



## **COUNCILMAN'S UPDATE REPORT #02 TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2023**



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<https://www.westcovina.org/departments/mayor-city-council/councilmember-ollie-cantos>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PART I: SNAPSHOT SUMMARY</b>	3
<b>PART II: MILESTONES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS</b>	3
A. Changes During City Council Meetings	3
B. Creation of the District 4 Volunteer Corps	3
C. Improvements to the "West Covina Report An Issue" App	4
D. An Enhanced Approach to Community Engagement	4
E. Fulfilling Priorities of West Covina Seniors	5
F. Gathering and Centralizing Information about Local Government Support to Low-Income Individuals and Their Families	6
G. Fostering Economic Empowerment of Up-and-Coming Young Professionals	6
H. Tackling Homelessness	6
I. Bolstering Business	9
J. Initiating Closer Collaborative Ties with School Districts Educating West Covina Kids	10
K. Obtaining a Status Update on Opening of the Sportsplex	11
L. Responding to Individual Residents' Concerns	11
<b>PART III: MEETINGS AND EVENT PARTICIPATION</b>	11
<b>PART IV: UPCOMING COMMITMENTS</b>	16

## **PART I: SNAPSHOT SUMMARY**

During this reporting period, issues that I tackled include air quality, beautification, business support and development, City app improvements, crime, foster care and adoption of kids, gas bill rates, homelessness, intern economic empowerment, mental illness, public utilities, school district collaboration, senior citizen issues, South Side attention, traffic, Sportsplex opening, trash services, and water conservation.

I am grateful to report that Mayor Rosario Diaz has appointed me to represent our City on the Homelessness Committee and the Environment and Natural Resources (ENRD) Committee of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG). In addition, she has appointed me to serve on our City's Audit Committee. I look forward to working actively and diligently in these new roles.

## **PART II: MILESTONES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

This reporting period has witnessed a number of changes, both small and large, that are leading to concrete improvements.

### **A. Changes During City Council Meetings**

In the interest of providing greater clarification for residents regarding what agenda items are being referred to at any given time, Assistant City Clerk Lisa Sherrick has begun the practice of orally stating the titles of agenda items. In addition, for those watching these and other televised meetings live or later on YouTube, our Division of Information Technology (DoIT) has changed the graphics at the bottom of the screen from the previous white lettering on a beige background through increasing color contrast by incorporating dark lettering on a white backdrop while retaining the Great Seal of the City of West Covina. This change also increases information accessibility for seniors with decreased vision and other residents with visual impairments. Deepest thanks to DoIT Manager Will Trujillo, IT Analyst Vartan Krekorian, Computer Services Technician Matthew Castellanos, Geographic Information System (GIS) Analyst Teresa Victoria, IT Intern Andrew Mosino, and GIS Interns Louis Castañedas and Matthew Hu for everything they do behind the scenes to keep IT operations running smoothly and well. These efforts are under the leadership of Finance Director Stephanie Sikema.

### **B. Creation of the District 4 Volunteer Corps**

On Saturday, January 21, at the inaugural District Town Hall Meeting (see Section D below), I announced the official formation of the District 4 Volunteer Corps, geared toward enlisting and deploying residents to support efforts to bolster the community. Ranging from helping individual residents, to strengthening existing grassroots projects, to serving as an informal way to introducing people to community service efforts sponsored by non-profit organizations doing work in the City, the Corps has already attracted involvement by residents from different parts of the City. Since we are ONE West Covina, all are welcome. For further information and to register, residents are invited to call me at (626)

926-9627 or to email me at [Ollie.Cantos@WestCovina.org](mailto:Ollie.Cantos@WestCovina.org). Fellow residents are also invited to identify needs with which the Corps may informally get involved to assist.

### **C. Improvements to the "West Covina Report An Issue" App**

1. Directly as the result of District 4 residents on the South Side who have expressed concerns regarding illegal overnight parking in neighborhoods where permits are required for street parking, a new feature has been added to the app which facilitates an ability for residents to report such occurrences.
2. As the outgrowth of resident feedback that the app sometimes shows matters as "Closed" when work has not yet been completed, the new notification modifications now reflect clarifying and more specific language: "Your Request #\_\_\_ has been updated with the resolution ..." Specific details then follow such as "Closed - Duplicate Assigned to Staff" and "Closed - Will Be Trimmed on Trim Cycle \_\_\_." Special thanks to resident Keisha Blackshear for expressing the initial concern, to our Community Development Department's Code Enforcement Manager Milan Mrakich and to Assistant City Manager Roxanne Lerma for instituting the changes.

### **D. An Enhanced Approach to Community Engagement**

1. On Friday, January 20, I asked City Manager David Carmany to organize a community meeting with Athens Services to answer various resident questions raised in response to an online post on Saturday, January 7 (see my [personal post on Facebook](#)) when I touted on video the need for us to recycle and showed partial footage from Athens's Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in the City of Industry. Following through quickly, he hosted the meeting in Council Chambers, [video recording](#) the proceedings and broadcasting it Live on Thursday, February 9. Lasting for more than two hours, the featured speaker was Gary Clifford, Executive Vice President of Athens Services. Though the advertised primary topic was SB 1383 implementation whose aims are to have decreased emissions of short-lived climate pollutants by reducing organic waste disposal by 50 percent in 2020 and later 75 percent by 2025, other issues as raised by residents were discussed as well. Because of this robust dialog, Athens agreed in principle to restore the annual pick-up of large items while enabling residents to continue having the opportunity to have up to 5 large items picked up weekly. This is significant because annual pick-up events have not occurred since 2017. This welcomed change is now in process, thanks to overwhelming resident feedback among those in attendance.
2. On Saturday, January 21, I convened the first District Town Hall Meeting, an event that had not occurred since districts were initially formed. The purpose was to create a venue in which residents had the opportunity to engage in solutions-oriented discussion of local issues in a constructive two-way exchange, which is far more interactive than one-way statements that are delivered during the Oral Communications portion of City Council meetings. Almost two-dozen residents were in attendance. (As specifically identified issues with effective follow-through are addressed, these will be shared via District 4 After-Action Reports and referenced in future editions of these Councilman's Reports.) At this meeting, topics included traffic concerns at particular intersections and

stretches of road, use of the Sportsplex, beautification and upkeep, community volunteerism, and more. Special thanks to City Manager Carmany and Assistant City Manager Lerma for making themselves available to answer extensive questions and making public commitments to carry out actions relating to specific resident concerns. I also wish to express heartfelt appreciation to Maintenance Staff Members George Carlos and José Medina for their diligent efforts to set up the venue by putting up a tent and setting up tables and chairs in a manner that optimized visibility and maintained accessibility with paths of travel. This Town Hall was held outside Rainbow Donuts. With appreciation to resident Phil Moreno for his great recommendation, my next Town Hall Meeting will occur in the second quarter of the year on the South Side of District 4.

3. On Thursday, January 31, at my recommendation, to provide fellow residents with a chance to share thoughts about preferred budget priorities, City Manager Carmany hosted a forum in Council Chambers at City Hall to gain direct feedback. This entire session was broadcast live and was recorded in Chambers, adding to the dialog, he made use of polling technology to track responses in real time, open to those in attendance in person and online. As lists of objectives within each priority were discussed, feedback regarding collective sentiments was also shared in real time.

## **E. Fulfilling Priorities of West Covina Seniors**

In strong support of the West Covina Senior Citizens Association, I have been working actively with Community Services Supervisor Vanessa Ibañez, in close collaboration with Assistant City Manager Lerma, to address concerns about the Senior and Community Center at Cortez Park as raised by the Association leaders and members and as I identified while still running for office. These include vehement collective wishes relating to restoration of the Giving Tree, use of the Computer Room with five stations, the quality and temperature of coffee, use of the microwave, ready access to and availability of games and puzzles without needing to check them in and out, the opportunity to provide direct feedback on the quality of food served under the County's food program, the need for a more welcoming environment in which community members are invited and encouraged to stay during all Center operating hours from 9am to 3pm, the perception of seniors feeling like they are being treated paternalistically instead of with respect, physical beautification of the grounds (including gardens) and upkeep of facilities, and cultivation of a collaborative environment in which the input of residents is taken seriously and acted upon with dispatch.

During this reporting period, these and other concerns have been raised and addressed with Center staff under the energetic and enthusiastic leadership of Community and Senior Services Supervisor Ibañez, and solutions-driven dialog will continue in earnest. Already, under the direction of Association President Les LeuFroy and Advisor Gloria Alvarez, the Association has formed an active working group of at least 15 volunteers to meet with Center management on a regular basis. As provided by the organization and shared with authorization, these individuals (listed alphabetically) include Gloria Alvarez, Jeff Chin, Marcella Cisneros, Eric Egardo, Erica Hernandez, Linda Jaramillo, Sandy Kaplan, Les LeuFroy, Cal Matranga, Julie Rast, Roger San Juan, Rosie San Juan, Brian Williams, David Zarate, and Che Zhang. I am confident that, as efforts move ahead and

in a spirit of partnership, the Center will flourish and in an atmosphere of vibrancy, energy, and vitality that will truly be a magnificent thing to behold!

Among the first achievements of this partnership is restoration of the cherished Giving Tree, a living memorial in which the names of loved ones are placed on golden leaves and hung onto the tree in perpetuity. The Tree was removed during a renovation project more than two years ago before COVID and is now back. Once volunteers painstakingly complete actions to restore it to its former glory, a special rededication ceremony will be organized, complete with new chances for additional golden leaves to be added along with taking the time to honor those whose names already adorn this enduring community symbol of selflessness, sacrifice, love, and caring,

As yet another development, beautification efforts continue (including plans for the gardens in the common areas where there used to be greenery) and, as related projects are completed, those will be reported here.

### **F. Gathering and Centralizing Information about Local Government Support to Low-Income Individuals and Their Families**

As I have met with representatives of different local entities, among many topics, I worked to identify ways in which assistance is available to low-income and other economically-disadvantaged residents. As a direct result, I have now gathered important information from Athens Services, California Public Utilities Commission, Foothill Transit, Metro, South Coast Air Quality Management District, Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company, and Suburban Water Systems.

Further resources at the City level include the loan program to eligible homeowners for up to \$25,000 to foster home improvement and the the "Move West Covina" Uber pilot program to enhance mobility of City senior citizens.

My next step is to place these various resources in one easy-to-access place and to distribute this to fellow residents to optimize public awareness.

### **G. Fostering Economic Empowerment of Up-and-Coming Young Professionals**

At the City Council meeting on Tuesday, January 17, I secured Council approval to have City staff look into modifications to our Internship Program to incorporate the new practice of paying our interns \$15 per hour, both to support economic advancement of those early in their respective careers and as a competitive measure to attract the best, brightest, and most talented students to join the ranks of our incredible City staff so that, as a matter of choice, they may see working here as a desirable and worthwhile career goal. Furthermore, successful actions to fortify a robust Intern Program will expand our pipeline of talent as we concurrently look to long-term succession planning to ensure that our City workforce continually increases in strength, energy, aptitude, and limitless potential.

### **H. Tackling Homelessness**

Building on the City Council's successful efforts to lower our City's Homelessness Count from more than 300 just a few years ago to a mere 112 as of 2022 (including just 46 Unsheltered), during this reporting period, I undertook a multifaceted approach that consciously incorporates a combination of individual difference-making actions and a broader systemic focus on partnership optimization through work with other local governments and non-profit organizations.

At a personal level, thanks to resident Jessica Han, I am getting involved with Miracle Messages, a non-profit organization that supports long-term solutions by matching unhoused individuals with "Phone Buddies," who stay in touch on a weekly basis to provide friendship and a listening ear. As a result of my invitation to have others join me (see my [personal post on Facebook](#)), those who expressed an eagerness to help include Mayor Rosario Diaz, Mayor Pro Tem Brian Tabatabai, and residents John Shoemaker and Joe Gardner. I applaud them all and know that, in their own ways, they will surely do their part to secure real impact. No matter our backgrounds, we each truly do matter and have a vital role to play. As I learn of more who join these important endeavors, I will recognize them in future editions of this Report. I wish to thank Kevin Adler, Ashley Dockendorf, Madeline Mazzocchi, and Jenni Taylor for being so supportive of our City's fellow residents' shared and ideally expanded commitment to become further involved.

Next, in support of resident Joe Gardner, a retired law enforcement officer with an extensive professional background in working with the homeless community, I have asked the West Covina Police Department (WCPD) to meet with him to learn about a pocket directory that he assembled for distribution to homeless individuals seeking resources and supports. He has already distributed these at his own expense to police departments in other nearby jurisdictions, so he is already beginning to magnify his work to impact the greater good.

At the City level, on Thursday, January 5, I met for hours with WCPD Captain Tony Cortina, Lieutenant Keith Freeman, Officer Sam Ling, and Officer Joe Mello directly to learn the "secret sauce" behind our City's effective work to combat homelessness. That is when I came to understand the critically-essential and consistent actions to establish and build trust among the population (sometimes, taking as many as 7 interactions), create genuine rapport, empower them to accept help, and follow through to secure solutions that promote greater housing stability on a more permanent basis. I was truly impressed. To foster next action steps, on Sunday, January 15, I issued a comprehensive email in which I discussed topics including support for our Homeless Outreach Prevention Education ("HOPE") Team and our partnership with the Los Angeles Center on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (LACADA), wanting to be introduced to Kelly McDonald on our staff who leads in securing grant funding for City programs, recruitment of Explorers and Cadets, introducing WCPD to Miracle Messages, retail stores installing magnetic borders to prevent shopping cart theft, seeking sample ordinance making scavenging illegal, requesting further illustrations of community police outreach moments, learning more about City-wide staff coordination to address various aspects of homelessness, incorporating the theme and philosophy "Innovation Is Our Tradition," and supporting Joe Gardner's Resource Booklet idea. As developments arise from the WCPD ultimately replying to that correspondence, I will share future progress here.

To gain a glimpse into what LACADA does on the streets of West Covina to strive to offer help to those experiencing homelessness, on Friday, February 10, I spent four hours with LACADA team members Chris Duran and Syria Ramirez along with their Supervisor, Josh Heinzman. While out, at one point, we came together with Officers Ling and Mello with whom resident Sue Augino was volunteering her time that day. Collectively part of what is affectionally known as the HOPE Team, our sworn officers and LACADA staff knew many of the unhoused men and women by name, and they were familiar with their life stories. When team members offered help, it came in the form of bottled water, light snacks, new undergarments and socks, social service referrals, and offers to assist directly with placement into social service programs and housing programs with which the team worked closely. Through my direct interactions, I saw how the process of supporting long-term journeys into more permanent living situations does indeed take time. However, what is clear from our overall results in witnessing decreases in the Homeless Count is that our local multidisciplinary approach is steadily working. That is why I intensely push for funding to LACADA to continue as we work at the same time to shore up supports elsewhere so as to create solutions of which we may all be proud. I look forward to joining LACADA in the future to help check on folks and to join with our HOPE Team in supporting long-term fixes to instances of homelessness.

At a regional level, I met by phone with Onnie Williams on Wednesday, January 18, to identify the funding opportunities available at the County level from Measure H, an initiative funded through supplementary taxes to support unprecedented expansion of services and supports to combat homelessness. This is in addition to a meeting that was organized by Los Angeles County staff that was held on Friday, February 3, as spearheaded by the Office of County Supervisor Hilda Solis (see Part III, below). On a separate track, as I began working on homelessness issues, on Thursday, December 29, 2022, I asked the County Department's Housing For Health (HFH) Division about how it's Health Unit, initiated in September 2022, to expand its work to support homeless individuals right here in West Covina. In response, on January 4, Absalon Galat replied. "We are presenting out to build partnership for future work with West Covina members and other SGVCOG members to provide services to PEH in their community. The Mobile Clinics launched with limited capacity in September 2022 as a soft launch period and are looking to further expand with more community partnership and coordination as capacity increases." In response, via an email, dated January 13, here is what I said:

In light of this, as I gain a deeper understanding about your ongoing efforts, I wanted to learn more about how we in West Covina may avail ourselves of the services the HFH mobile clinic provides. Especially considering how our residents have contributed literally millions of dollars via Measure H (is it roughly \$20 million thus far or another figure?), I am particularly excited to see funds affirmatively dedicated to supporting members of our homeless/unhoused community so that they may gain the additional support that they deserve. In that spirit:

1. What specific next action steps must we as a City take to facilitate the mobile clinic coming here to West Covina to help folks here like it has done with success in other places?
2. I am extraordinarily proud of how we have a team of law enforcement officers, LACADA, and City departments come together daily and at a cross-disciplinary level to



foster long-term solutions. How do we link up our team with yours in order effectively to optimize impact on the lives of homeless/unhoused individuals right here in West Covina, and what would be the accompanying time frame for such coordination to occur as quickly as possible?

3. How may we strengthen our partnership with your office so as to enhance service delivery by building an ongoing and ever-increasing relationship of collaboration?

I fully recognize how West Covina is one of 88 cities and, as such, there must surely be multiple demands on your office's time. And, of course, every single child and adult within the homeless/unhoused community is in need of support. Consequently, the more we may learn of your methodological approach that governs how your office decides to dedicate its time, energy, and resources, the better positioned we will be to know what next action steps we may take.

Thank you so much in advance for helping me to understand these various processes better. I look forward to hearing from you again soon and am grateful to you for whatever specific information you may share.

I will report on the response I receive, once it arrives.

As yet another dimension of partnership, thanks to bridge-building efforts at my request from Julia Conolly from the Los Angeles County Business Federation, I was put in touch with Matt Buck, Vice President of Public Affairs at the California Apartment Association. We are to meet on March 15 to put our heads together regarding how West Covina May support their members by filling vacancies so as to create a win-win arrangement to benefit West Covina apartment owners and those seeking affordable housing options.

Lastly, in my new role as the Mayoral Appointee to the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG), during its recent Special Meeting of its Homelessness Committee, headed by Monrovia Mayor Becky Shevlin, an esteemed colleague, I inquired about how we as a City may partner up with other jurisdictions to coordinate our efforts, especially to the extent that we may secure SGVCOG funding support to keep backing our efforts to work with LACADA. As results from this inquiry materialize, I will keep residents posted through subsequent Councilman's Reports.

## **I. Bolstering Business**

To me, being of support to businesses requires a multifaceted approach in which we attract businesses affirmatively to choose West Covina, support greater customer volume through proactive efforts to encourage visitors and fellow residents to select these establishments as a matter of choice, facilitate a business-to-business climate that embraces collaboration far beyond mere networking alone, and provide each business with relationship-building opportunities to make a difference in the life and vitality of the community in support of West Covina non-profit work.

Toward these and other related ends, on Wednesday, January 11, I met with the Greater West Covina Business Association (GWC) at its office located within the complex of Plaza

West Covina, to begin getting to know its leaders and staff and to identify partnership possibilities. (See Part III for meeting details.)

On another front, on Thursday, February 23, I met with leaders from Plaza West Covina to offer to be of support. Among the attendees were General Manager Allison Mack and Marketing and Business Development Manager Sweeney Montinola. Topics included backing efforts to attract additional businesses to the City by helping to fill existing mall vacancies, cultivating relationships with business owners (small and large), providing information to small businesses about existing loan programs and other supports, attending future community events hosted by Plaza West Covina, offering my contact information to business owners through Plaza West Covina's internal monthly newsletter, backing efforts to have new murals done in honor of the City's 100th Anniversary, sharing further information about the City's Arts In Public Places Program, and attending future meetings that convene business owners so as to strengthen collaborative working relationships. Soon, I will be following up by email to operationalize and implement effective next action steps.

On Thursday, March 1, I spoke extensively with Assistant City Manager Paulina Morales to brainstorm ways to expedite businesses being attracted to West Covina. That is when I learned about how the City supports businesses through efficient permit processing. When bringing up the need for a Welcome Packet to encourage residents and visitors to avail themselves of products and services offered by West Covina businesses, I learned that the last version of such a packet was released in 2006 and that we routinely welcome new businesses who come to town. In terms of next steps, I will be following up by email to operationalize suggested new revitalization activities and to collaborate with City staff on other innovations.

## **J. Initiating Closer Collaborative Ties with School Districts Educating West Covina Kids**

Supporting our community kids at both public and private schools throughout West Covina is absolutely paramount as part of a broader effort to coordinate supports in a manner that prevents unnecessary duplication of effort; pools together financial, human capital, and community resources in ways that stretch each asset to maximize outcomes; and bring the community even closer together as we rally hard to make certain that our kids are best supported as they grow up to be happy, productive, caring, successful, community-oriented, and visionary adults.

To advance these worthy aims, my first order of business has been to build relationships with school board leaders from West Covina Unified School District (WCUSD), Covina Valley Unified School District (CVUSD), and Rowland Unified School District (RUSD).

On various occasions, I have interacted with WCUSD School Board President Mike Flowers, and I look forward to our meeting to discuss specifics. Concurrently, on Thursday, January 5, I met with CVUSD School Board President María Caceres and Clerk Simon Wright. Items discussed include sharing information related to the then-upcoming 24th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., commemoration event being organized by the San Gabriel Valley Branch of the NAACP that was taking place at City Hall; promoting greater community service by students throughout the District such as by working with

existing service clubs; backing District efforts to promote greater career preparedness among students; bolstering actions to increase positive and measurable outcomes for students in foster care, on the road to adoption, facing the potential for homelessness, and experiencing other difficult circumstances; identifying potential funding opportunities that could assist the District; requesting introduction to the junior high school that has successfully created an internal environment that embraces direct interaction over mere interaction via social media; and speaking to students about the importance of resilience and conquering adversity. I issued a follow-up email on Sunday, January 29 and with additional follow-up on Saturday, February 11. As results come to pass as the outgrowth of these efforts to facilitate concrete actions, I look forward to sharing accordingly.

On Thursday, February 16, at the City's Centennial Dinner, I met RUSD School Board President Erik Vinegas. As an immediate next step, I have been invited to participate in the District's upcoming Principal for the Day event, set for Wednesday, March 22.

#### **K. Obtaining a Status Update on Opening of the Sportsplex**

After having secured Council approval on Tuesday, January 17 to instruct staff to report on the anticipated opening of the Sportsplex, City Manager Carmany, aided by Assistant City Manager Lerma, reported at the Council meeting on Tuesday, February 7, that it is to occur by the end of March 2023. Relatedly, in conjunction with the community via an open and interactive process, a Field Usage Policy will be developed.

#### **L. Responding to Individual Residents' Concerns**

Following through on requests of neighbors during the campaign to look into the possibility of the City installing traffic lights at the corner of Citrus and Cameron, under the leadership of TransTech's Traffic Engineer Jana Robbins, a neighborhood hearing is to take place at the Senior and Community Center at Cortez Park to maximize accessibility of neighborhood residents.

As additional campaign follow-up, resulting from neighbor sentiments shared by Marvin, Diane, and Kassandra Tayag on Sunday, February 12, reflecting concerns by numerous homeowners expressing a desire for placement of a Stop sign at the intersection of Valerie Court and Wednesday Avenue is now being considered as requested. Again, here, TransTech is doing a great job at processing this matter. This includes Director of Traffic Engineering and Transportation Planning Jana Robbins and Transportation Analyst Nicole Robbins.

And finally, during the wee hours of Saturday, January 7, in which I was asked to assist with a major noise complaint due to Air B&B house renters partying too loudly and well past midnight, this was handled quickly by law enforcement.

### **PART III: MEETINGS AND EVENT PARTICIPATION**

**Tuesday, January 3:** Five Acres. During this meeting with Chief Advancement Officer Jennifer Berger and Chief Program Officer Elizabeth Gonzalez, we discussed future collaborative

possibilities including spreading the word about the organization's role in supporting kids in foster care and/or on the road to adoption, increasing community support for families at future holiday events and volunteering to assist with event logistics, strengthening ties with service organizations so that they may learn how they may help, and working more closely with its West Covina office further to help kids right here in our own community. At present, 106 of the kids Five Acres serves live in West Covina.

**Wednesday, January 4:** Homelessness Community, SGVCOG.

**Thursday, January 5:**

- Meeting with West Covina Police Department Regarding Homelessness: At the meeting included Captain Tony Cotina, Lieutenant Keith Freeman, Officer Sam Ling, and Officer Joe Mello to learn about West Covina's innovative, compassionate, and effective strategies in partnership with LACADA to combat homelessness. (See details in Part II, Section H, above.)
- Meeting with Covina Valley School Board President María Caceres and Clerk Simon Wright to share information about existing initiatives.

**Friday, January 6:** Meeting with Community and Senior Center Supervisor Vanessa Ibañez. (See Part II, Section E, above.)

**Saturday, January 7:** Athens Tour of Valley Material Recovery Facility (MRF), City of Industry.

**Sunday, January 8:** Meeting with resident Carolyn Arndt at Merrill Gardens to discuss parking accessibility at Shadow Oak Park.

**Monday, January 9:** Orientation Meeting for volunteering as a "Phone Buddy" to support a homeless person assisted by Miracle Messages.

**Wednesday, January 11:** Meeting with Monica Farias, Founder and Executive Director of the Greater West Covina Business Association (GWC). Those present included Founder and Executive Director Monica Farias and SGV Entertainment Group owner JR Esquivel, and Kaiser executive David Farias. Discussion topics included intern opportunities at GWC such as through Mount San Antonio College ("Mount SAC"), planned efforts to visit business owners on Fridays to be of added support and to gauge additional needs, GWC's "Community Buzz TV" podcast series, marketing approaches to membership development, and facilitating connections with member businesses. GWC issued a written follow-up on Friday, January 13 to which I replied on Monday, February 6. I then issued subsequent follow-up communications on Thursday, March 2. As concrete developments arise from subsequent follow-up correspondence efforts, I will report on those here.

**Saturday, January 14:** Explorer Banquet, Explorer Post 465, West Covina Fire Department, Cortez Park.

**Monday, January 16:** 24th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Commemoration Event, San Gabriel Valley Branch, NAACP, City Hall. Also present were Mayor Diaz, Mayor Pro Tem Brian Tabatabai, and Councilman Tony Wu.

**Tuesday, January 17:** City Council Meeting.

**Wednesday, January 18:**

- Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Committee, SGVCOG.
- District 4 Neighbor Visits and Follow-Ups.

**Thursday, January 19:** Community Services inter-organizational meeting, graciously hosted by Allied Restoration (represented by Business Manager Jackie Rivera), 3120 East Garvey South. Here, I was present along with Mayor Diaz. Conducted by Kiwanis Club of West Covina President Brad Manning, various local non-profits shared their respective calendars of upcoming events so that everyone may support one another through promotion and attendance and to help minimize the possibility of unnecessary schedule conflicts.

**Saturday, January 21:**

- District 4 Town Hall Meeting and Special Announcement (see Part II, Sections B and D1, above).
- Annual Dinner (paid for out-of-pocket), East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center.

25. Monday through Sunday, January 23 through 29: While in Washington, DC, on other business in attending the National Mentoring Summit on behalf of one of the national non-profits in which I am involved, I met with Congresswoman Grace Napolitano on Wednesday, January 25. Together, we did a video to the People of West Covina (see my [personal post on Facebook](#)).

**Monday, January 30:**

- Grand Opening, Health and Wellness Center, Covina Valley School District. Mayor Diaz was also present.
- Meeting with Angie Gillingham, President of Friends of the Los Angeles County Public Library in West Covina and President of the West Covina Improvement Association (WCIA). Her stated priorities included support for the library being given the resources needed to optimize value to the community, revitalizing the Taylor House, and strongly encouraging the City to hire a full-time Planning Director ably to guide in developing for the future in a transparent, thoughtful, and organized way.

**Tuesday, January 31:** [City Manager's Town Hall Meeting regarding 2023 Budget Priorities](#), City Hall (see Part II, Section D2, above). Mayor Pro Tem Tabatabai was also present.

**Wednesday through Friday, February 1 through 3:** New City Councilmembers and Mayors Regional Conference, California League of Cities, Universal City. (Traveled to the venue daily from West Covina.) Mayor Diaz was also present.

**Friday, February 3:**

- Meeting with Asia Powell, Local Government and Community Liaison, California Public Utilities Commission.

- Meeting with the Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis to discuss homeless initiatives (see Part II, Section H, above). Attendees included Housing and Homelessness Deputy Daniella Urbina, Planning Deputy Guadalupe Duran-Medina (working on low-income housing development and preservation), District Director Andrea Moreno (covering the East San Gabriel Valley), Assistant Field Deputy Ryan Serrano, Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) Homeless Incentive Program Supervisor Cindy Lopez, and City Manager Carmany. Supervisor Solis's Asian American / Pacific Islander (AAPI) Deputy Frank Lu, though tentatively scheduled, was not on hand. Measure H funding is to be shepherded through the SGVCOG which is to coordinate homelessness efforts at a regional level in order to utilize a broader-based multi-jurisdictional approach across cities. Also, through an initiative called Project Homekey, financial backing from various sources is being pooled together to increase non-congregate housing inventory through rapid conversion of existing properties (i.e., hotels and motels). Furthermore, funding is to be set aside to reduce encampments by supporting efforts to move people to transitional and then more permanent housing. interim temporary housing ideally should last no more than six months and, for those moving into more permanent supportive housing, funding is available through LACDA for wrap-around services and supports (i.e., mental health supports, employment assistance, and other social services). Incentives are also available from LACDA for landlords who accept housing vouchers from low-income tenants. Though the City cannot give preference, using County funds, to West Covina individuals in homelessness, preference is possible for permanent affordable housing. Additionally, though there are no present instances in which partnerships exist between cities regarding housing, there are instances in which cities have partnered to provide mental health services.(SGV Examples: Pomona/Claremont/LaVerne cohort doing mental health services and the South El Monte / El Monte / Baldwin Park cohort that has a shower program, Goodwill for workforce development, and Union Station for interim housing.) The County's recommended next action steps are to consider Project Homekey and working with the SGVCOG at a regional level.

**Saturday, February 4:**

- Lunch with Audit Committee Member Jim Grivich and his wife Ann, George's Cafe.
- "Walk Out of Darkness" Suicide Awareness and Prevention Event. (See my [personal post on Facebook](#))

**Tuesday, February 7:** City Council Meeting.

**Wednesday, February 8:** Press Conference in Support of Family of Gabby Perez.

**Thursday, February 9:**

- Meeting with resident Peggy Martinez.
- Meeting with Vice Chairman Mike Cacciotti and Consultant Ben Wong, South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD). Here, a series of incentives were shared further to encourage individuals, businesses, and municipal governments to speed up the transition to equipment and vehicles that cause far less air pollution. Subsequent to this meeting, a presentation was made to the City Council on Tuesday, February 21.

- City Manager's Town Hall in Council Chambers regarding Athens Services (see Part II, Section D1, above). Mayor Pro Tem Tabatabai was also present.

**Friday, February 10:**

- Teamed up with the Los Angeles Center on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (LACADA) on the streets of West Covina for several hours to assist homeless individuals by offering and rendering help (see Part II, Section H, above).
- Bishop Amat Memorial High School: Networked with Principal Gabriel Escobar and Alumni Relations Director Steve Haggerty to encourage its West Covina students and their families to get involved in West Covina by becoming active in community service organizations and consider interning with the City while in college.

**Wednesday, February 15:** SGVCOG ENRD Committee.

**Thursday, February 16:**

- Grand Opening of Jolibee at Eastland (29th store in California), 147 Barranca Street, The Curve. Also present were Mayor Diaz and Councilman Wu.
- Centennial Dinner at the Sportsplex (sitting at the table of the Castucci Foundation). All City Council colleagues were present including Mayor Diaz, Mayor Pro Tem Tabatabai, Councilman Wu, and Councilwoman Letty Lopez-Viado. The evening was capped off by fireworks (see my [personal post on Facebook](#)).

**Friday, February 17:**

- Day of Service at Deseret Industries, Downtown Los Angeles (see my [personal post on Facebook](#)).
- Opening Ceremony at Centennial Festival on Glendora Avenue.

**Saturday, February 18:**

- Swearing-in ceremony for State Senator Susan Rubio, University of LaVerne, Morgan Auditorium, 1950 3rd Street, LaVerne 91750. (Attended with Mayor Diaz.)
- Opening Day, West Covina Pony League. Walmeradi Park, 625 East Merced Avenue (see my [personal post on Facebook](#)). Mayor Diaz, Mayor Pro Tem Tabatabai, and Councilman Wu were also present.

**Sunday, February 19:** Kiwanis service giving out arm bands + supporting Centennial Festival.

**Thursday, February 23:** Meeting with General Manager Allison Mack and Marketing and Business Development Manager Sweeney Montinola, Plaza West Covina (see Part II, Section I, above).

**Friday, February 24:** Meeting with Lisa Nashua, Executive Director, Los Angeles City College (LACC) Foundation. Discussion items included encouraging qualified LACC students (particularly those in West Covina) to apply for City internship and employment opportunities, my pointing the Foundation to funding possibilities under the Office of Minority Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, matching students served by LACC's Office of

Support Services with advocacy opportunities in the community, and the potential to speak to the students about promising pathways to success. She also serves as Governing Board Member for Trustee Area 1 within the Pomona Unified School District.

**Saturday, February 25:** Birthday Bash and City Beautification Awards, Hurst Ranch, West Covina Beautiful (sitting at the table of the Castucci Foundation).

**Monday, February 27:** SGVCOG Special Homelessness Committee (see Part II, Section H, above).

**Wednesday, March 1:** VIP Tour of Meritage Homes' models at Vincent Place, 356 Lockhart Way, 91790.

**Thursday, March 2:**

- "Because We Care" Support Groups (both in English and Spanish), Delhaven Community Center (La Puente). As invited by Support Group Coordinator Liz Hernandez, I shared local and Federal Government information resources with families of persons with mental health disabilities. Topics included addiction recovery, child custody, civil rights, crime victimization, employment and economic empowerment, government benefits assistance, housing, immigration, legal services support, small business development, social services, and special education.
- Citizens Academy - Session 1.

**Friday, March 3:** Barn Boys (Guest of resident Robert Potter), Hurst Ranch.

## **PART IV: UPCOMING COMMITMENTS**

**Tuesday, March 7:**

- 6pm: Closed session.
- 7pm: Council Meeting.

**Wednesday, March 8:** 5pm to 7:30pm: Five Acres Awards Ceremony in Pasadena - Annual Meeting and Board Celebration. 551 South Hill Avenue, 91106. (The Athenaeum.)

**Thursday, March 9:**

- 4pm: Meeting with Chick Fil-A owner Danny Fernandez and team, I-10 and Barranca.
- 6:30pm to 8:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 2.

**Friday, March 10:**

- 11am: Lunch with Tim Itatani, Board President, ESGVJCC.
- 2:30pm to 3pm: Meet and Greet with State Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio.
- 4pm: Meeting with Peggy Martinez.

**Saturday, March 11:** 9am: Little League Opening Day, Cortez Park, Field 1.



**Sunday, March 12:** 11am: Victory Outreach of West Covina, 15847 East Francisquito, La Puente 91744.

**Monday, March 13:** 5pm: Dinner with WCUSD School Board Member Rose Lopez, at Anna's Pizza.

**Tuesday, March 14:** 12:30pm to 6pm: Fire Department Briefing with Chief Vince Capelle, City Hall, Fire Administration, 2nd Floor, Room 218.

**Wednesday, March 15:**

- 4:30pm: Meeting with Matt Buck, Vice President of Public Affairs, California Apartment Association (see Part II, Section H, above).
- 6pm: Firefighters Forum.

**Thursday, March 16:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 3.

**Saturday, March 18:**

- 8am to 2:30pm: Kiwanis Regional Conference in Burbank.
- 6pm: Annual Banquet, University of the Philippines National Alumni Association.

**Sunday, March 19:** 5pm to 9pm. Fil-Am Association of West Covina Installation Dinner.

**Monday, March 20:** 7pm: Dinner with City Clerk and Planning Commission Chairman Nick Louis (place TBD).

**Tuesday, March 21:** City Council Meetings and Student Government Day.

- 9am: City Hall - Meet Kiwanis students.
- 6pm: Closed.
- 7pm: Council Meeting.

**Wednesday, March 22:** 9am to 3pm: Principal for the Day event, Rowland Unified School District.

**Thursday, March 23:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 4.

**Friday, March 24:**

- 9am: Meeting with Stephanie Wiggins, CEO, Los Angeles Metro.
- 12pm: Lunch with Pastor Ezra at Victory Outreach Church of West Covina.

**Saturday, March 25:** 12pm to 1:30pm: Board Luncheon, Future America, El Torito.

**Tuesday, March 28:**

- 9am to 1pm: Tour of Suburban Water Systems, 1325 North Grand Avenue, Suite 100, Covina.
- 5:30pm: Firefighter Appreciation at the home of residents.

**Thursday, March 30:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 5.

**Saturday, April 1:**

- 9am: Kiwanis Club of West Covina -- Easter Eggstravaganza at Cortez Park, 2441 East Cortez Street.
- 9am: Kiwanis Club of West Covina -- Easter Eggstravaganza at Del Norte Park, 1500 West Rowland Avenue.

**Sunday, April 2:** 8am: "Walk For Autism Day," Azusa Connects Foundation.

**Tuesday, April 4:**

- 6pm: Closed.
- 7pm: Council Meeting.

**Thursday, April 6:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy, Session 6.

**Sunday, April 9:** 4pm: Meeting with resident Carolyn Arndt (place TBD).

**Thursday, April 13:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 7.

**Friday, April 14:** 11am: Post Office Naming Ceremony honoring Former Congressman Esteban Torres, 356 South California

**Tuesday, April 18:**

- 6pm: Closed.
- 7pm: Council Meeting.

**Thursday, April 20:** Citizens Academy - Session 8.

**Thursday, April 27:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 9.

**Tuesday, May 2:**

- 6pm: Closed.
- 7pm: Council Meeting.

**Thursday, May 4:** 6pm to 7:30pm: Citizens Academy - Session 10.

**Tuesday, May 16:**

- 6pm: Closed.
- 7pm: Council Meeting.

Wednesday through Friday, September 19 through 21: Annual Conference and Expo, California League of Cities, Sacramento.

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Respectfully Submitted at 5:24 am on March 7, 2023,

Olegario D. Cantos VII, Esq.  
Councilman, District 4  
City of West Covina

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