



## WISPPA Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2021, 5:00 pm, via ZOOM

### 1. Welcome and Updates – Mary Urquhart

- President Mary Urquhart called the virtual meeting to order and welcomed everyone who was present online, including David Kim from Senator Portantino's office.
- Mary relayed that WISPPA had held a Zoom Forum on April 10, 2021. Interim City Manager Sean Joyce, Interim Finance Director Elaine Aguilar, and Planning Director, Joanna Hankemer, answered all questions and the meeting lasted for an hour and a half.
- There was another forum held via Zoom on July 10, 2021 with new City Manager, Armine Chaparyan. This was a great opportunity to begin to get to know her.
- Mary said she hopes WISPPA can continue to provide planned forums where people can have their questions answered about City issues.
- Mary noted that we have not had an in-person WISPPA meeting since November, 2019, due to the Covid pandemic. The next in-person WISPPA meeting will be November 6, 2021 at 10 am at the Senior Center. Masks required.
- Meeting minutes from this current meeting will be approved at the next in-person meeting in November.

### 2. Treasurer's Report – Janet Braun

Mary asked for the Treasurer's Report from Janet Braun, acting Treasurer.

- The reporting covered past six months. There has not been much financial activity during the past year.

- Membership dues collected were \$750.00
- Expenses: Zoom software, office supplies, professional membership dues (Natural Women’s Political Caucus and Wired Women)
- Other income: \$418.00
- Balance Sheet showed \$6,231.00 in cash.

Treasurer’s report was approved.

### 3. **City Manager Report – Armine Chaparyan**

Mary introduced City Manager Armine Chaparyan and noted that two main areas of current public concern were:

- Filling Department Head Positions
- Long Range Planning

#### **A. Long-Range Planning**

Armine addressed long-range planning first.

- Planning has begun on a Strategic Plan which will address the next 3 – 5 years.
- A very important element of the plan is public outreach and input.
- The City has developed an online public survey for residents to express their thoughts and opinions about City issues.
- The site has received 400 visits and 337 responses. The deadline to respond is Thursday, September 30, 2021.
- The emerging themes from this survey are listed below. Armine feels that of these, housing issues will be the most important.
  - Staffing Needs
  - Capacity Issues
  - Infrastructure Needs
  - Facility Needs
  - Housing: Local & State Issues
  - Sustainability

## B. Staffing

Armine then addressed staffing issues.

- Armine has made a major new hire to head the Planning Department.
  - Armine plans to change the job title from Planning Director to “Community Development Director.” She feels that this title is more inclusive of the responsibilities involved.
  - Angelica Frausto-Lupo, formerly Community Development Director for the city of Rosemead, has been hired for the same position in South Pasadena.
  - She starts October 5, 2021 and was hired for her strong management skills. Armine feels that the Planning Department is in need of strong leadership.
- **Open City Positions**

There are still many positions that are unfilled in the city.

- Management Analyst
- Senior Analyst
- Chief City Clerk
- Deputy City Clerk
- Code Enforcement
- Finance Director

Armine almost hired someone, but he changed his mind at the last minute. It did not work out, but she was able to secure Ken Louie, he will be taking Elaine Aguilar’s position. He is coming out of retirement to serve in an interim role.

- HR/Risk Manager  
Paris Schultz, who formerly city manager for Claremont in this position, will step in on an interim basis.

## C. Q & A with Armine Chaparyan

- **What is the reason for the high staff turnover? (Yvonne La Rose)**
  - Remnants of last 2 -3 years, during which SP has had some upheaval.

- Some individuals were looking to leave or retire.
- Some were just not working out.
- Armine wants to work on creating a stable organization, one in which we can retain good employees. There has been too much movement in the past.
- Armine wants to be thorough in the hiring process because she wants candidates who are strong and dedicated to public service
- **To what extent are salary limitations causing hiring delays? (Sally Kilby)**
  - We are in the middle compared to other cities. In the next few months, Armine will be working with HR on salary review to see if our salaries are competitive in the marketplace. Today's workforce is also looking for incentives, lifestyle, and work/life balance. Unfortunately, we cannot offer tele-commuting.
- **Are there any plans to change part-time positions to full-time positions? (Yvonne LaRose)**
  - Potentially some could be changed, but it is too early to tell. Armine has asked every department head to look at their needs. Armine is doing assessments of certain departments, including public works and the city clerk's office so that she can understand how they are operated and what they need to function. She is also working with the library to assess that operation.
  - Armine will work with new Community Development Director to closely assess that department. The Planning Department is a huge example. During the pandemic many citizens took on renovations and many are building ADUs. The workload has increased dramatically. New help will be brought in.
  - She plans to recommend some movement throughout the organization. Staffing and capacity are huge areas of concern. The City Council understands and is aware and supportive.

- **Regarding Planning Department approval, some residents face long delays, but their approval can be expedited for a significant fee. This doesn't seem fair. (Betty Emirhanian)**

- Expedited time is always available, not only for single family, but also larger projects. It is available in all cities.
- The backlog in the Planning Department is a big priority. They are looking at how they can expedite existing projects and getting help and suggestions from local architects in the city.
- Clearly, the city needs to be more responsive on many fronts.

#### **D. Additional Questions for Armine:**

- Since we did not get to everyone's questions, Armine Chaparyan was asked to follow up later with written answers to the remaining questions. Armine's responses are in the addendum to this document.

#### **4. David Kim – Portantino's Office**

Mary introduced David Kim, from Senator Anthony Portantino's office and he gave an update.

- The legislative session ended and they are waiting for the Governor to decide which bills he will sign.
- They are anticipating that he will sign the bill that Senator Portantino worked on with South Pasadena regarding 710 Freeway properties.

#### **5. Membership – Dolly Chapman**

Mary asked Dolly Chapman for the Membership report.

- WISPPA now has 86 members
- 28 members paid for 2022 within the last 3 weeks.
- Total dues for the year are \$50.00 for each individual

#### **6. New Business**

Mary addressed new business.

## **A. Voting for Officers**

- Janet Braun was elected Treasurer.
- Shelley Stephens was elected Secretary.
- Mary noted that at the November 6<sup>th</sup> meeting we will be voting for all officers for the next year. Mary stated that if anyone would like to serve, we would like to have you, so please put your name forward.

## **B. Upcoming WISPPA Meetings and Events**

Mary outlined WISPPA's schedule for the next year.

- **Nov. 6, 2021** WISPPA Meeting – In-Person at Senior Center, 10 am
- **Feb. 5, 2022** WISPPA Meeting – Zoom
- **May 16, 2022** WISPPA Cocktail Party
- **June 18, 2022** WISPPA Meeting – Zoom
- **Fall, 2022** Candidates Forum

## **C. Mosaic Church**

- Mary noted that some in the community are concerned about the Mosaic Church, the religious organization that is now inhabiting the former Rialto Theatre, on Fair Oaks.
- WISPPA has been providing info to the Public Heritage commission and trying to monitor the situation.

## **D. The Future of City Commissions**

- Armine has proposed eliminating all or some of the commissions. She wants to cancel or consolidate commissions because she sees them as a big load on city employees at a time when the City is extremely under-staffed and employees have too much work already. This is a way to lighten their workload.
- There was a general discussion about this issue that included Joanne Nuckols, Ellen Daigle, Kim Hughes, Betty Emirhanian, Bianca Richards, and others. All felt that the commissions provided a valuable service to the city and the

community, and that this situation should be studied and analyzed carefully before any major decisions are made.

- Key points from the discussion included:
  - The time for residents to share their opinions about city commissions is now. This issue will be coming before the City Council shortly.
  - Some WISPPA members have served on commissions from as far back as the 1980s and 1990s. They very clearly understand the value of the commissions to the residents and the city and are hesitant to see them eliminated.
  - There is institutional knowledge and culture that will be lost if commissions are eliminated.
  - We have a very interested and talented population in SP. They are willing to give their time and effort to provide a meaningful service to the City. This creates a stronger, more knowledgeable, and engaged community. This is a great resource that we should not overlook.
  - Commissions can be the eyes and ears for the city. They give voice to the residents.
- The discussion also included ways in which the current system could be modified to lighten the burden on the city staff, administration, and volunteers.
  - Commissions can become more self-driving. In earlier times, the commissioners set their own agendas and took their own minutes.
  - There does not need to be a City Council representative attending.
  - Perhaps the commissions should function more like advisory committees.
  - Now there are zoom meetings and they can be recorded, a tool that did not exist earlier. This might help to make meetings more efficient and less time-consuming.

- Perhaps some commissions could meet less often, for example, every other month.
- There should be clarification regarding the roles and duties of the commissioners and the goals of each commission.
- Councilmember Michael Cacciotti mentioned that the future of commissions might be addressed as part of the strategic planning for the City.
- Sally Kilby noted that these commission meetings still had to abide by the Brown Act requirements, unless they were advisory committees only.
- Mary raised the question of how we make our feelings known.
  - The idea of establishing a task force to study the issue was raised. Also raised was the idea of asking the City Council to wait before making any decisions so that the issue could be studied further.
  - Mary proposed possibly setting up another forum with Armine for the sole purpose of discussing the future of commissions. Mary felt that we need to open up this issue to the community for their input. An evening meeting was proposed to start at either 5:30 or 7:00 pm. Most felt that there would be better participation during an evening meeting.

Mary thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 6:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Stephens

## **ADDENDUM**

There were some questions left unanswered that City Manager Armine Chaparyan kindly answered after the meeting through an email on September 28, 2021. The questions submitted and her written responses are copied below.



**1). 'Do we have concerns if we have much of our staffing that live outside the city? Can they participate at levels that are needed?' Kim Hughes**

There are no concerns with staff living outside the City. Yes, they participate at levels that are needed which may at times include Commission, Council meetings, along with special events.

**2). 'Can we find a way to let residents make small changes to their homes such as replacing a single window without getting the city involved, which could save time for the city and residents?' Betty Emirhanian**

For non-historic properties, replacement of windows would be approved by the Director/Staff through a Minor Design Review and if it is like for like it should be about a week. If there are changes it might take 3-4 weeks.

**3). Any changes expected in the Public Works Dept.? Helen Romero Shaw (I believe you answered this, but would like the answer for the newsletter.)**

The City Manager has authorized the start of an organizational assessment of the Public Works Department, similar to assessments she's doing in several departments of the City. There are no changes expected at this time. The focus here is to continue with the onboarding of the new staff that's been hired in the last 3-4 months while we continue with filling the other outstanding vacancies in Public Works.