

Mayor Gives Her State of City a Trial Run at WISPPA Event

By Dana Farar *South Pasadena Review* - November 10, 2016

Mayor Diana Mahmud, the City of South Pasadena's fifth woman to serve in that position, spoke at Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action (WISPPA) about her three primary themes while in office: sustainability, economic development and the proposed 710 freeway tunnel.

Mahmud tested her State of the City Address on about 25 people in attendance at WISPPA's monthly meeting at Calvary Presbyterian Church last Saturday. She will officially give the address at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14, in the South Pasadena Library Community Room.

Regarding the 710, Mahmud said several positive developments mean that it is "extremely unlikely that the tunnel will be built." First, the staff of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) found in its analysis of transportation projects for the next 20 years that the tunnel would result in the worst air quality of the five alternatives. "To have SCAG staff find that the tunnel would result in poor air quality is really significant," she emphasized.

The other positive step is that Measure M funding cannot be used for any of the Route 710 alternatives, meaning that the only way the tunnel can be built is with private financing in the \$5 billion to \$10 billion range. Federal funds would only be available if trucks are allowed in the tunnel. The next step is Metro's recommendation on the tunnel project, which is expected in early 2017, she said.

Mahmud, who noted that she spent most of her professional career working on water and energy law, then turned to sustainability and infrastructure. The city is in the process of hiring a consultant to evaluate the option of installing electric vehicle charging stations and solar panels. In the future, the city may take advantage of a state community aggregation program that allows wholesale energy purchases at a cost savings, she said. The city is also looking at taking over ownership of its light poles from Southern California Edison in order to install energy-saving LED lighting, she added.

The mayor also discussed the recently approved polystyrene ban that must be implemented within one year. And she noted that the city's commitment to maintaining city parks and medians with electric-powered vehicles and equipment is saving 31 tons of pollutants per year and making South Pasadena the first American Green Zone Alliance city. "We have every reason to be very proud of this," she said.

In looking ahead, Mahmud mentioned two neighborhood pocket parks that are in the works after the city acquires Caltrans surplus properties and the new community center, for which a conceptual plan has been approved.

Cost savings have been realized during her term in the form of consolidating copier contracts and refinancing construction bonds, she said. And transparency has been increased because more information is available through an online portal. The city is also updating its General Plan for the first time in 18 years and attempting to take a comprehensive look at traffic and parking, Mahmud said.

The former WISPPA president thanked the group for providing the impetus for her to run for office: "I wouldn't be here except for WISPPA," she noted. And, speaking of her time serving on the council and as mayor, she added: "We are all trying to achieve things for the benefit of our residents."