



February 27, 2014

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Edward C. Starr, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** WEEKLY REPORT: February 21-27, 2014

---

➤ **CITY MANAGER/ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENTS**

- Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez hosted "Coffee Breaks" last week for residents and community and business leaders to discuss local, state, and legislative issues affecting the community. One was held Thursday evening in the Montclair City Council Chambers and the other on Saturday morning in the Montclair Police Department Emergency Operations Center.

At both sessions, Assemblymember Rodriguez responded to a number of questions from City staff and residents on a variety of issues including extension of Gold Line service to Montclair, the future of ambulance services in the west end of San Bernardino County, CalPERS employment issues, future prospects for reviving community redevelopment agencies, and education funding.

However, a topic of major concern was last week's gas main and water line leaks at the intersection of Central Avenue and Palo Verde Street. Assemblymember Rodriguez's office received several telephone inquiries regarding the incident. Accordingly, at Saturday's session, spokespersons Bob Cruz from the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) and Justin Scott-Coe from Monte Vista Water District (MVWD), addressed assembled residents and City personnel regarding the current status of the ruptured water and gas lines on Central Avenue and Palo Verde Street.

Mr. Cruz and Mr. Scott-Coe reported that the ruptured gas main and water line related to last week's incident had been repaired with permanent fixes, and an investigation was underway to determine cause. Up until Saturday, approximately two dozen Montclair households had been without water since the rupture to the water line was discovered on Tuesday, February 18

at approximately 4 p.m., and over 1,600 SoCalGas customers were without gas service. Discovery of the leaks occurred after Montclair Finance Department Accounting Specialist Randy Burwell called in a reported leak to the MVWD.

During the initial phase of the response to the reported water leak, MVWD employees detected a leak in a gas main adjacent to the ruptured water line. During the course of the event on Tuesday through Wednesday morning, water entered the 8" natural gas main causing gas service outages to over 1,600 Montclair homes and businesses.

In response to the incident, a SoCalGas Command Post was placed in operation at the Montclair Costco parking lot until Friday afternoon, when it was relocated to 4260 Holt Boulevard (the northeast corner of Holt Boulevard and Amherst Avenue). The command post remained in operation through 9 p.m. on Sunday evening, after SoCalGas restored services to over 1,600 Montclair households. The latter location then transitioned to a staging area through Wednesday, February 26 for crews working to pump remaining water trapped in gas lines.

In restoring businesses and residential customers of SoCalGas to full service, service technicians were required to siphon/purge water that entered gas lines, meters, and home appliances. In a number of instances, however, SoCalGas found that water re-entered household lines after gas meters were replaced and fixes completed, requiring additional service calls and meter replacements.

Mr. Cruz reported that approximately 350 SoCalGas service technicians from throughout the region were in Montclair replacing meters and restoring service. Fortunately, SoCalGas had a sufficient supply of new "smart" meters ready for deployment throughout its various service areas. These meters were quickly delivered to Montclair, allowing SoCalGas to meet the extraordinary demand for new gas meters. By mid-morning on Saturday, approximately 700 SoCalGas customers remained without service. Full restoration of gas services to nearly all Montclair residents and businesses was not achieved until late Sunday evening. In restoring service, SoCalGas technicians divided the City into response areas, each with designated service technician response teams.

Concurrent to this period, venting of natural gas was occurring from a new vault box meter installed in front of City Hall on Benito Street. SoCalGas officials responded within minutes of the notification, identified the problem, and placed an order for a specialized meter for installation this week.

Following the presentation by Mr. Cruz, MVWD representative Justin Scott-Coe reported water service had been restored to each Montclair household affected by the water line rupture. Mr. Scott-Coe also reported that water flowing in the District's lines is uncontaminated and safe to drink.

During the incident, MVWD delivered bottles and jugs of water to each of the more than two dozen households without water through Saturday morning.

Until the point when gas service was restored, the Montclair households impacted by the incident were inconvenienced with a lack of fuel for heat, cooking, and water heater operations. To accommodate bathing needs, SoCalGas provided Pomona Valley YMCA vouchers to residents, enabling those without hot water to shower at the facility located at 1460 E. Holt Boulevard, Pomona.

Throughout the week, incident updates were available by visiting the SoCalGas website at <http://www.socalgas.com/news-room/montclair-incident.shtml>; and by visiting the Monte Vista Water District website at <https://www.mvwd.org/news.cfm?resID=2787>. Update links were also available at the City's website at <http://www.cityofmontclair.org/> and on the City's public access channel.

The ruptured lines are approximately 50 years old—service life is estimated at 60 to 80 years. Neither SoCalGas nor MVWD have immediate plans for infrastructure replacement of the gas and water lines.

During efforts to contain the water and gas leaks last Tuesday evening and Wednesday, Montclair Police, Fire, and Public Works personnel provided logistic and public safety support, ensuring the incident was contained and the public welfare preserved. The Montclair City Council extends its sincerest gratitude to all City personnel for their commitment to the Montclair community. Congratulations are also extended to SoCalGas and MVWD for their quick responses to the incident and herculean efforts to return businesses and residents to full service.

I am pleased to note that residents and businesses responded well to the incident, and appear appreciative of the efforts made by SoCalGas, MVWD, and the City.

The City Council is appreciative of Assemblymember Rodriguez for meeting with Montclair residents and business and community leaders, and for allowing briefings on the gas main and water line ruptures to be a part of his program.

➤ **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

- On February 10, the Planning Commission approved a Conditional Use Permit to allow STG Auto, which currently operates a used car business at 4963 Holt Boulevard, to open a second Montclair location at the southeast corner of Central Avenue and Kingsley Street. In the past two weeks, the new tenant has been diligently working to spruce up the property, which has not been occupied by a regular tenant in several years. Workers have been cleaning up landscape areas, addressing disabled-accessible access, and

applying a new coat of paint to the building and parking lot light poles. It is expected the business will open sometime in March.

The subject property was originally developed as George Follmer Porsche+Audi in the early 1980s and has been occupied by a succession of new and used car dealers since that time. STG Auto has been in business since 1997 and specializes in higher-end used vehicles.

➤ **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

- No new information to report.

➤ **HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

- Yesterday, Director of Human Services Marcia Richter and Senior Human Services Supervisor Michelle Castillo attended *State of the County*. Held at Citizens Business Bank Arena in Ontario and themed *Building a Future Together*, the event highlighted the County's work to maximize its resources and form partnerships in areas such as business, education, public infrastructure, healthcare, environment, public safety, and social services.

Board of Supervisors Chair Janice Rutherford addressed attendees with a presentation that emphasized the strengths of our county and how we, as a County, are moving forward and preparing for the future.

Over 450 business leaders and county, city, and school representatives attended the event and networked after the presentation.

- Yesterday, over 260 senior citizens celebrated the "month of love" senior birthday party in the Community Center. Guests enjoyed a delicious meal and dessert. Entertainer Ron Johnson brought the seniors to their feet with a rendition of *Proud to be an American*, which was dedicated to veterans and their spouses. The group line dancing also provided entertainment and fun for everyone.

A picture collage can be found on Page 9.

➤ **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

- Last week, in response to a request made to the Police Department, Detective Amanda Holloway spoke to a group of seniors about elder abuse and how to recognize the many signs and symptoms. She reviewed with them the top ten scams targeting seniors and provided examples on how to protect themselves against fraud. Attendees received booklets on identity theft and a handout of safety tips.

The attendees were all retired employees from area schools districts.

➤ **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

- With the expectation of a long-awaited rain to the area comes preparation for what some forecasters are calling the Inland Valley's heaviest rainfall of the season.

Although the Montclair Public Works Department has a routine maintenance schedule for cleaning streets, catch basins, culverts, and water channels, there has been a long span of time between rains. The combination of scattered rains and the spring-like weather we have been experiencing has increased vegetation growth and debris in areas of the City that normally do not have growth at this time of year.

This week, crews have increased their maintenance efforts by clearing waterways, removing debris, and preparing sand bags. Not only does this preventative maintenance assist with preventing blockages, flooding and road hazards, it also prevents trash and debris from entering our waterways, storage basins, and, with enough rainfall, eventually the Pacific Ocean.

Sandbags are available for Montclair residents at the Montclair City Yard, 10835 Monte Vista Avenue. The public may contact Public Works Superintendent Xavier Mendez between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday. During non-office hours, sandbags may be picked up from the parking lot of Fire Station No. 2, also located at the Monte Vista Avenue address. Residents are asked to use "the honor system" and take only the needed amount.

➤ **SUCCESSOR REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY/MONTCLAIR HOUSING CORPORATION**

- Two and a half years ago, as the company was struggling against several ominous challenges, Best Buy announced a plan to reduce its big box prototype by ten percent. This was shortly updated to increase the shrinkage of new prototype locations by an additional ten percent.

In order to speed up the process and not rely only on newly built smaller stores to advance the cause, Best Buy also announced a campaign to offer appropriate retailers space to sublet within its established stores. This ultimately met with some, but very limited, success.

Best Buy wasn't the first chain to think smaller in terms of store size or even to seek to sublease existing locations, especially during the recession. But its announcement was an unusual change in big box policy, a national chain going to a smaller box.

Competing with Internet-only merchants or independents with a strong web presence increasingly brought retailers like Best Buy to see their large store space as a financial handicap rather than as a greater opportunity to draw in paying customers.

Best Buy's announcement to reduce its real estate burden was among the first of its kind in the current era. In fact it may have awakened other retailers and started a trend.

About the same time as Best Buy's reduced prototype announcement, Walmart was unveiling its far more radical compact prototype, the approximately 15,000 sq. ft. Walmart Express concept. The Express format was seen as a new platform for the retailer, designed to embark in a new arena of competition—the dollar store.

Express was immediately designated "a work in progress" by the company and designed for communities not nearly as viable to support Supercenters or even traditional Walmart big boxes. An early version in Chicago, however, was located near a Supercenter. The company had hoped that its small footprint would serve to supplement the supercenter's traffic. However the downtown Express store closed after one year as its lease ran out.

Best Buy's new prototype was simply expected to reduce inefficiencies, and thus costs brought on by big-box retailing's real estate-based bloating. It was also expected to lead to a platform which could better compete with the growing threat of Internet-based competition by better coordinating its website operations with more efficient brick-and-mortar strengths.

Since Best Buy's announcement to seek a more diminutive store model, other retailers have followed suit. Just last year, Staples, Office Depot (prior to the merger with OfficeMax), and OfficeMax (also prior to that merger), each opened prototypes far smaller than even their smallest traditional locations. In addition to a hopefully more profitable use of valuable retail real estate, these new prototypes offer greater flexibility in permitting openings in urban downtown areas within walking distances of towering office buildings and the many offices that need supplying of an ever-growing assortment of products and services.

These stores make up for their small size and the obvious need to reduce on-floor product by relying on in-store, state-of-the-art video kiosks, which are geared to offer the greatest ever company product selection, linked through the corporate website. This internal, Omni-Channel linkup offers customers rapid delivery of the company's entire product assortment, with any eye to same day fulfillment.

Target seemed to have acknowledged the advantages of a smaller prototype with the openings of its CityTarget model during the summer of 2012. Coming in at about 80,000 square feet, this Target model is designed to accommodate costly, high-end urban landscapes, where typical real estate and traffic costs can be prohibitive for a big box, even one with a reputation of "affordable chic."

One could not help but wonder, with all this activity at significantly reduced prototype sizes, if the 80,000 square foot CityTarget model was as small as Target was prepared to go. Now word has come that Target indeed covets new territory in terms of store size and market segmentation.

TargetExpress is a 20,000 square foot concept store which is expected to open this July. The concept's launch site will be in downtown Minneapolis. Perhaps of greater interest is the actual real estate to be occupied. The space is essentially the ground floor of an apartment building that is under construction, near the University of Minnesota campus.

TargetExpress enlists a distinct, uniquely diminutive size for the company. This, combined with a distinct community location, indicates the parent company sees the same values Walmart has recently begun to serve.

ECS:spa

" You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you." – Walt Disney

# MARCH 2014



3	City Council Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
5	Community Action Committee Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
8-12	Congressional City Conference Washington D.C.	
9	Daylight Saving Time Begins	2:00 a.m.
10	Planning Commission Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
11	City Manager's Staff Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
12	Oversight Board Meeting Council Chambers	6:00 p.m.
17	St. Patrick's Day	
17	Code Enforcement Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	6:00 p.m.
17	City Council Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
20	Spring Begins	
20	Safety Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
20	Public Works Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	2:00 p.m.
24	Planning Commission Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
25	City Manager's Staff Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
27-28	City-County Conference Lake Arrowhead Resort	11:00 a.m.



# Senior Center February Birthday Party

