

Neighborhood Councils are the Voice of Stakeholders

Commentary by Soledad Garcia, Chair, Community Infrastructure Committee

The Neighborhood Council/LADWP Memorandum of Understanding Oversight Committee (OSC) conferred with the councilmembers, spoke to the energy and environment and budget and finance committees, presented the ratepayers' position to the DWP commissioners and maintained outreach with neighborhood councils and media. The OSC persuaded DWP to hold a budget presentation and audit assessment.

The city council committees responded by suspending the DWP budget-delaying decisions on the rate increases for three months. Whereas DWP assumed in June 2007 that base rates would be in place, in fact, the first increase was implemented in June 2008. Resident ratepayers got a reprieve of several million dollars.

Without neighborhood council input, DWP developed the restructuring plan for implementation during the summer. DWP did not provide timely notification for NC participation. The DWP Oversight Committee advocated for compliance of the MOU before the city council, council committees and DWP Commission.

The restructuring and zoning were issues remanded to the Energy and Environment Committee. The city council passed the plan, but not to be implemented until summer 2009. There are many faults with the restructuring plan. The neighborhood councils should work to defer the plan an additional year to lessen the double increase which will be felt most by the working middle class. Resident ratepayers have a year's reprieve of a few million dollars.

The DWP Oversight Committee has worked on behalf of the ratepayers and stakeholders by protecting the integrity of the MOU. On October 18, DWP will comply with the MOU by having a workshop for the 08-09 Budget. DWP will provide individual NCs presentations (on request) on restructuring, conservation, green power and any significant issue important to the neighborhood councils.

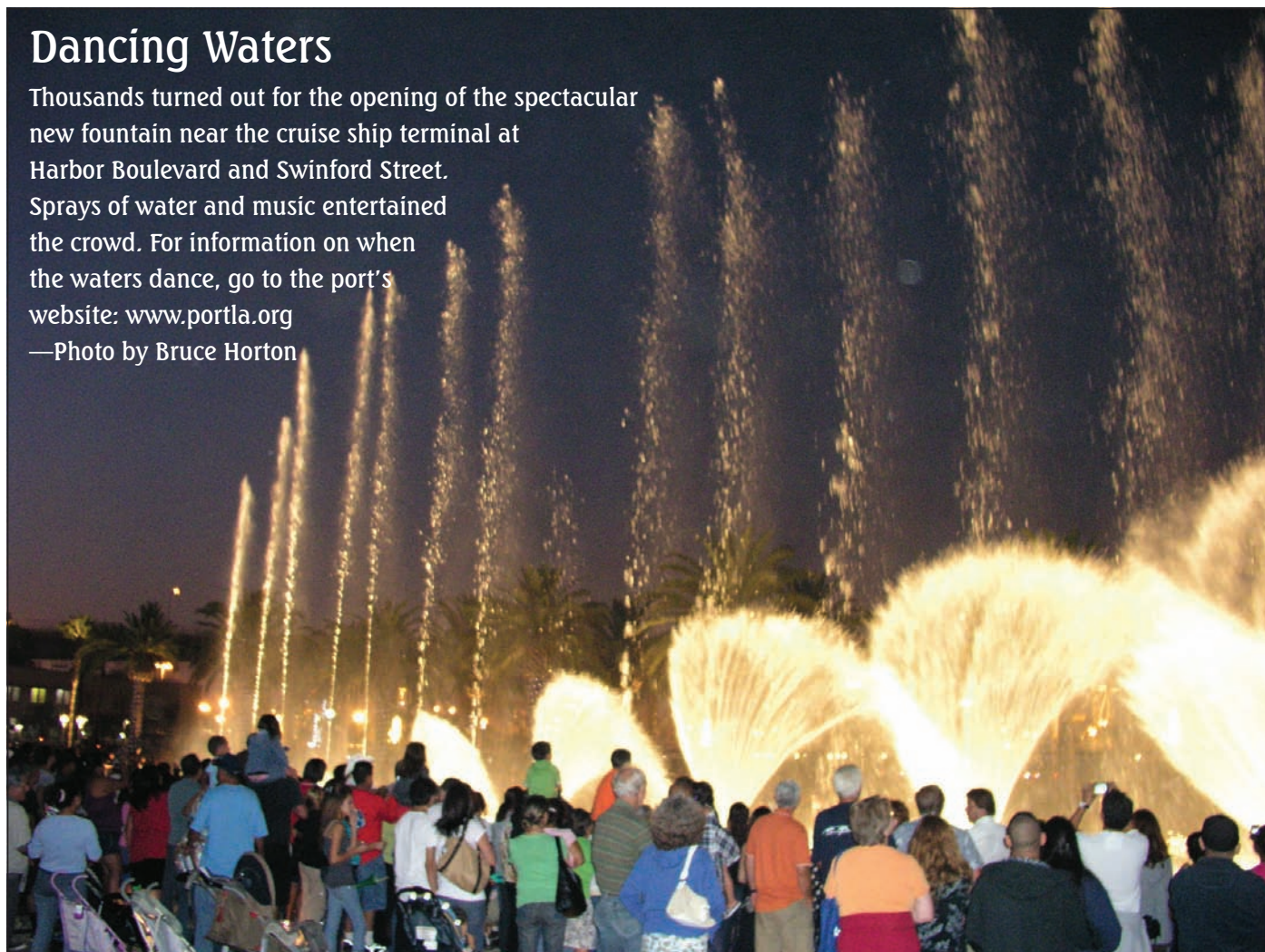
It is because the NC/DWP MOU Oversight Committee has a 75 neighborhood council-membership that DWP complies with the MOU. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is the largest utility agency in the United States and is one of the three proprietary departments in the city. It does not depend on the city for its budget. Its money comes directly from the ratepayers.

The NC/LADWP MOU Oversight Committee will continue to protect the MOU; it will not advocate issues and rates. That will be left to another neighborhood coun-

Dancing Waters

Thousands turned out for the opening of the spectacular new fountain near the cruise ship terminal at Harbor Boulevard and Swinford Street. Sprays of water and music entertained the crowd. For information on when the waters dance, go to the port's website: www.portla.org

—Photo by Bruce Horton



Infrastructure Roundup Includes Fee Hikes, Solid Waste and New Tunnel

By Soledad S. Garcia, Chair, Community Infrastructure Committee

On September 1, the city's sanitation charge increased to \$36.32. But that's not all. According to L.A. Municipal Code Article 6.1, Section 66.41, there are scheduled and planned increases of the solid waste, transfer, recycling, recovery of waste, and disposal fees coming. The \$36 fee is to cover the full cost of providing refuse service.

On July 1, the cost for a single-family dwelling was \$26. We were told a 30 percent trash fee increase was necessary to help balance the city budget and cover the cost for pickup. Rates for multi-family buildings of three units or more will increase from \$17.16 to \$24.33.

Two years ago, our fee went from \$11 to \$28. Then, we were told that a \$42 increase would provide the city with 1,000 more police officers. Millions of dollars accumulated because the police were not being hired. The full burden for the 1,000 police officers was charged to the ratepayer for two years. The unused money was transferred to the city's general fund, where it could be used for city projects or to balance the budget. It was not kept in a reserved fund.

City Controller Laura Chick recently spoke to a group of neighborhood council members at L.A. Community College. She said that after two years,

the city has now hired 405 officers. The \$137 million overage is because of the higher trash fees. The city is still struggling with a budget shortfall.

Be encouraged, alternative technologies for municipal solid waste are here. Sanitation has had three ZeroWaste conferences. The theme is that the community can help sanitation recycle waste by diverting it from landfills to sites that take recyclable materials for renewable energy. As the Solid Waste Integrated Resource Plan develops and remains an important alternative, the 20-year plan may actually reduce solid waste.

The County of Los Angeles has 24 independent sanitation districts. Generally, district boundaries follow watersheds for purposes of natural gravity for cost-effective wastewater and solid waste management.

Seventeen of the 24 share interconnected sewerage systems to form a Joint Outfall System (JOS). Eleven water reclamation plants in the JOS treat two-thirds of the wastes which includes industry wastes. The Carson Plant is one of these treatment plants.

Two six-mile-long tunnels built between 1937 and 1958 discharge the Carson plant's treated water 1.5 miles offshore of White Point in San Pedro.

Because the tunnels have reached their capacity after 50-80 years of service, they need to be refurbished. Therefore, a third tunnel must be built so the other two may be maintained.

The dilemma for the community is where it will be built. We are all NIM-BYs. San Pedro has carried the county's burden for 80 years. Is it time for the Palos Verdes Shelf to share the new tunnel? San Pedro will endure the pollution of digging up to the two tunnels and of having trucks carrying tons of dirt every day for several years. Our streets will be impacted and dirtied.

Write to the ClearwaterProgram@lacs.org, Clearwater Program, and Sanitation Districts of LA County, PO Box 4998, Whittier, CA 90607 or call 877-300-Water, give them your recommendations, and place your name on their mailing list to receive notices and workshop dates.

The Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council Infrastructure Committee will have an inspection tour of the Carson Treatment Plant on September 23. If you are interested in joining us, contact Soledad.Garcia@coastalsanpedro.org or call (310) 290-0049 or write to Soledad at 1536 West 25th Street #223, San Pedro, CA 90732.

Let LADWP Help You Catch a Few Rays

With an average of 300 sunny days per year, Los Angeles has plenty of this natural resource to go around. And now, LADWP has made it easier and more economical for all of us to catch a few rays.

The improved LADWP Solar Power Incentive Program offers greater performance-based financial incentives to customers who install a solar photovoltaic (PV) system on businesses, while continuing the successful program for systems on homes.

With an expanded annual budget of \$33 million, the Solar Program now offers customers a 275 percent increase in incentive funds per year, making LADWP rebates among the most competitive in the state. Customers can take advantage of flexible payment options

such as a leasing-ownership option and loans to assist in the installation of a new system.

Solar Program financial incentives are based on the projected performance of a solar system. Interested customers can visit www.ladwp.com and use the PVWatts calculating tool to estimate individual PV system output and calculate the potential rebate amount. Rebate amounts will vary depending upon the size, tilt, position and location of the solar PV system.

The expanded program was designed to meet the requirements of Senate Bill 1—the 2006 California Solar Initiative. Under the approved legislation, LADWP's goal is to have 280 megawatts of customer installed solar power by the end of 2016.

Complete program details and applications for the Solar Incentive Program are available at www.ladwp.com under "Programs and Rebates" or by calling 1-800-Green LA.

