

Claremont Planning Commission
League of Women Voters of the Mt. Baldy Area
Observer Report by Paula Martinez
June 2018 to May 23, 2019

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 2019); 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, September, and October 2018. Single meetings were held in May, July, and November, 2018, and in January, February, and March, 2019. No regular meetings were held in April or May 2019.

It appears that the lack of items ready for action and the lack of staff time to thoroughly prepare traditional items for full agendas have caused the reduction in number of meetings. Also the Commission has been tasked with several joint meetings with the Architectural Committee. (see below) which has taken much time with limited staff and hours. Nonetheless, the Commission is following good government standards. It operates transparently and welcomes public input; 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 approve the 2017 Annual Progress Report on the Housing Element. It continued with a finding that the 2018-2019 Capital Improvement Program is consistent with the City's General Plan. A study session with the City Attorney was conducted to review parliamentary procedures, conflict of interest law, Brown Act compliance and principles for developing legally valid findings.

In general, Conditional Use Permit (CUP) approvals and CUP amendments for various business operations throughout the City have been approved as well as several variances for residential properties and extensions for certain developments. A new auto dealership was approved. Amendment of the City's Code was recommended to reinstate an inclusionary housing requirement for development of new rental housing units citywide. After much initial confusion and then a revised and further explanatory staff report, the Commission approved a four-lot subdivision map at the Colleges to conform lot lines to actual buildings on the ground.

This year, of particular interest to the public was an initial discussion/public hearing on the Village South Specific Plan. A joint special meeting (study session) was conducted before the Architectural and Planning Commissions to review draft goals, guiding principles and initial land use concepts for the Village South Specific Plan.

Finally, a proposed Code amendment regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) was initiated in response to changes in State law that seek to spur the increased production of housing. The Commission conducted several meetings and joint study sessions with the Architectural Commission before presenting a draft ordinance to the City Council for review in January and February of this year. In March, the City Council 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.

The Commission and staff were directed to study and consider (1) increasing the maximum permitted ADU size for ministerial applications; (2) providing a more straightforward discretionary review process; (3) providing stronger incentives for ADU development at affordable rental levels; and (4) providing exceptions for the owner-occupancy requirement so as not to discourage ADU development by owners. Thus, a third *joint* study session with the Architectural Commission was held on April 16, 2019, per City Council direction. No decision was rendered at the study session. The draft ordinance will be further revised based on comments received prior to scheduling a formal review by the Planning Commission for making a revised recommendation to the decision-making City Council.