



May 8, 2014

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

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

**SUBJECT:** WEEKLY REPORT: May 2-8, 2014

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➤ ***CITY MANAGER/ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENTS***

- The Great Recession of 2007 affected millions of California property owners and thousands of local governments. Alongside its broader economic effects, which included widespread foreclosures, reduced construction activity, and diminished household wealth, the decline in property values resulted in temporary property tax reductions for 3.2 million properties—about 2.6 million homes and 600,000 other properties. These property tax reductions were required by Proposition 8 (1978), which modified the provisions of Proposition 13 to explicitly allow for such reductions when property values fall.

For homes that received property tax reductions in 2013-14, the average homeowner received a \$1,600 reduction in his or her property tax payment. For other properties that received property tax reductions—mainly apartments, commercial buildings, industrial facilities, and agricultural land—the average owner received a \$7,500 property tax reduction. In total, temporary property tax reductions depressed local government property tax revenues by an estimated \$7 billion in 2013-14, amounting to a 15 percent reduction statewide.

Statewide home values increased 12 percent during 2012, yet property taxes for most property owners were largely unaffected. This is because state law limits property tax increases for most properties to 2 percent each year. However, taxes on properties with temporary tax reductions under Proposition 8 can increase faster than 2 percent each year. Property taxes for these properties increase based on the property's market value because these properties are assessed at market value each year that they receive a reduced assessment.

Real estate improvements during 2012 resulted in property tax increases ranging from 5 percent to 20 percent for many of these properties in Fiscal Year 2013-14.

In Los Angeles County, for example, assessments for properties with temporary tax reductions increased by a total of \$10 billion in 2013-14, generating additional property revenues of \$120 million for local governments there.

Looking ahead, property tax payments for many owners that received temporary property tax reductions during the real estate crisis could increase by more than 10 percent annually for the next several years. These increases likely will cause local property tax revenues to grow swiftly over the next several years as well.

- In a 5–4 decision, the United States Supreme Court ruled this week that the town of Greece, New York, did not violate the First Amendment prohibition on establishment of religion by opening its meetings with a legislative invocation or prayer.

Plaintiffs challenging the town's practice argued that legislative invocations contained sectarian language or themes, and argued that the invocations coerce non-adherents to remain in the room or even pretend participation in order to avoid offending the board members who sponsor the invocations.

The Court rejected the argument that governments may only allow nonsectarian invocations as that would require government to act as "supervisors and censors of religious speech" and be placed in the position of regulating content by determining what constitutes a nonsectarian invocation as opposed to a sectarian one.

As to the coercion argument, the Court found that legislative invocations in the town meeting context are not intended for the public, but for lawmakers "who may find that a moment of prayer or quiet reflection sets the mind to the higher purpose and thereby eases the task of governing." However, the Court cautioned that coercion could be possible if the town board members directed the public to participate in the prayers, singled out those who chose not to participate in the invocations, or indicated that their decisions might be influenced by a person's participation in the invocation.

The Court's decision is important for every city that currently opens its meeting with a legislative invocation or may decide to do so in the future.

## ➤ **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

- On April 30, the Fire Department placed a new 2014 type-1 pumper from KME Fire Apparatus into front-line service as Unit No. 82-14. This unit is assigned to Fire Station No. 152.

The first emergency call for service this unit responded to was a grass fire near the intersection of Holt Boulevard and Central Avenue.

The City was able to purchase this unit through Assistance to Firefighters Grant funds.



From left to right are: Fire Captain Ed Cook, Fire Engineer Steve Ward, and Firefighter/Paramedic Nathan Brooks

➤ **HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

- Yesterday, I joined members of the City Council, City employees, and community members for a little shopping at the highly anticipated opening of the Montclair Community Certified Farmers Market. I enjoyed checking out the market and buying fresh produce and other goods. The market featured 14 vendors offering an assortment of fruits, vegetables, brittle, hummus, baked goods, nuts, teas, sauces, tamales, roasted corn, baked potatoes, and kettle corn.

The farmers market runs every Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the north portion of the Alma Hofman Park parking lot (next to the skate park). It is produced by Heritage Education Group and is sponsored by the City of Montclair and Healthy Montclair through funding by First 5 San Bernardino.

A photo collage of the first market day is included on Page 11.



➤ **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

- At the City Council meeting on Monday, Officer Kristofer Kelley was formally recognized by the City for his recent year-long military duty.

In December 2012, Officer Kelley was notified by the US Army that he would be activated for military duty, effective April 5, 2013. He reported for duty and was assigned as the Noncommissioned Officer-in-Charge of 17 soldiers deploying to Guantanamo Bay Military Prison in Cuba. His unit was responsible for internal and external security of the terrorists known as the "911-5."

Deployment for Officer Kelley meant putting his wedding plans on hold and being separated from his fiancé for over a year. Nonetheless, he understood his commitment to serve the United States and accepted his activation with great dignity and pride. Before he left, Officer Kelley wrote, "I would like to further express my continued devotion to the Montclair Police Department, the City of Montclair, and the Montclair residents," and vowed to return to duty as a Police Officer. Officer Kelley returned to duty with the Montclair Police Department on April 11, 2014.

Officer Kelley, on behalf of the Montclair Police Department, the City of Montclair, and the Montclair residents, thank for your service to the community and our country. Welcome back!

- On Friday, Chief Mike deMoet attended the VIP Preflight Event, *A Salute to the Mighty Eight*, at Chino Airport. Attendees, including Senator Norma Torres and Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez, celebrated the birthday of their host, San Bernardino County Fourth District Supervisor Gary Ovitt. Everyone received a tour of the airport and enjoyed the static displays.

Friday's event was a prequel to the 2014 Planes of Fame Air Show held on Saturday and Sunday.

- Also last Friday, Montclair Police Department staff participated in Ramona Elementary School's Annual Career Fair. Officers Courtnie Mair and David Taylor and Cadet Candace Martinez set up an informational booth (which according to them was the most visited booth by some 800 Pre-K through 6th grade students). Most of the students wanted information about the law enforcement profession, i.e., "what's it like to be a cop?"



Officers Courtne Mair and David Taylor and Cadet Candace Martinez pictured with students



Officer Mair with one of the students

➤ **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

- Back in March, I reported that the Splash Pad at Alma Hofman Park would be receiving a new play surface. Last year, staff noticed the existing play surface was delaminating from the concrete substrate below. The existing surface was nursed along to keep the Splash Pad open for the remainder of the summer season, then staff started working on various scenarios on how to best repair or replace the existing surface. Several different manufacturers of play surfaces were contacted, and staff received several bids for making repairs and for the complete replacement of the play surface.

During this process, we learned there was a pending class action lawsuit against the manufacturer of our existing play surface, so we temporarily put repairs on hold. Staff worked closely with City Attorney Diane Robbins, and, after getting the "go ahead," staff resumed soliciting bids for a new play surface.

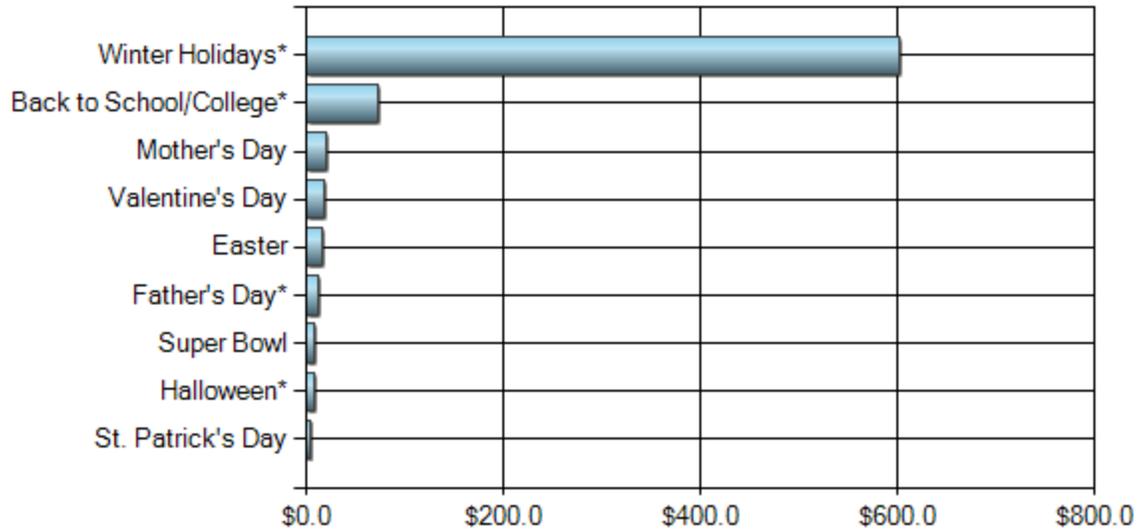
Although it is unlikely the "facelift" will be completed by Memorial Day weekend, staff is working with the contractor to get the job done as quickly as possible.

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

- For 11 years now, the National Retail Federation has partnered with Prosper Insights and Analytics to gauge consumers' spending intentions on America's favorite holidays, like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and Christmas; and also Halloween.

During that time, Halloween has grown to become one of the most popular "holidays" of the year, average spending on back-to-school items has increased 31 percent since 2004, and Thanksgiving has officially become a bona fide shopping day for millions of bargain-hungry Americans. The National Retail Federation has ranked consumer spending to add some context to who, what, when, where, why, and how people shop for consumer holidays. Here's how each holiday ranks as of the release of a Mother's Day survey:

## Holiday Spending Totals In Billions, 2013-2014



Source: Monthly Consumer Survey

### Information

Seasons with the \* indicates the data is from the 2013 Monthly Consumer Survey



Charts from the NRF Foundation's Retail Insight Center. To access this data and more research please visit the [Retail Insight Center](#).

- ✓ **Winter holidays:** As the largest gift-giving holiday of them all, the winter holidays account for nearly 20 percent of total annual retail sales for retailers. In 2013, holiday celebrants spent an average of \$730 on gifts, food, decorations, and more. After all was said and done, the National Retail Federation found that holiday sales increased 3.8 percent to \$602 billion. More than 90 percent of Americans celebrated Christmas, Kwanza, or Hanukah last winter, the most-celebrated season of the year.
- ✓ **Back to school/college:** Spending on pencils, backpacks, denim, college dorm furniture, collegiate wear, tablets, smart phones, and notebooks costs parents hundreds of dollars on average and a total of \$72.5 billion last year.

- ✓ **Mother's Day:** Consumers say they will spend an average \$163 this year—\$19.9 billion total—with the majority of their budget going to special outings, new apparel items, and jewelry. As to why Mother's Day is so much bigger than Father's Day: the types of gifts people typically buy mom tend to cost a little more, and dads generally admit that they don't like all the fuss anyway.
  
- ✓ **Halloween:** In 2013, two-thirds of Americans said they would partake in Halloween activities, spending \$75 on average to celebrate, for a total of \$6.9 billion. In addition to children's Halloween costumes, the day has become more of an adult event than ever before, helping boost spending on costumes, candy, decorations, and party materials more than 55 percent since 2005. With the growth in popularity, other sectors have jumped into the mix. Home improvement stores now take advantage of their vast space to sell life-size yard decorations, and drug and grocery stores are also now devoting select aisles to decorations, candy, and costumes.

ECS:spa

"Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy." ~ Anne Frank

# MAY 2014



11	Mother's Day	
12	Planning Commission Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
13	City Manager's Staff Meeting Council Chambers	9:00 a.m.
14	City of Montclair Employee Benefits Day Montclair Community Center Auditorium	11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
14	Oversight Board Meeting Council Chambers	6:00 p.m.
15	Safety Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
15	Public Works Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	2:00 p.m.
15	Reserve Officers Appreciation Dinner and Awards Ceremony Montclair Police Department	5:00 p.m.
19	Code Enforcement Committee Meeting - <b>Canceled</b>	
19	City Council Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
26	<b>Memorial Day – City Hall Closed</b>	
27	City Manager's Staff Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
27	Planning Commission Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.

# Montclair Community Certified Farmers Market

