



## District 5

### July Newsletter from Councilmember Jess Rivas



Hey Neighbor,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the District 5 monthly newsletter! Margo and I have done our best to keep you informed about City news and events through timely e-mail updates, but this newsletter will be a way for you to hear directly from me on how I am serving and representing you on the Council.

Taking on this responsibility during the pandemic has made for a demanding, but incredibly rewarding, five months as your councilmember. I am proud to be a progressive voice on the issues that affect our community as they come before the Council.

We're all in this together. Each month we'll also spotlight one of our District 5 commissioners and residents who are working hard to improve our neighborhoods and city as a whole.

So what have I been up to since joining the Council in February? Here are some highlights:

- **Affordable Housing and Homelessness** – Some of the most pressing issues our City faces are ensuring people can afford to stay housed and lend a hand to those experiencing homelessness. I have been proud to support the following initiatives that the Council has adopted:
  - **Secured 513 Units of Affordable Housing for Middle-Income Renters at Westgate Apartments and The Hudson** – The City has joined a joint-powers authority that will acquire these two buildings and maintain affordable rental rates for middle income renters. These folks are sometimes called the “missing middle” as few government-subsidized housing initiatives target the middle-income workforce (i.e. nurses, teachers, construction tradespeople, and young professionals) who earn too much to qualify for traditional “low income” housing, but cannot afford market-rate rents.
  - **Award Winning Second Unit ADU Loan Pilot Program**– This program launched in 2020 before I joined the Council, but in April we approved additional loans for 5 ADUs that will be operated as affordable rental units.
  - **Loans for Heritage Housing Partners** – In April we approved loan a loan for HHP to acquire a unit for affordable homeownership and in June we approved a loan for HHP to acquire and operate 5 units as affordable rental units.
  - **Affordable Housing Local Preference Guidelines Pilot**– Our local preference guidelines determine the order in which applicants for affordable housing units receive priority to rent or buy those units. In March, we approved a pilot program to add former residents who have been displaced to the priority list.
  - **Additional Motel Vouchers** – We recently approved roughly \$71,000 in additional funding for motel vouchers for our neighbors experiencing homelessness.
- **Community Police Oversight Commission (“CPOC”) and Independent Police Auditor (“IPA”)**– As you may know, this past fall the Council established the CPOC, made up of community members, and the position of the IPA, to support the CPOC and monitor our Police Department. As of June 8<sup>th</sup>, the Council has appointed all members of the CPOC and hired an IPA. In making my choice for the

District 5 representative, I wanted to find someone who could be a voice for those most effected by policing in our community and use a transparent process. I held public interviews of all applicants on Zoom on March 27<sup>th</sup>, which highlighted the rich pool of dedicated and thoughtful District 5 residents willing to step up to serve in this vital new role. I selected Raúl Ibáñez, who we will highlight in a future newsletter. As for the IPA, I voted against the applicant who was ultimately selected based on his 10 years of experience as a defense attorney for law enforcement. I worried that this experience would give the perception of bias in favor of law enforcement, which would be counterproductive to our goal of improving community-police relations. Nonetheless, I am hopeful that the IPA's performance will quell concerns about that perception.

- **Villa Parke Community Center and Washington Park** – The Council has approved nearly \$3.2 million in renovations to the Villa Parke Community Center, which will include locker room repairs, new floors for the gym and auditorium, new roof, and new pool deck. Additionally, as part of the FY 22 Capital Improvements Budget, we have allocated \$2.1 million for the construction phase of the Washington Park community house and new restrooms.
- **Hero Pay** – This was a proposal to require large grocery and pharmacy chains to temporarily increase pay for their workers due to the hazards they faced during the pandemic. I voted in favor, but it failed to pass by one vote. It was the first “controversial” matter that came before the Council since I joined, but I don't believe there is anything controversial about helping workers, especially when they have sacrificed so much for us by risking their own health and their family's health during the pandemic.
- **FY 22 Budget** – We recently adopted the budget, which is essentially staying flat from FY 21, but is still down significantly from the FY 20 pre-pandemic budget. We continue to be cautious as we recover from the economic shock of the pandemic.

That's it for now. Please do share your thoughts on any of the issues above or any others. You can reach me directly at [jerivas@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:jerivas@cityofpasadena.net). I look forward to seeing you at my office hours or around town.

-Jess

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## Resident Spotlight

Arianah Rizzo was born and raised in Pasadena, and though she hopes to be living on campus in Westwood this fall for her second year at UCLA, her heart is in Pasadena.



Pursuing a degree in Political Science, Arianah wants to get more involved in the beautiful community she grew up in and has joined my office as an intern for the summer. She is working on District 5's social media, along with attending meetings and events, and helping with other projects.

This summer, Arianah hopes to further her understanding of local politics and the direct change that can be made to improve the lives of her neighbors. Above all, Arianah hopes to continue her passion for uplifting and empowering our community. I thank her for all her enthusiasm and youthful perspective that she brings.

If you would like to be featured in a future Resident Spotlight, please [let us know](#).



## Commissioner Spotlight

Park and Rec Commissioner Terri MacQuarrie finds joy in solving problems. Her passion is to “ensure access for everyone to the riches of our park and recreation resources, including natural wonders like the Lower Arroyo.” Terri Ashley-MacQuarrie is a citizen volunteer starting her second three-year term on the Pasadena Parks and Recreation Commission. Her greatest reward is working to “bring stakeholders

together to solve problems – and to see progress actually happen!”

Recently, she walked through Hamilton Park with local residents, City staff and Little League volunteers. Gopher holes have been a long-standing issue – and all were motivated to come up with a solution. Terri suggested using donated Owl Boxes (that have been in storage for possible use in the Arroyo) to attract owls as a natural check on the gophers. So if you go there now, they’ve been installed!

That “can do” spirit is what got Terri involved in the first place. When she and her husband Jim moved into their home near Raymond and Orange Grove 21 years ago, the neighborhood was plagued with the spillovers of drugs, crime and prostitution centered on Andy’s Liquor. “Our goal was simple – to work with our neighbors to create a safe neighborhood and build community,” she recalls. Those efforts led to the liquor store being demolished to make way for new housing – and new neighbors.

A life-long educator, Terri says her “holistic understanding of child development” raised her awareness of how park spaces and recreation activity expand the horizon of kids and “open up a world of experiences bigger than yourself.”

“As a high school drop-out, raised by a single mom,” she explains, “I moved around a lot. Pasadena was the first place I lived that felt like home. I want to ensure that every child has the benefit of all the riches our community has to offer.”

Uncovering one of those hidden community treasures came when Terri discovered archery. Her husband first started taking their oldest daughter to the silent shooting range tucked into the Lower Arroyo. Soon, all three of their kids were practicing their skills. Terri went to watch – and soon found herself with a bow in her hands – and was hooked! Her teaching skills translated into her eventually becoming a respected coach – and president of the local archer’s association. It also led to her Councilmember Victor Gordo (now Pasadena’s Mayor) asking her to apply for the Parks and Rec Commission.

“I was surprised,” she recalls. “I had my doubts about whether I knew enough about City government.” What she’s learned, however, is the value of “fresh perspective – someone who’s not afraid to ask questions and to reach out to others to get involved.” She’s glad to be able to provide ordinary citizens the opportunity “to be heard, to be taken seriously and to know someone understands their frustrations and fears.”

If you are interested in possibly serving on one of Pasadena’s volunteer commissions, check out [this list of current vacancies](#) and apply today!



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