

Upland City Council
League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area Observer Report
By Observer Cynthia Reul
May 11, 2017

Council Members: Debbie Stone, Mayor; Gino L. Filippi, Mayor Pro Tem;
Carol Timm, Janice Elliott and Sid Robinson
Interim City Manager: Martin Thouvenell
City Attorney: James L. Markman

This is my 6th year of observing the Upland City Council. I attended 18 meetings and one special session. The council is attentive and respectful to the citizens at the Meetings. No Brown Act violations have been observed in open session.

Last August, Mayor Musser announced that he would not be seeking another term on the council after 18 years of service. After the elections in November, we have our first female mayor, Debbie Stone. Also elected was Janice Elliott. Sid Robinson was appointed to fill the vacancy caused when former councilmember, Glen Bozar, was defeated by Stone to become Upland's mayor. We have had staff changes as well. We are again looking for a new city manager. In the meantime, former city manager Martin Thouvenell is acting City Manager. He understands Upland's issues and is a respected long-term resident of our city. Our new city attorney, James L. Markman's firm, Richards, Watson and Gershon previously represented Upland for 22 years. We have added officers to our police force. We now have 5 women police officers.

Many issues continue to face my city. I will focus on 4 issues that received the most attention at the Council meetings since my last report. They are marijuana, voting districts, homelessness and fire services annexation.

In November 2016, Measure U was placed on the ballot to allow 3 medical marijuana shops to operate within Upland's city limits. The voters defeated this measure. Since 2014, Upland police have closed 24 illegal pot shops but new shops keep popping up. Our city is spending about 30k monthly on marijuana related enforcement issues. In October, our council unanimously voted to close loopholes in our current marijuana ordinance (No. 1910) banning all marijuana related activities beyond what is allowed under California state law. A citizen coalition gathered enough signatures (4,700) to force a special election to overturn this new ordinance. This will happen this June 6th. Measure E will cost Upland \$242,000 for this special election but we do not have the money to fight a long protracted legal battle against a well-funded opponent. We will see what the voters decide.

Last July, the Council approved the establishment of four voting districts in Upland for city council member elections beginning in 2018. This will bring us into compliance with the 2002 California Voting Rights Act. Our councilmembers will need to be residents of the district that they will represent. This will change our

current system of at-large elections. Our mayor will continue to be elected by all of the residents. This is a big change for our city and will require outreach and education so that our citizens are prepared for the changes that will occur in our 2018 council elections.

Our police chief, Brian Johnson, is trying new approaches with our homeless population by working with other groups within the City and County. In 2016 our homeless count in Upland was at 164 persons the 3rd highest in San Bernardino County. This year that number is down to 127. We have established the Upland Community Restoration team that has coordinated outreach to the homeless population by having all the various groups find ways to work together to help reduce the number of homeless people living in our community. This team works by involving the public, police, faith-based groups and elected officials in finding workable and accountable solutions to the myriad of reasons for this nationwide problem. We are having success with this program.

Lastly, Upland is negotiating with San Bernardino County Fire to annex Upland fire and emergency health services. This change will relieve the city of future pension costs and the costs of maintaining the fire stations and equipment. Upland residents will be paying a parcel assessment of \$154 annually. While some residents are opposed to this plan, most residents understand that Upland cannot continue to provide effective fire services without this change. This move is even supported by the Fireman's Union. San Bernardino County Fire will be able to maintain and improve services and equipment because of their economies of scale that Upland does not have. It is estimated that in only 10 years, Upland will save 50 Million dollars.

Finally, Upland continues to face difficult economic decisions in the upcoming year and beyond. We will face a budget shortfall of 12 million dollars by 2018 if we do not make some very tough decisions. I would like to thank our City Council and staff for continuing to keep Upland the "City of Gracious Living".