

Inglewood News

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Inside This Issue

- Calendar of Events.....3
- Certified & Licensed Professionals.....5
- Classifieds.....3
- Entertainment.....2
- Seniors.....7
- Food.....8
- Hawthorne Happenings...3
- Lawndale.....4
- Legals..... 4,6,7
- Pets.....5

Fit For Gold Grads Honored



Thirty-five high school and college students were honored May 17 during the 15th Annual Fit For Gold Tutoring & Fitness Academy Graduation Ceremony held at Rogers Park in Inglewood. The program is operated by the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB). Family members, training partners, educators and local elected officials from Inglewood as well as surrounding cities attended the ceremony. Mayor James Butts joined with SBWIB Executive Director Jan Vogel Mr. Vogel to present two \$500 scholarships provided by West Basin Water District and the SBWIB to Cadets Giovanna Gutierrez from Inglewood Animo Charter High School, and Imani Bush of Gardena High School. Photo Provided by SBWIB. •

City Provides Glowing Financial Picture with the Mid-Year Budget

By Haleemon Anderson

The mid-year budget review, delivered at last week's meeting of the Inglewood City Council, deemed Inglewood in excellent fiscal fitness with a robust reserve fund in tow and spending in line with revenues. The City is exactly where it should be at the mid-year point in terms of revenue, according to Chief Financial Officer David Esparza, who reported that "49.4 percent of projected actual revenue has been collected at this time. Overall general fund revenues are up 11.5 percent, which is very good news for the City."

Esparza explained that the original operational budget -- including capital projects -- contained a projected \$17,726 million shortfall. He said City Manager Artie Fields came up with a plan to bridge that shortfall by using reserves and savings. In total, \$11.5 million in reserves, \$3.7 million in healthcare savings and \$2.5 million in vacant positions were used to plug the deficit.

Esparza also gave an overview of key economic indicators for the past year, noting revenue increases in property and sales taxes as well as building permits. Another area of increased revenue was Hollywood Park. Unemployment is at a record low and City expenditures were under budget in the past year. One decline: utility user taxes.

New developments are at a 591 percent increase over the past year, according to Esparza. Currently, there are 27 projects in construction and 11 in the design phase.

Councilmember Alex Padilla, District 2, remarked favorably to the estimate of 49 percent expenditures at mid-year, saying, "This gives

us a quick idea of where we stand. Like every other city, our budget is fluid and changing. I want to thank staff for giving us such a comprehensive report."

Councilmember Ralph Franklin, District 4, also acknowledged the staff's effort to present accurate and insightful budget information. "We now have the flexibility to draw down on our reserves, which is what it's designed for," he said. He also noted health care cost reductions and unfilled vacancies as effective cost-saving measures advanced by staff.

Mayor James T. Butts also acknowledged Mr. Esparza and the finance team. "They give us honest numbers," he said. "That has allowed the Council to make a series of excellent financial decisions. We want to run this city like a responsible company. We have more than quintupled our reserves over the last seven years to \$69 million from \$11 million in 2011." Butts added that the current financial team helped the City avoid receivership, and maintained stability while staying off bankruptcy.

In her report, City Treasurer Wanda M. Brown reported the City's gross investment interest for the month of April at \$976,140 in total. Brown also noted the City's financial solvency and pointed to the contrast in Stockton, which declared bankruptcy in 2012 and was "going broke after 15 years of freewheeling spending." Stockton's bankruptcy bill was \$41 million and includes three years of federally supervised reorganization. Brown commended the staff for keeping Inglewood from a similar fate "as to where we were headed in 2010."

Also on Tuesday, Pamela Manning from LA County Public Works presented an initia-

tive from the Board of Supervisors. The Safe, Clean Water program is pushing a measure on the November ballot that would raise \$300 million per year in tax revenue. According to Manning, the Supervisors' initiative "champions a change to the way we capture water" and proposes to develop a revenue source for water. An estimated \$300 million per year in tax revenue would be generated, with 40 to 50 percent being available to cities. Inglewood's piece of the water pie could be upwards of \$400,000, said Manning.

Cities eligible for the funds would need to develop a water quality use project, or use funds for already existing projects, including education. Disadvantaged communities would be eligible for reimbursement of their tax liability. "There are a lot of opportunities for you to benefit the communities," said Manning. She added that "drain-off is going from storm drains to the beaches to marine life." The goal, she said, is to collect, capture and send out cleaner water to the oceans. The initiative will be up for a motion at the May 30 meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and a public hearing on June 26.

In public comments, resident Diane Sambrano expressed concern about action items having no reports attached for community input. She had questions about the mid-year report and the staff who prepared it. She suggested residents see how other communities make presentations and observe the differences.

The Inglewood City Council meets every Tuesday, unless otherwise noted, at 2 p.m. in the council chambers on the 9th floor, Inglewood City Hall. •

Weekend Forecast

Friday
Partly
Cloudy
64°/56°



Saturday
Sunny
65°/57°



Sunday
Sunny
68°/58°

