

**City Council of La Verne City**  
League of Women Voters of Mt Baldy Area  
Observer Report by Carrie Coolbaugh  
January 2020 to May 2020

Founded in 1906, La Verne City Council consists of four elected Council and one separately elected Mayor. These policy makers of the municipality hire a City Manager to supervise day-to-day activities and appoint members to advisory commissions for specific departments, most notably the planning commission.

Current members: As of the March 3, 2020 election include Tim Hepburn, Mayor (formerly Council) to serve for 2 years; Rick Crosby, newly elected to Council for 4 years; Wendy Lau, newly elected to Council for 4 years. Council followed pre-existing procedures concerning rotation of Mayor Pro Tem office and continuing Council Robin Carder will serve for one year. Muir Davis is the other continuing Council member. Formerly Don Kendrick was mayor and Charlie Rosales was on Council. The election was contentious and covered by a local newspaper reporter. Candidate forums were well attended at various locations and I attended two. Also, on the ballot was Proposition LV, a bond issue for the support, primarily, of public safety, that was supported by all candidates and was passed.

The City Administrator is Robert Russi and City Attorney is Robert Kress. Also, attending live council meetings has been Lupe Estrella, Assistant City Clerk. La Verne has municipal safety services with Nick Paz serving as Police Chief. Devin Leonard, Interim Fire Chief (the third chief in just a couple of years) is leading a force which has experienced legal suits, a candidate lobby group, resignations, vacant positions, medical leaves, temporarily limited service at one station and continuing bad feelings.

I had La Verne as my mailing address for 27 years but actually moved into the city limits in summer of 2019. I attended my first Council Meeting on November 18, attended two more meetings before accepting the LWV Observer position. January 21, 2020 was a Special Meeting about wireless communications which was taped for public viewing. I was introduced to the Council on February 3 by Barbara Rugeley, LWV Observer Coordinator. I have attended every meeting in-person or by observing the Livestream video available on the city website. The website also includes agendas and full agenda packets, available on the Wednesday before meetings which are held on the first and third Mondays.

Accomplishments during 2020 include the successful conduct of the March election which introduced new voting machines from Los Angeles County and a smooth transition to the new Council positions followed at the next meeting with new Council Committee assignments.

There had been six Council candidates. Supporters for both mayoral candidates spoke among the 17 public comments at a single meeting and were not limited in time. I attended two candidate forums and heard reference to Council not following the Brown Act but have not seen or heard anything more specific. I know this is a particular interest of the LWV but surmise

the accusation is about Council Sub-committee(s) formed in reference to recent legal action involving the Fire Department.

The March 2 meeting was short and addressed local short-term rentals.

March 16 meeting agenda was amended and accorded with the Governor's Executive Order of March 12 about public gatherings. The public was requested to submit public comments and announcements via email, watch the meeting remotely online and to practice social distancing if they attended in person. Chairs were placed at a distance from each other in Council chambers.

The April 6 meeting temporarily suspended requirement of the Brown Act, Council chambers were closed to the public and Council were advised they could attend telephonically but attended to be sworn into office. Again, the public could submit comments via e-mail, and these were read aloud. Election celebrations were subdued in light of the increasing concern about Covid19.

April 20 and May 4 meetings had each Council Member and City Attorney participating from home and was publicly available via livestream thru the city website. Public comments were submitted via e-mail or live telephone calls. There have been the expected technical glitches, but the City Manager assured all that any public comments lost in tech gaps were fully recorded in the official minutes.

New Councilmember Crosby has requested public participation in the Census during his Council Comments. Most of the public comments were prior to the election, primarily addressing mayoral candidates. Council seems to be expanding on the LiveStream pre-existing option to encourage public input via telephone or e-mail (which is read aloud) and is not using ZOOM.