

Upland City Council  
League of Women Voters of the Mt. Baldy Area  
Observer Report by Cynthia Reul  
May 20, 2020

Council Members: Debbie Stone, Mayor; Ricky Felix, Mayor Pro Tem;  
Janice Elliott, Rudy Zuniga and Bill Velto, Councilmembers

This is my 9<sup>th</sup> year of observing the Upland City Council. I attended 14 in-person-meetings and two meetings that have been held with Covid 19 adaptations online. The Council is attentive and respectful to the citizens at the meetings. The meetings are different during this pandemic. The public can still participate by phone and many residents do. The Council appears to be operating transparently and the councilmembers are well prepared.

The 2020-21 budget is just beginning to be debated. Covid 19 will affect those discussions. Last year, which this report covers, Upland revenues increased by about \$1,750,000. We spent an additional one million dollars in general fund increases including employee raises and replacement of city equipment and infrastructure repair. The remainder went to increase our reserves. We were moving in a positive direction. Pension funding continues to be an issue in Upland as well as in most other California cities.

In 2016, the Upland City Council voted to disband our local fire department and join San Bernardino County fire services. This action led to an annual special tax assessment of about \$150 per parcel. A lawsuit was brought by residents of the unincorporated area of San Antonio Heights. They were part of the assessment because they had been served by the Upland City Fire Department. The plaintiffs prevailed and all residents received a refund for the assessments for 2018 and 2019.

Two major issues consumed the Council's deliberations this year. One was the continuing effort to sell four acres of Upland Memorial Park to San Antonio Hospital for a parking lot. The sale of the parkland would provide some funds for needed improvements to the remaining parkland. It is moving ahead, but most of the community is opposed to this sale. The sale and project can be voided by the current Council by a vote refusing to change the existing zoning that is necessary

for the parking lot to be built. The second issue affecting Upland is a proposed warehouse to be located at the junction of Central Ave. and Foothill Boulevard, south of Cable Airport. The plans for the warehouse have been revised several times due to opposition from citizens and the Council. The plans have been approved for one warehouse with 201,000 square feet of warehouse space. The building will limit the number of large truck deliveries to 25 per day. The development will bring about 300 permanent jobs as well as in-lieu tax payment to Upland of \$6.3 million. The payment will be earmarked to benefit local public schools, parks and the police department. The developer promises to plant 1,000 trees on the site.

With the Covid-19 closures and loss of employment, the Council voted on March 31<sup>st</sup> to ban evictions for 6 months. With the threat of a lawsuit by local apartment and retail owners, the resolution was overturned two weeks later. Forty-four percent of Upland residents are renters.

The City of Hope Cancer Center opened in Upland. It has 25 exam rooms, 2 procedure rooms, 23 chemotherapy infusion chairs and is staffed by 9 cancer specialists and provided another local cancer facility in the Inland Empire in addition to Loma Linda.

Rosemary Hoernig is now our City Manager after serving as the Interim City Manager for the past six months. We are currently in search of a new City Attorney. Steven Flower is acting as Interim City Attorney while the search continues.

Finally, Mayor Pro Tem Ricky Felix (District 3) announced his resignation effective May 31<sup>st</sup>. It is unknown if his position will be filled by appointment or left vacant until the November 3<sup>rd</sup> elections.

Covid-19 has upended all of our lives but we are getting through it by changing and by adapting the established procedures. Local government is one area that is changing. The full impact of the changes is still unknown.