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from front page

City Council

meant to modify the now outdated language for telephone-related tax regulations (note: UUT covers telephone, electricity, water and gas services for commercial and industrial businesses and entities) in order to account for today's technologies and include all types of communications including cellular/wireless and Voice Over Internet Protocol. The City currently receives about \$500,000 in annual telephone UUT. That revenue will decline without the language tweaks, according to City staff.

Council Considers Going County for Local Fire Services

With sizable budget deficits looming in the foreseeable future and cost-cutting becoming imperative, the Council agreed to look into outsourcing local fire services to Los Angeles County. On Tuesday, the Council authorized staff to request a proposal from Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County to see if it makes sense both operationally and financially for El Segundo to contract out fire protection and paramedic services rather than maintain its own department. The County currently serves 58 cities, including neighboring communities Del Rey, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lennox, Lomita, Marina del Rey, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills and Rolling Hills Estates.

"The County will come in, work with staff, evaluate our current service capability, evaluate their resources in the area and make a recommendation as to how they would provide services," explained El Segundo Fire Chief Kevin Smith. The survey will take about four months, after which the City can decide to do nothing or enter into an agreement with the County.

El Segundo is not likely to consider consolidating its fire services with other South Bay cities, as Redondo Beach and Hermosa Beach are currently discussing amongst themselves. "It's much more complicated to combine multiple agencies," said Smith, who estimated that such a process could take "many, many years" since it would involve the input of various city councils, unions, fire chiefs and other stakeholders. Smith did confirm that the City is researching potential regional consolidation for its dispatch center.

"We are not proceeding along this line for any purpose other than to study the issue," said McDowell, who emphasized that keeping jobs was a top priority. "This could save the City as much as \$8 million a year, preserving jobs not just in the fire department but other departments as well. That goal might be best served by a move like this potentially." Smith agreed the County option might be the best way to go if continuing budget cuts force the Fire Department to reduce staffing to the point it can no longer adequately serve the community.

"I like having an independent fire department, but the cost of operating that department is rising horrendously," added Jacobson. "It's our duty to look at all avenues, as much as I don't like to look at it. I think we have to. They need the free reign to come in and suggest what is needed."

The County report will detail proposed operations of the District within the city, including incident response, intended staffing, equipment usage, fire prevention activities, dispatching systems, support services and investigations of fire causes.

City to Adopt Landscape Water Conservation Ordinance

Not to be confused with a general community water conservation ordinance that will go into effect next month, the City will soon adopt its own landscape water conservation regulations for new commercial, industrial and three-unit-plus residential developments. The City must implement these regulations by January 1, 2010 or else be forced to adopt the State of California's own model ordinance with no ability to change it in the future. "This is a local control issue," explained Mayor McDowell, who admitted the ordinance wasn't perfect but is "the best it can do under the circumstances to keep control out of the hands of Sacramento."

Holiday Proclamations, RSVP Award Winner Announced

As is customary during the first meeting in December, the Council recognized several holiday-related events, including the annual Candy Cane Lane on the 1200 block of East Acacia Street. A tradition since 1949, Candy Cane Lane draws thousands of visitors to the area as families creatively decorate their front yards to transform the street into a snow-covered Christmas village with an appearance by Santa and music courtesy of the El Segundo Community Band. This year, Candy Cane Lane will kick off on December 12 at 7 p.m. and will continue nightly through December 23.

Another proclamation announced the 46th annual Holiday Parade set for Sunday, December 13 from 1-3 p.m. Sponsored by the El Segundo Chamber of Commerce and again chaired by Julie Warner, this year's parade theme will be "Winter Wonderland." The procession will run along Main Street from Imperial Highway down to El Segundo Boulevard. A few days earlier on December 10, Santa's Village at City Hall Plaza will take place beginning at 3 p.m., followed by the annual Tree Lighting Celebration in the Plaza from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and the Chamber's Holiday Mixer at Citizens Business Bank from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The Council also commended Maurice O'Brien as the recipient of the El Segundo Police Department's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of the Year award. An RSVP since January 2001 (and a reserve for more than a decade prior), O'Brien has worked not only the required four hours per week, but has contributed additional hours training new RSVP recruits and assisting during DUI and driver's license checkpoints.

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