

Bell Gardens SUMMER 2018

Today

VETERANS PARK
SLIDES NEW
EQUIPMENT
INTO PLAY

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Everything you need for SUMMER - Complete recreation program information inside.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CITY MANAGER

Your City staff has been hard at work making Bell Gardens a great place to live and do business, just in time to kick off a summer full of great activities!

In these pages you'll find the details on the newly-passed ordinance prohibiting overnight parking by oversized vehicles, which will help prevent visual blight, protect public health and safety and ensure parking remains available for residents. Traffic safety will also be enhanced with this new regulation as well. Enforcement starts June 1.

Speaking of traffic improvements, the City has joined the CENTRACS system administered by LA County that keeps traffic moving smoothly and efficiently by coordinating signals at heavy traffic times. The Police Department has received two grants for traffic safety and communication; the first will improve safety and decrease the number of traffic collisions, and the other will fund connection to a county-wide communication system that will streamline disaster response.

Addressing the problem of homelessness is the focus of an outreach program that partners BYPD officers with those of neighboring law enforcement and public service agencies to offer resources and possible resolution. Additionally, volunteers recently worked on the annual LA County Homeless Count and their findings are interesting.



Don't miss a feature on BYPD's award-winning K9 officer, Baron, who recently won second place in narcotics detection at a police dog competition. His six-year career with BYPD has resulted in numerous arrests and recovery of evidence. Good dog!

We'd like to congratulate Police Chief Robert Barnes on his successful 30-year career in law enforcement, the last eight years spent as Chief here, as he is retiring at the end of June. We wish him all the best.

As always, we want to hear from you, any concerns, questions or comments are welcome and now there's a super-easy way to connect with City Hall – just email us at Talk2Us@bellgardens.org. We are also developing a new, informative and interactive website which will be live within the next several months.

Philip Wagner

CITY MANAGER

GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT

REGISTER TO VOTE

Election time will soon be here and the City of Bell Gardens wants you to be ready! Everyone plays an important part in government and it starts in the voting booth – so be sure that you are registered to vote.

It's never been easier to register – residents can either pick up a hard copy voter registration form at the DMV, County Clerk or City Clerk's office at City Hall or register online at <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>. There are currently 13,622 registered voters in the City of Bell Gardens, according to the Los Angeles County Registrar Recorder's Office.

The next election in Bell Gardens will be on Tuesday, November 6, 2018. Be a part of your local government – register and go to the polls! Want to know more about elections or the voting process? Visit www.lavote.net. Remember, every vote counts!



CITY OFFICIALS

Bell Gardens City Council

Maria Pulido, *Mayor*

Jose J. Mendoza, *Mayor Pro Tem*

Pedro Aceituno, *Councilmember*

Priscilla Flores, *Councilmember*

Jennifer Rodriguez, *Councilmember*

Philip Wagner, *City Manager*

The public is welcome at all City meetings, which are held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 7100 Garfield Avenue, Bell Gardens:

CITY COUNCIL

2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 6 p.m.

Notice of Special City Council Meetings will be posted at City Hall and City facilities.

EDUCATION COMMISSION

2nd Thursday of the month at 5 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

3rd Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

RECREATION, CULTURAL AND YOUTH COMMISSION

3rd Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.

SENIOR CITIZEN COMMISSION

2nd Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION

1st Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m.

BGPD RECEIVES HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT

Communication across agency lines is a critical part of disaster response. A recent \$83,911 award from the state's Homeland Security Grant program will make it possible for the Bell Gardens Police Department to purchase portable radios that are interoperable with one of two existing regional communications systems administered throughout Los Angeles County. The Police Department is currently completing an analysis of these systems to determine which one they will join.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Grants Management is responsible for the administration of approximately \$1.6 billion in funds for homeland security, emergency management, criminal justice, and victim services programs, a majority of which are distributed to local and regional entities to enable the most effective prevention, detection, response and recovery efforts.

On the Cover:
It's all fun all the time at the new Veterans Park playground

GRANT AIMS TO CONTINUE IMPROVED TRAFFIC SAFETY IN CITY

The State of California Office of Traffic Safety's Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) recently awarded \$95,000 to BGPD to fund the purchase of traffic collision enforcement-related equipment, train officers in the detection of impaired driving and conduct various enforcement details. This is the second year that the



Department has received an OTS grant; the initial grant allowed BGPD to create a traffic safety program that resulted in a 13 percent decrease in overall traffic collisions and a 12 percent decrease in injury traffic collisions. The proactive education and enforcement program also created a 22 percent increase in the number of enforcement citations issued, which supporting research shows is a deterrent to moving violations.

"The grant covers education and enforcement of DUI, pedestrian safety, and primary collision factors related to previous accidents in the City," said Bell Gardens Police Chief Robert Barnes.

The goal of the program is to reduce the number of persons killed and injured in crashes involving alcohol and other collision factors. Additional focus on areas of concern, such as impaired and distracted driving, motorcycle safety, enforcement and public awareness in areas with a high number of bicycle and pedestrian collisions has resulted in media attention and enhanced the overall deterrent effect.



Bell Gardens Today is published quarterly by the City of Bell Gardens to provide information to the community about the City's programs, services and activities.

Visit us at www.bellgardens.org for updated City information or email us at: Talk2Us@bellgardens.org.

Go to www.bgrecreation.org for recreation programs and events. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

◆ ◆ ◆ **STEADY AND STRONG: STATE OF THE CITY** ◆ ◆ ◆

The City of Bell Gardens is as strong as ever, thanks to prudent resource management and innovative thinking. Remarks presented at the recent State of the City luncheon by City staff and the Mayor outlined many reasons to be proud of the City and its accomplishments.

The luncheon was presented in partnership with the Bell Gardens Chamber of Commerce, and the connection between businesses and the City was cited as an important part of the City's success.

The message was that the City understands the challenges faced by businesses and their success is vital to the economic stability of the City. The business community was encouraged to contact the City for assistance when needed.

Despite the challenges of a global recession nearly 10 years ago, Bell Gardens emerged strong, the result of being fiscally responsible, planning carefully, spending cautiously and building the City's reserve fund. Independent audits have verified and recognized the strength of the City's finances, validating the City's accountability, transparency and financial security.

Working with a budget of \$53.4 million, including the \$31.8 million General Fund and \$7.7 million in capital improvements, it was noted that wages and benefits for the City's 225 full- and part-time employees make up 35.7 percent of the General Fund budget. An overview of the cost of the City's operation budgets for the following:

- **Police Department \$15.6 million**
- **Public Works \$4.3 million**
- **Recreation and Community Services \$2.9 million**
- **Finance, Human Resources, and Risk Management \$2.7 million**
- **Community Development \$1.4 million**

Increasing costs of employee pensions and health care are issues being assisted by employees making larger contributions to their future retirement and benefits. In addition, an irrevocable trust funded by the City will ensure that benefits will be available when retirees need them in the future. Rising liability and workers' compensation insurance continue to be critical fiscal challenges.

Grant funding is one of the innovative ways that projects and programs are funded throughout the City and it was reported that over the past five years, staff successfully



secured more than \$12 million in outside funding sources to supplement day-to-day operations, capital improvement projects, public safety and other services, as well as to improve the infrastructure.

In addition, other grants have been received for citywide improvements and projects that include:

- **\$10 million for a major reservoir project at Ford Park to divert and retain storm water runoff from a three-square-mile area for reuse.**
- **A \$2.2 million project to improve traffic flow at the intersection of Eastern and Florence.**
- **Bike lanes and disability compliant access ramps will be installed throughout the City funded by an \$802,000 grant.**
- **Several large grants will be used for improvements in turn signal and turn lanes at the busy intersections of Florence and Jaboneria, Eastern and Lubec, and Garfield and Loveland.**
- **Planning and development of a new aquatic center at Ford Park is underway to replace the 50-year-old swimming pool.**

One of the challenges facing the City is the aging infrastructure of municipal facilities, some of which range in age from 40 to 60 years. A five-year plan was recently approved by the City Council and work on the most critically needed fixes has already begun. Most improvements are also energy efficient, such as lighting systems recently installed and heating and air conditioning systems that have been replaced, which should save the City more than \$1.5 million over the next 20 years.

State of the City, continued

Crime prevention remains a top priority, with an average 2.5 percent annual decrease in Part 1 Crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, larceny theft and arson). Comparing the past 14 years, Part 1 crimes have shown an overall decrease in Bell Gardens of 34 percent.

Homeless outreach has also become a focus for the Police Department, with a comprehensive team of police officers, social workers, mental health clinicians and LA County Housing Authority representatives visiting sites known as gathering places for the homeless to offer resources and support.

Environmentally, Bell Gardens is proud to have been one of the first Southern California cities to achieve a 75 percent recycling rate after residential contract hauler Athens Services implemented a “no sort” policy, taking all refuse to its material recovery facility where the process more than doubles the materials actually recycled and reducing the amount of trash dumped into landfills.

In keeping with the business-themed event, it was also pointed out that Bell Gardens was a finalist in the 2009 and 2013 “Most Business Friendly Cities” recognition from the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation.



NO MORE OVERNIGHT PARKING FOR OVERSIZED VEHICLES



The City Council recently approved an ordinance that prohibits overnight parking of oversized vehicles on City streets. Oversized vehicles are those which are greater than 20 feet in length, 6 ½ feet wide or 6 ½ feet in height. More than a dozen cities surrounding Bell Gardens have enacted similar regulations, which caused an increase in oversized vehicles parking in our City, and has a negative impact on public health, traffic safety, visual blight and eliminates parking spaces available to residents.

“We are the only city in the area that doesn’t impose and enforce parking restrictions on oversized vehicles,” explained Abel Avalos, Director of Community Development. “We needed to enact this ordinance to prevent Bell Gardens from becoming a magnet for overnight parking.”

Oversized vehicles – large trucks, vehicles with trailers, extended vans and some recreational vehicles – create traffic safety hazards as they can impede the visibility of stop signs, traffic signals, turn restrictions and warning signs; hinder visibility of traffic lanes around driveways; interfere with the flow of traffic on narrow streets; and compromise the safety of sidewalks and streets for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

The ordinance specifically prohibits the parking of oversized vehicles on City streets between the hours of 2 and 5 a.m. Signs displaying the parking restrictions and referencing the City’s municipal code have been installed at 10 vehicular points of entry to the City.

Property residents, tenants or owners may obtain a permit to park an oversized vehicle for a limited time; permits will be



limited to no more than six 3-day permits and six 7-day permits for any specific oversized vehicle within a calendar year. The permits may not be consecutive and there must be a minimum of 48 consecutive hours between the issuance of permits. The permitted vehicles must be parked within the same block as the permitted address and the vehicles shall not be used for overnight camping or lodging. For more information call **(562) 806-7608**.

Enforcement of the ordinance will begin June 1. Penalties for violating the ordinance include a \$50 fine for the first violation, \$100 fine for the second violation and third violations are subject to fines of \$200 and possible towing of the vehicle.

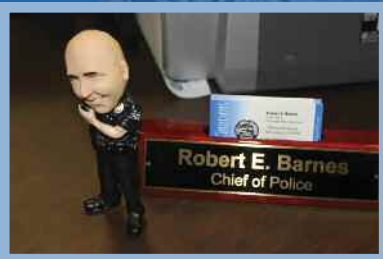


POLICE CHIEF BARNES RETIRES

After eight years as Chief of Police for the City of Bell Gardens and 30 years in law enforcement, Robert Barnes has announced his retirement. During an interview in his memento-filled office, which included an action figure and bobblehead in his image, he said what he was looking forward to most was having a lot more unscheduled time and traveling the country with his wife.

Although his successor has not yet been named, Barnes has but one bit of advice to continue the department's success: Be in touch with the community.

"We've done a good job of doing that lately and have made the shift from telling people how they are



going to be policed to being in tune with their needs and issues," he said. "Of course, we're out there to enforce the law, but when you're in the field, you see people victimized and you stop and help them, realizing that it's the little things you say or do that might change their situation."

In college, Barnes was studying for a career in accounting, hoping to become a CPA or financial planner, but a part time job as a dispatcher for Irwindale Police Department inspired a passion for law enforcement. After three years as a dispatcher, he became a reserve officer and four months later, became a sworn officer, spending the next 21 years on the Irwindale force. Looking for more challenges in his career, Barnes applied to join the Bell Gardens Police Department in July 2008, becoming part of the department at the rank of Captain. He was appointed interim Chief of Police in January 2010, and was permanently appointed in May 2010.

Barnes has seen law enforcement change over his 30-year career.

"It used to be that officers just fought crime and didn't deal with



the softer issues. Like I said before, we told them how we were going police them and didn't communicate as well. We've been able to change and become more aware of the community and address their concerns, and work with them. Programs like Neighborhood Watch that have facilitated our relationship with the community are a big part of our success. Without them, we wouldn't be where we are."



COURT TIME FOR LOCAL COPS



Fifth grade students at Suva Elementary School took on some badge-wearing grownups in a friendly handball competition recently during Playground Day, a new program of the Bell Gardens Police Department. According to Principal Janice Riddle, the students were so excited and enjoyed the event so much, they can't wait for the officers to come back. The Police Department is planning another event in the near future.



HOMELESS OUTREACH OFFERS RESOURCES

Every month, a resource team comprised of police officers from Bell Gardens, South Gate, Bell, Vernon and Huntington Park, along with social workers, mental health clinicians and representatives of the Los Angeles County Housing Authority visit areas known as gathering places for the homeless.

Their mission is not to sweep out the residents, but rather to offer them resources. Vouchers for shelters, hygiene kits, EBT applications, counseling and government relief are made available. No arrests are made and if the residents don't want to interact with the team, they are left alone.

"We don't make any arrests at these," explained Officer Rick McCraner, who leads the task force for the Bell Gardens Police Department. "There is no enforcement, unless we find someone who is wanted for a crime. We talk with them, make sure there are no weapons and tell them 'here are services that are available to you.' We are trying to help them get off the street."

McCraner said that most of the time, the people they meet are hesitant to talk with law enforcement, so the police often step back and allow the social workers to do most of the interaction. Additional resistance is sometimes encountered because people cannot take their spouses or pets to shelters and they sometimes refuse services; Department of Child and Family Services counselors help with any minors encountered and often, children are the leverage needed to get a family unit into temporary housing.

While he's seen a few good things happen, such as people enrolling at shelters, or going through drug rehab and getting their lives back on track, McCraner admits that the outreach can often be frustrating, but the team is determined.

"We're going to keep doing what we can do," he said.

Until recently, no public funding was available for this purpose. With the recent passage of Measure H, an initiative passed by the voters to address the issues of homelessness in Los Angeles County, some funding is now being directed toward this community issue.



BELL GARDENS PARTICIPATES IN ANNUAL HOMELESS COUNT

For the fourth consecutive year, the Bell Gardens Police Department, in partnership with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, recently conducted the annual Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. A team of 46 volunteers from the Neighborhood Watch and Explorer programs, PD staff and civilians participated. This count is done to establish the number of sheltered and non-sheltered individuals and families in Los Angeles County and to estimate the demographics of this population.

The City was divided into 12 census tracts, and the volunteers found 45 homeless individuals on foot and several campers/RVs, vans and cars, as well as one tent and eight makeshift shelters being used for habitation. In comparing statistics, Bell Gardens has seen a gradual increase in the number of individuals and camper/RVs that are being counted, from 24 individual and two camper/RVs in 2015 to 45 individuals and 16 camper/RVs in 2018.



BELL GARDENS POLICE K9 FETCHES MEDAL AT COMPETITION



"Baron,"

an 8-year-old German Shepherd K9 officer with the Bell Gardens Police Department, recently participated in the inaugural Law Enforcement/Military K9 Trials hosted by the Murrieta Police Department, bringing home a Second Place award in Vehicle Narcotics Detection. In 2016, Baron won a First Place award for Narcotics Detection in Buildings at the Riverside Police Department K9 Trials.

Baron has been working with the Bell Gardens Police Department since 2012 and during his career, has located

26 dangerous suspects, as well as numerous guns, narcotics and \$1.1 million stashed in hidden compartments of a suspect's vehicle. He has also helped other police departments, including South Gate, Bell, Montebello, Monterey Park, Huntington Park, Downey, San Gabriel and the California Highway Patrol. Baron even helped the LA IMPACT team, the federal Drug Enforcement Agency and the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office.

He trains with his partner, Officer Luis Isarraraz, for nearly 400 hours every year, with weekly and monthly sessions and an annual certification. You may have seen Baron at some of the schools in Bell Gardens, where he visits with the children and shows off some of his talents. He even has his own trading card!



CENTRACS KEEPS TRAFFIC MOVING, SAVES CITY MONEY

The City of Bell Gardens has joined the County of Los Angeles' CENTRACS traffic control system to streamline monitoring and make immediate maintenance fixes to signals within the city. The state-of-the-art traffic management system improves connectivity and mobility, optimizes signal synchronization, decrease commute times and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by keeping traffic moving smoothly.

Bell Gardens joins more than 28 other cities in Los Angeles County that are already connected to the traffic management system.

The multijurisdictional, wireless signal coordination will provide constant monitoring of traffic conditions and signal operations from the Traffic Management Center (TMC) in the Public Works department. Monitoring provides instant notification of signal malfunctions and will allow the TMC to change signal timing immediately, preventing traffic backlog. The CENTRACS system eliminates prior multi-step procedures that required much more dedicated staff and allows neighboring



agencies to synchronize their traffic signals with Bell Gardens, constantly exchanging information on traffic patterns and adjustments.

A total of 34 intersections will be equipped with closed-circuit cameras interconnected to the County system. Los Angeles County is providing all the funding for the program, and there is no impact to the City's General Fund. The system is expected to be fully functional in 2019.

VETERANS PARK SLIDES NEW EQUIPMENT INTO PLAY

Kids at a nearby preschool got a great surprise recently when they got to be the first to play on brand-new equipment at Veterans Park. The popular playground soon filled with their shrieks of joy and laughter as they jumped on the slides and swings after City officials welcomed them in.

The previous equipment had been in use for more than 20 years and had become a safety concern for the City. When replacement parts for the aging equipment became unavailable, the decision was made to replace all of the playground elements. Recreation staff pursued a grant from Game Time, a national playground equipment firm, and the City was awarded \$19,427 toward the purchase of the new equipment.

The grant, along with the use of a national cooperative purchasing program that guarantees participants the lowest price, allowed for the springtime renewal of the playground. In addition, the City was able to save an additional \$29,165 from the original estimate by using the City's Public Works Department to demolish and haul away the old structure and surfacing.

The total cost to the City was \$176,857, which was allocated from the General Fund.



RECYCLING REGULATIONS NOW INCLUDE BUSINESSES AND MULTI-FAMILY UNITS

State law requires businesses and multi-family communities (5 units or more) to arrange for recycling of organic/green waste and other recyclables by January 1, 2019 if they generate at least four cubic yards of trash per week.

Having organic waste hauled away by your solid trash contractor is not the only way to deal with the waste; businesses and multi-family communities may also compost, donate, sell or make alternative arrangements for pick up and recycling of organic materials.

Recycling of both organics and recyclable materials conserves resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. It extends the life of landfills and creates a healthy environment.

Organic waste includes only food waste, food-soiled paper waste that is mixed in with food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste and nonhazardous food waste. Additional information is available at <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/commercial/organics>.

The City of Bell Gardens must report to the State of California how many properties are affected by the regulation and the status of their compliance.

To comply with the requirements for landscape waste recycling, managers may select one or a combination of the following:

- **On-site mulching or composting,**
- **Self-hauling to a recycling, composting or agricultural facility,**
- **Requiring landscape contractors to recycle yard waste by hauling it to an appropriate facility, or**
- **Arranging for regular trash haulers to recycle yard waste.**

Businesses and multi-family communities should check with their respective trash haulers to see if they are already sorting non-organic recyclables, which would make them compliant with the State law.

Hazardous waste should never be placed in trash or recycling containers. For example: batteries, paint, antifreeze, chemicals and cleaning products should not be mixed in with recyclable materials set out for collection. These should be taken to periodic hazardous waste roundups or follow instructions at <http://ladpw.org/epd/hhw/>. Electronic devices such as old computers, monitors, TVs and cell phones are recyclable, but also contain hazardous materials. They should not be placed in recycling bins. For information, visit <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd.hhw.ewaste.cfm>.

General information about California's business and multifamily recycling requirements is available from the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) at <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/commercial>.