

WISPPA

Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action

June 6th Meeting Minutes

Date: June 15, 2015

Location: Calvary Presbyterian Church

Present: Betty Emirhanian, Gary Pia, Kim Hughes, Ron Rosen, Lela Bissner, Clarice Knapp, Harry Knapp, Dollie Chapman, Debby Fox, Suzie Abajian, Lynda Sullivan, Nancy Wilms, Janet Braun, Bianca Richards, Waynna Kato, Mary Urquhart, Diana Mahmud, Jim Miller, Mary Ferrero, Gail Maltun, Judith Harris, Polly Podewell, Dick Helgeson, Kay Maroudian, Gretchen Robinette, Ellen Daigle, Lisa Pendleton, Escott Norton.

I. Speaker

Dollie Betty introduced our speaker, Escott Norton who is the Director of Friends of the Rialto and Executive Director of LA Historic Theater Foundation throughout LA County. The following is the draft of a story which was sent to Bill Glassier at the South Pasadena Review by Lela Bissner to meet his deadline, which summarizes his presentation to our group:

“Escott O. Norton, Founding Director of the Friends of the Rialto, spoke on Saturday to the WISPPA meeting about the history and future of the Rialto Theatre. The Rialto opened in October 17, 1925 as a vaudeville and movie house and from the very beginning was the cultural and social center for South Pasadena. The stars and director came out from Hollywood for the big premiere of “What Happened to Jones,” accompanied by a full orchestra and 5 “snappy acts” of vaudeville. Since then the Rialto theatre has presented almost 90 years of movies and live acts.

“Since the 1950s the Rialto was owned by a family trust and in 2014 the Trust sold the Rialto for the first time. The buyers contacted Escott Norton soon after the purchase was announced and since then he has met with the owners and their team on many occasions. Mr. Norton explained that the owners have told him they plan to restore the exterior of the building first while they finalize the tenants for the theatre space. The owners are in the early stage of negotiations with people who have operated other historic theatres as first-run movie theatres. While Mr. Norton expressed that he would be happy to see movies on the Rialto screen again, he thought that just showing movies was underutilizing the theatre and that the community would be better served by a multiple-use facility. In addition to his continued advocacy for the Rialto Theatre he also is working with a team of theatre professionals to develop an innovative management plan for the Rialto. This plan would activate it as a multi-use performing arts and movie venue, and also incorporates an educational element so the Theatre is used both day and night.”

“There was a short Q&A following the presentation and the WISPPA members were able to ask how they might help with the process. Mr. Norton urged them to stay informed and express their opinions about what they thought was in the best interest of the community. Mr. Norton stated that some creative changes might be needed to make the Rialto a viable business, however his organization stands firmly for historic preservation of the theatre, saying one of the value of the Rialto is that it is so close to

the way it was in 1925, a rarity in the southern California area. He concluded that the Rialto is a true community treasure with great potential.”

II. May minutes were approved with minor corrections. (Diana Mahmud moved to approve the minutes and Mary Urquhart seconded) by Diana and Mary.

III. New Business

We already have 70 people who have rsvp'd for our June 22nd cocktail party. Ellen Daigle is the person to contact for food donations. Gretchen, Kim and Nancy agreed to cover the registration table. Suzie and Bianca will help Dollie with membership. After review it was agreed that we would see how a raffle works for us. Our goal is to make \$1,000~~++~~. Ellen Wood and Lynda Sullivan will help sell raffle tickets at the membership table. Prizes will include Laker and Hollywood Bowl tickets, dinner for 6 at the fire station, a ride along and lunch with the police chief and a case of fabulous wine. Vic, Pablo, Ron and Dick were volunteered as bartenders for the event. We have confirmed Laura Trombley, the first female president at the Huntington as our speaker for the evening and we will be honoring Clara Richards for her service to our community as a businesswoman.

The City Council candidate voter forum is scheduled for October 8th and will be co-hosted by the League of Women Voters and Los Vecinos as well as WISSPA. A budget of \$1,200 was approved to cover the cost of streaming the forum live on our local channel and a quarter-page ad in the Review, which also would include a feature article on the event. It is hoped that our raffle will help cover the cost of the forum.

Wayna Kato and Clarice Knapp presented the 710 update. They reminded us that the deadline for comments is currently July 6th and encouraged members to go through our website and follow the prompt to be sure that we weigh in on this important issue. They also passed out a potential format and background on how to write an effective comment letter. The Beyond the 710 group which is championing the multi-modal plan is receiving quite a bit of media attention and so our group was encouraged to add our express support which could include specific concerns to help individualize our support, including issues such as air quality, fire concerns and general health cost to the community.

The No 710 group is writing full commentaries on all of our concerns, but our letters as individuals are important too. We were reminded again that we can search a topic such as earthquakes, for example, in the long EIR document by putting in a subject and hitting control F, which will automatically highlight our specific issue as it is mentioned throughout the document. Suzie reminded us that the prompt letter for Beyond the 710 on our site will automatically cc everyone. Wayna asked that we be sure to copy NO 710 on our letters too.

A vote to lend WISSPA official support to the Beyond 710 group passed unanimously.

The group agreed to join the No on 710 group in this year's 4th of July parade. WISSPA will have a banner proclaiming our support of Beyond the 710 from Cantu graphics which will be approximately 3 by 6 feet and cost around \$55.

Upcoming events included the June 10th Close the Gap event in Alhambra and a June 25th talk about the Armenian Genocide featuring two of our members, Suzie Abajian and Kay Maroudian in the Community Room.

IV. Reports

Treasurer's/Membership -- Dollie Chapman reported that we currently have \$3,572.69 in our treasury and 72 members. She reminded the group that annual dues become payable the first of July and said that she will be sending an email reminder. It was suggested that we also can remind members of our \$40 membership dues at the cocktail party.

City Council Liaison --Nancy Wilms reported that the UUT had been effectively tabled for the moment and won't be on a ballot but the concern from Diana is that the group will continue to agitate for ending the tax, so we will need to be vigilant. Wilms reported that the Council also discussed the library tax measure, which while it is a 33 percent increase is still a modest amount which should be stressed to the public.

Public Safety – Janet Braun reported that the police department is hoping to fill remaining staff positions by the end of the year. The department's 'they're here to help' attitude seems to be useful in diffusing local situations, and predictive policing with an increased presence in trouble areas was appreciated by the group. On the fire side, a CERT training was scheduled for the following week, and two more trainings were planned for next year. The new emergency operations plan just needs more capital to get going on the Center. A quick CPR training was held at the fire station the week before our meeting. 100 new Neighborhood Watch signs have come in and we need to get a request in for public works to put them up.

NREC – Kim and Nancy reported that 690 trees were trimmed in April and 25 new trees were planted. While there is money in our West Coast Arbors budget to maintain trees, which includes replanting trees which must be removed, Hughes said that we need to move forward with water conservation in mind and not focus on new trees, but learning how to take care of our current trees during the drought. She also suggested that we will need to give thought to supplemental water in the future, for example considering gray water resources. At this point 446 trees have been planted this year and further trees will be prioritized for schools, parks and foot traffic first. Finally, a new charging station is going in at the Mound parking lot.

Website – Suzie reported that we are averaging 60 views with 20 unique visitors daily. A new page for Beyond 710 has been added with a Take Action button which makes it easy to email the board and Caltrans, which includes every metro board member receiving a copy of our letter. We need to build [followers of the WISSPA](#) ~~our~~ facebook page. ~~Members are also so members were~~ encouraged to go in and like the facebook page ~~with~~ Beyond 710. ~~likes.~~

V. Our next meeting will be July 11th.