

Claremont City Council
League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area Observer Report
By Observer Betsey Coffman
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The Claremont City Council is composed of five elected members who meet twice monthly on the second and fourth Tuesday evenings for eleven months of the year – August is usually dark. Meetings are held in the City Council Chamber, 225 Second Street in Claremont at 6:30 PM. The Council’s job is to oversee the well-being of the city, and in so doing they are assisted by the City Manager and city staff. They are also assisted by several Commissions, whose members they appoint to deal with Planning, Human Services, Community Services, Architectural matters, Traffic and Transportation, and Police, as well as the Sustainability Committee. Occasional Special Meetings sometimes precede the regular meetings – these are not open to the public and usually deal with litigation or personnel matters.

Currently, the Council consists of Mayor Larry Schroeder, and Councilmembers Corey Calaycay, Sam Pedroza, Opanyi Nasiali, and Joe Lyons. All have been reelected at least once, and are experienced in considering the complex issues involved in governing this city. The position of Mayor is rotated among the Council members – for most of this past year Sam Pedroza served as Mayor. The Mayor presides at Council meetings, signs documents as authorized by the Council, makes Council committee appointments and is often called upon to represent the city at public occasions. All members come well prepared to ponder and decide the issues.

The Council meetings are well attended by local citizens who sometimes overflow the available seating. There is a public comment period near the beginning of each meeting, at which residents may comment on matters not listed on the Agenda. For Agenda topics, public comment is taken after the item is introduced and explained. There is usually a four-minute limit on an individual citizen’s input. A reporter from the local newspaper, *The Claremont Courier*, attends regularly and his summaries of the evening’s happenings usually appear in the weekly edition on Fridays. A video record of the proceedings is made, which is streamed live on-line and later available on the city website, along with the written “Minutes”.

There have been several meetings this year which have excited great public interest. One occurred on December 13, 2016, after the final negative decision by the Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge who ruled against Claremont’s effort to declare eminent domain, thus preventing the city from proceeding in its efforts to buy the local water system. Not only did the audience receive a detailed written statement from Mayor Pedroza contesting the Court decision, but one citizen at that meeting requested that Claremont adopt Sanctuary City status – a request echoed by numerous other speakers. All this resulted in two January City Council sessions, one on the 31st which authorized the City to appeal the decision to deny Claremont eminent domain in the water system case, and the other on the 24th at which 110 speakers spoke on the Sanctuary City issue (83 “for” and 27 “against”). The latter meeting ended after 1:00 AM the next day, but not before the Council passed “A Resolution Affirming the City’s Long-Standing Commitment to Diversity and Safeguarding the Civil Rights, Safety, and Dignity of all People.” During that meeting the Claremont City Attorney pointed out that there was no legal definition of “Sanctuary City”.

Another contentious issue, mentioned in last year’s LWV Observer Report, was that of Pomona College building an Art Museum on land at the corner of College Avenue and Second Street in downtown

Claremont. This was considered by some to be an example of “College Creep”. In February of 2017 the Council turned down an appeal to reverse its approval of moving the historic house on the property across the street and constructing the new Art Museum. And the project is moving forward as we speak.

An ongoing issue for the Council is the mandated program known as MS4. This involves Claremont and its neighboring cities monitoring and managing the watershed (runoff water from storms and human activity) both to the west (the San Gabriel Valley watershed) and to the east (the East Claremont watershed). The former drains into the San Gabriel River, and the latter drains into the Santa Ana River. This is a long-term obligation and will require continuing work and expense.

The members of the Claremont City Council are well informed and they appear to give careful consideration to the input of each other, staff, others involved in presenting information, and the public before making decisions. All cities should be so lucky.