

Claremont Planning Commission
League of Women Voters of Mt. Baldy Area
Observer Report by Paula Martinez
June 2019 to May 2020

Purpose: The Planning commission is the only City Commission required by State law. It advises the City Council on all matters dealing with the present and future development of the City, in accordance with the values and goals set forth in the City's General Plan, based on specified evidentiary-based findings.

Commission Members: Chair Richard Rosenbluth (term expires 2020); Vice Chair Leigh Anne Jones (term expires 2023); Parker Emerson (term expires 2021); and Douglas Lyon, James Jackson, Rick Reed and Steven Frieson (all with terms expiring 2022).

City Staff: The Commission is supported by Community Development Director Brad Johnson, Sr. Administrative Assistant Nancy Krahn, and various City Planners, interns and contract planners.

Regular Meetings: Traditionally meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 7:00 pm, City Council Chambers, except for the traditional August recess. That was the case for only June 2019. Single meetings were held in July, September, October and December 2019, and in January, February, and May 2020. No regular meetings were held in November, 2019, March or April 2020.

It appears that the lack of items ready for action and the lack of staff time to thoroughly prepare traditional items for full agendas caused a reduction in number of meetings in the Fall and the COVID-19 Pandemic caused cancellation of meetings in March and April of 2020. Finally, a Zoom meeting was conducted in May 2020. Nonetheless, when the Commission meets it is following good government standards. It operates transparently, welcomes public input and the members appear well prepared to ask questions and raise their individual concerns.

This year, the Commission began with a recommendation to the City Council to finally approve the state-mandated 2018-2021 Housing Element Update. It continued with a finding that the City's 2019-2020 Capital Improvement Program is consistent with the City's General Plan.

In general, the work of the Commission included reviewing, approving, or recommending City Council approval of requests for Conditional Use Permits (CUP), zone changes, subdivision maps, and variances.

CUP approvals and amendments for various business operations throughout the City were approved this year: an auto leasing and rental facility on Auto Center Drive, a massage business on W. Fourth St., an indoor cycling fitness studio on Foothill Blvd., a game and video arcade at the Packing House, as well as beer and wine service permits for Pong's in the College Center Plaza and the Laemmle theater, and distilled spirits at the Back Abbey. One variance for fence height within the front yard setback at a residential property on Baseline was approved. And a tentative parcel map was approved for merging lots at Mt. San Antonio Gardens.

Of particular interest last year and this year was the City's Municipal Code (CMC) amendment regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in response to changes in State law that sought to spur the increased production of housing. This past year, the Commission conducted several meetings and joint study sessions with the Architectural Commission and the City Council also held a study session focused on issues such as maximum permitted ADU square footages, how to incentivize the creation of affordable ADUs, and the owner occupancy requirement for properties with ADUs. Finally, in July 2019, the Commission reviewed and recommended approval by the City Council of a Proposed Amendment to the CMC.

However, state law re ADUs again changed effective January 1, 2020, as explained by the City's attorney to the Commission, and in January 2020, the Commission considered a *revised* proposed amendment to the CMC re ADUs. Commissioner Lyon's motion to reject the proposed ADU ordinance, urging the City to reject the State Legislature's usurpation of local planning control, died for lack of a second. With Commissioner Lyon voting no, the Commission adopted the staff's recommendation to the City Council to approve the *revised* proposed amendment to the CMC re ADUs.