 12, due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Ageing Next volunteers are delivering packaged meals to seniors' homes because group dining has been discontinued until there is a vaccine. Those lovely road trips are reduced in number by the budget and perhaps more so by Covid-19. There is a fundraising goal of \$100,000 to upgrade the Blaisdell kitchen.

### **Youth & Family Programs**

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the Recreation Brochure will be online. Camp Claremont will be on a virtual platform only. Event days (Memorial, Arbor, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Halloween, etc.) have been moved to online videos. The City can no longer support the extra Sunday hours for Claremont Helen Renwick Library. The busy YAC and TAC teen facilities are closed due to Covid-19, but not eliminated in the budget.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The basic services of sanitation, street sweeping, and park maintenance continue and are being heavily used during the "Shelter at Home" restrictions when people are cleaning out their houses.

### **Budget Reductions**

The 20/21 budget eliminates three unfilled full-time positions and five part-time. The City is canceling the \$25,000 for Sustainable Claremont and eliminating the Summer Youth Work Program (of which they have been so proud). There will be reductions in janitorial services, new holiday decorations, tree inspections and trimming, and the extra Village landscaping contracts are canceled.

### **Landscape and Lighting District**

We have purchased all LCD streetlights, reducing energy expenses. An increase of \$6.04 per assessment unit to \$186.21 will cover most, but not all, of the support for our 26,000 street trees, 21 parks, and 2,500 streetlights. The Foothill Blvd. Improvement Project is finished but the new narrower bike lanes required the purchase of a small street sweeper which can also be used for city parking lots.

### **Trees**

All grants have been completed and 570 trees planted. New grants are unlikely as they are usually given to disadvantaged communities. The Tree Policies Manual is revised, now online, and addresses the issue of setbacks between private property and the Wilderness Park, a fire hazard concern for one citizen. (Note: in the July 1, 2020 Commission Zoom meeting that resident expressed a desire to have 100 feet setbacks, not the narrower one required by the L. A County Dept. of Agriculture.) One Commissioner lamented that the Draft Urban Forest

Management Plan, which values our trees at \$88 million, was a “document all dressed up but with no where to go,” as its goals are unfunded. However, some grants would require such a plan “and now we have one.” One Commissioner suggested that the Tree Fund Donation program could be advertised more. On his last day as Deputy Director, Dave Roger spoke eloquently in response to the accusation, “If you can’t maintain the trees, why plant them?” saying “We plant trees now, because if we don’t, in 20 years there won’t be any trees to maintain. We always hope that in the future there will be money to maintain them.”

**League of Women Voters of Mt. Baldy Area Position on Government – Local Finances**

“...Support measures to ensure revenues that are flexible, suitable and sufficient to meet changing priorities for local government services, that emphasize equity and fair sharing of the tax burden as well as meet current and future needs of municipal financing...”