

For Publication: June 11, 2015

South Pasadena Review  
625 Fair Oaks Ave, Suite 160  
South Pasadena, CA 91030

## **“Mayor’s Cup of Joe” Column 1: 2014-15 Budget Brought Improvements to City Services**

I want to open this column by thanking the South Pasadena Review for the opportunity to write about the City and community I call home. Bill and his team do a great job of reporting on the business of the City and the important events of the wider community. In writing this column, I hope to provide my fellow community members with an interesting perspective on the people that help to make our City such a special place to live, work, and play.

As many people know, the summer is a very busy time in our community, and this year more so than most:

- The South Pasadena Senior Center will hold their annual Father’s Day Luncheon on Friday, June 19, at 11:45 a.m.
- The annual Festival of Balloons Parade will take place on Saturday, July 4, along Mission Street with the theme “South Pasadena Welcomes the Special Olympics World Games”.
- The City’s annual summer Concerts in the Park series kicks off Sunday, July 12, and takes place every Sunday from 5 to 7 pm through August 9.
- South Pasadena will act as host to Special Olympic World Games delegates from Morocco and Paraguay from July 21 to 24. Events include a picnic at Garfield Park, parade down Mission Street, dinner with local community members, and a visit of our downtown business district.

Finally, I want to personally thank City Manager Sergio Gonzalez and Deputy Fire Chief Paul Riddle for making it possible for the South Pasadena Preservation Foundation to hold their annual meeting at the Rialto Theater on Saturday, June 5. They and Izek Shomof did a lot of work to make the event possible, and I really appreciate the effort.

The City Council has spent several recent meetings learning about and discussing the City’s budget and potential programs for the upcoming year. However, in order to know where you are going, it helps to have a clear

sense of where you have recently been. So, I sat down with City staff to find out what the City did with our money this past year, and found that we made real progress on some of the most important City services and issues.

To begin with, the Public Works Department has made major improvements to the City's streets this year. As our Public Works Director, Paul Toor, explained, between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015 the City has put more than \$2.4 million into street resurfacing, sidewalk repairs, and removal and replacement of City trees. The program targets the portions of the City's sidewalks, streets, and trees that are in most dire need of replacement in order to keep our community safe from accidents. One needs only to drive down Mission Street between Fair Oaks and Garfield, Orange Grove south of Monterey Road, or Foothill Street between Meridian and Fremont to witness the excellent job done by this hard-working department.

All this is in addition to the \$40 million in improvements that the Public Works Department is currently making to our water and sewer system. This past year has been one of the busiest years for water projects according to Public Works Director Paul Toor. The department has completed upgrades to the Wilson Street Reservoir, and began work on the Garfield Reservoir, totaling about \$28 million in construction costs for the two projects. These two reservoirs are expected to provide a safe and reliable water supply to the community for the next 60 to 80 years. In addition, the City received \$11 million in subsidized loans through the State of California Department of Water Resources, allowing the City to keep sewer rates low while doing much needed work to our aging sewer system.

At the same time, the Police Department has been hard at work fighting crime with innovative tactics like predictive policing and resource sharing. According to Police Captain Mike Neff, the City began using predictive policing techniques in the 2013-14 budget year, when the Police Department purchased a software package that allows them to determine the most likely times and locations where criminals will strike. With this information, Captain Neff can then proactively flood those areas with additional officers who are able to stop the crimes before they occur. With these techniques, they were able to reduce crime by about 17.8% in 2014. And the City has been able to use these predictive policing techniques while also sharing resources with other Cities so that we can call in

resources from other local communities to flood an area with patrol units, making it so that other parts of the City do not notice any real decrease in the presence of police officers.

The Community Services Department is also innovating and collaborating to effectively stretch our limited public funds. This year, they partnered with the Los Angeles Community Garden Council to build a local Community Garden. According to Community Services Director Sheila Pautsch, the City secured the site through a lease with Caltrans and provided \$35,000 in seed money. The strong volunteerism and dedicated efforts of the community allowed the South Pasadena Community Garden to grow additional funds and flourish.

The Senior Center has done a lot of work to expand and improve service for our Dial-A-Ride program. Within the past year, the City has brought on two full-time drivers and one full-time administrative staff member, expanded the hours of service, and added routes to popular destinations in the surrounding communities of Alhambra and Arcadia. Senior Center Supervisor Liliana Torres has seen improved feedback from our seniors since implementing these changes and is appreciative of the hard-work that her staff and the Senior Citizens Commission has done.

These are just a few of the many areas where the 2014-2015 Budget made significant impacts on the City we call home. At the time of this writing, the City Council and staff are working to finalize the 2015-2016 Budget, which will be very similar in size to the current budget. Once we have finalized that budget, I will be attending the meetings of local civic and community groups to discuss what is being programmed for next year. I welcome your thoughts, ideas and any requests to receive information on the upcoming budget from local groups. Feel free to email me at: [rjoe@southpasadenaca.gov](mailto:rjoe@southpasadenaca.gov).

-Robert Joe, Mayor of South Pasadena