



NEWS



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Upland needs to annex into SB County Fire Department: Guest commentary

David Stevens, Daily Bulletin

Posted: May 24, 2017, 8:58 AM



San Bernardino County firefighter Dale Sandoval applies a new decal in preparation for the county's takeover of San Bernardino Fire Department in this June 2016 file photo. Upland is following the same route, moving toward annexation of its department to San Bernardino County Fire Department. (File photo by John Valenzuela/SCNG)

I am retired from Orange County Fire Authority. I have served the city of Upland as a planning commissioner, and I served four years on the City Council. I am writing this as a concerned citizen of the city of Upland.

Several years of deferred maintenance have gone on, and that has really hurt our city. Because of financial problems the city staff has been cut to try to stop the bleeding.

I do understand why the City Council has made the choice to annex the city to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. No one wants to ask the citizens to pay more taxes. But we have come to a point where we must consider that choice, because our fine city is failing into disrepair.

We can no longer afford to just make cuts in our work force; we must look at the possibility on new revenue. That includes bringing in more businesses that provide a great sales tax and other taxes and fees. If we don't do this our property values will decline and we will no longer have a nice city to live in.

Our surrounding cities have taxes such as utility taxes, landscaping assessment districts, lighting assessment districts and public safety taxes. No, not all cities have all these taxes, but Upland has none of these, yet we think we are the best city in the Inland Empire. Right now we are getting behind, and the city needs our help.

Years of deferred maintenance on our roadways and underground infrastructure have left us tens of millions of dollars in the hole when it comes to necessary improvements, a price tag that is growing every day. We are currently in the process of annexing into the county fire system, a move that will improve our bottom line by as much as \$50 million over the next 10 years.

I know that many citizens do not want to lose our Fire Department. Let me tell you about my experience in a fire department. I was hired by the city of Stanton in Orange County. After eight years on the job the city of Stanton contracted with Orange County for fire protection. So I have gone from a city department to a county department. This seems like a drastic thing to do, but there are many advantages for the city, and for the firefighters as well.

First of all the city of Upland will save \$50 million over 10 years. This is accomplished by saving \$3 million a year combined with the fact that our three fire engines and the one fire truck are coming to the end of their usefulness. The three engines need to be replaced now and the truck is reaching its lifetime as well. These units are very expensive, and will be the county Fire Department's expense when the annexation is completed.

The firefighters' pensions will then be the responsibility of County Fire, this will be further savings for the city of Upland. The city of Upland will have a lot more resources available, such as helicopters, bulldozers, and search and rescue to supplement our fire protection.

As far as the employees are concerned, they will be on a larger fire department with the possibility of promoting that is not available in a smaller department. The firefighters will have the option to be on specialized units that the city cannot afford to man.

I have heard complaints from some business people that the County Fire inspection fees are a lot higher than the fees they are paying to the city of Upland. While this is true, the city has found out that the fees have not been adjusted for several years, so even if we don't go to County Fire our fees will increase to match the fees of other fire departments in the Inland Empire.

So, my fellow citizens, please join me in stepping up and helping the city of Upland. It will protect your property values and make our city a great place to live in again. We need to do this.

David Stevens is a former member of the Upland City Council.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/opinion/20170524/upland-needs-to-annex-into-sb-county-fire-department-guest-commentary>

Upland poised to approve leaner budget without fire department

Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Posted: May 24, 2017, 11:13 PM

UPLAND >> Upland's budget is shrinking, and that's in large part due to the push to fold its fire department into **San Bernardino County Fire**.

For example, salaries and benefits in the proposed 2017-18 budget compared to the 2016-17 amended budget will drop by \$6.9 million.

The City Council on Tuesday evening got a glimpse of its coming budget during a special meeting. After reviewing it, elected officials are poised to pass a \$38.6 million budget, which has a \$460,208 surplus and maintains 15 percent in reserves, considered a rainy day fund.

"This spending plan ensures that existing levels of service will be maintained," Interim City Manager Martin Thouvenell wrote in his budget message to the council.

Still, the council members have difficult decisions before them to ensure the city is financial stable in the long term, Thouvenell wrote.

Upland’s proposed budget will fund 272.5 full-time employees, which includes 47 Fire Department employees who will work for Upland for one month before the transfer to San Bernardino County Fire, expected to take place in August, Deputy City Manager Jeannette Vagnozzi said Wednesday by email.

That one month of city-run fire service will cost \$2.5 million, Vagnozzi said.

In the proposed 2017-18 budget, general fund expenditures — which pay for most city services such as police, library and recreation program — are projected to be \$38.1 million, down \$8.5 million from this fiscal year, which ends June 30.

With the Upland Police Department comprising 54 percent of the city’s expenditures, Chief Brian Johnson told the council he recognized the need make adjustments to the budget.

“We were very sensitive, recognizing this was going to be another tough fiscal year, not only for the city but all the department,” he said.

Johnson looked at several areas to possibly trim and presented to Thouvenell the option of freezing four police positions.

Instead, Johnson and Thouvenell agreed to freeze one captain, one lieutenant and one civilian position.

Overall, the proposed 2017-18 fiscal budget is \$7.1 million smaller than the previous year, which officials attributed to the proposed elimination of the Fire Department.

In her presentation to the council, Interim Finance Manager Misty Cheng broke down the general fund expenditures into categories, comparing the 2016-17 amended budget to the 2017-18 proposed budget.

Property tax revenues are projected to be \$14 million, down \$5.3 million from the previous year, according to the staff report.

Former councilman Glenn Bozar questioned the amount projected for incoming property taxes. He contended the number doesn’t accurately reflect what Upland is agreeing to give up under the annexation of the Fire Department, when the city transfers \$6.7 million in property tax revenue to San Bernardino County’s Fire Protection District.

“This is about a lack of transparency and a lack of truth and what’s going on with our budgets,” Bozar said after the meeting. “You’re giving away property tax increment that pays for streets, sidewalks, trees and parks.”

But Cheng said budget’s property tax column include current secured property tax as well as unsecured property tax, aircraft tax and weed abatement.

“All these little property tax items are included in that larger number,” she said.

Councilwoman Janice Elliott requested the council hold an additional budget workshop to discuss the numbers, but her colleagues rejected the idea. Elliott said she had a set of questions, based on the staff report, that weren’t discussed.

“At what point do we negotiate this,” she asked.

The budget is expected to go to the City Council for approval in June. Tensions flared at the end of the meeting when Thouvenell thanked the staff for “putting this budget together and coming up with a balanced budget the first time around, something Mr. Bozar you have never done your four years here.”

From the back of the room, Bozar uttered “smoke and mirrors.”

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/government-and-politics/20170524/upland-poised-to-approve-leaner-budget-without-fire-department>

Victorville Man Caught in Possession of Large Quantity of Illegal Fireworks

24/7 Headline News
Posted: May 24, 2017



HESPERIA – A Victorville man was cited after posting a sales ad for illegal fireworks on social media on Tuesday evening. The Hesperia Gang Team, in order to reduce the sales and use of illegal fireworks, conducted the bust on the 12400 block of Amargosa Road in the City of Victorville.

The Hesperia Sheriff Station’s Gang team contacted Eriberto Perez, 37, at around 5:00 a.m. on Tuesday morning in response to an ad posted on social media. “Hesitant to have the meeting at his residence Perez asked if the deal could be made in a public parking lot, and gave a location and his vehicle description,” Hesperia Sheriff’s Station spokeswoman Jaelyn Chambers said in a news release.

Before meeting with the Hesperia Sheriff’s Station Gang Team, Perez’ vehicle was stopped and he was found to be in the possession of five, 42 round “cakes” mortar style fireworks. Eriberto Perez, 37, of Victorville was cited by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** for the possession of the illegal fireworks. Perez was cooperative and six additional cases of fireworks were located at his home.

All of the fireworks, which are illegal not only in the City of Hesperia, but also the State of California were confiscated and Perez was cited.

<https://247headline.com/victorville-man-caught-in-possession-of-large-quantity-of-illegal-fireworks/>

Victorville Man Cited for Selling Illegal Fireworks

Victor Valley News Group

Posted: May 24, 2017



HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) During an operation to reduce the sales and use of illegal fireworks, the Hesperia Gang Team busted a 37-year-old Victorville man found to be in possession of illegal fireworks.

On Tuesday, May 23, 2017, at approximately 5:00 p.m. Eriberto Perez was contacted by the Hesperia Sheriff Station's Gang team after Perez posted an ad advertising the sale of fireworks on a social media site.

"Hesitant to have the meeting at his residence Perez asked if the deal could be made in a public parking lot, and gave a location and his vehicle description," stated Sheriff's spokeswoman Jackie Chambers.

Prior to the meeting, a traffic stop was conducted on Perez's vehicle, and he was found to be in possession of five, 42 round "cakes" mortar style fireworks. Perez cooperated with law enforcement and six more cases of fireworks were confiscated from his residence.

With the assistance of **San Bernardino County Fire**, Fire Investigator Brian Hedley responded to Perez's residence and cited Perez for the illegal fireworks.

"All the fireworks confiscated from Perez are not only illegal in the City of Hesperia, but are illegal in the State of California," stated Chambers.

Victorville resident Eriberto Perez was cited from San Bernardino County Fire Department for the possession of illegal fireworks.

The Hesperia Sheriff's Station wants to remind the Citizens of Hesperia with the upcoming 4th of July holiday, that fireworks, including "safe and sane", are illegal within the city limits.

<http://www.vvng.com/victorville-man-cited-selling-illegal-fireworks/>

Sheriff's Aviation holds hanger warming

Hector Hernandez Jr., Highland News

Posted: May 24, 2017, 4:24 PM



A Sheriff's Aviation helicopter crew demonstrates its capabilities in assisting fire departments in fighting brush fires with aerial water drops, May 23.

After moving from Rialto to San Bernardino International Airport in 2015, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Aviation headquarters and hangers recently received the final finishing touches giving the branch of the Sheriff's Emergency Operations Division a new home and more centralized command center.

The new facilities were toured and the abilities of its helicopter crews demonstrated during a special tour and luncheon held for the area's news media on Tuesday, May 23.

According to Sheriff John McMahan, having the new 12,000 square-foot of office space and two 23,000 square-foot hangers enables the department to centralize its operations and strengthen its partnership with **County Fire**.

"This building will house everything for us. Prior to this building our volunteer forces was headquarters, our fixed wing operation was here, our helicopter operation was in Rialto," McMahan said. "It was a little difficult manage those operations when they were in three different places."

Sheriff's Aviation operates 15 aircraft (12 helicopters and three fixed-wing aircraft) with 50 personnel assisted by thousands of volunteers including Sheriff's Reserves, Citizens on Patrol and volunteer doctors and nurses.

The aircraft are used in patrols, fire suppression, search and rescue, hoist rescues and rapid transportation of personnel.

Sheriff's Aviation handles about 16,000 Sheriff's and fire calls per year throughout the county and when assisting other departments. In 2016 the Aviation unit responded to 2,805 calls in county areas, 3,863 in contract cities (such as Highland), logged 4,481 hours of total flight time, assisted in 754 arrests and 119 pursuits, and responded to 192 search and rescue calls conducting 55 hoist rescues.

The event also served as a celebration of the partnership between Sheriff's Department, County Fire and volunteer services. With County Fire Sheriff's Aviation is Advanced Life Support (ALS) capable, able to provide patients high medical care on the way to the hospital.

http://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/sheriff-s-aviation-holds-hanger-warming/article_2684887a-40d8-11e7-ab4a-6b3b9986dc9d.html

Vegetation Fire Reported in Wrightwood Wednesday Night

24/7 Headline News

Posted: May 24, 2017, 11:00 PM

UPDATE (5-24-17 11:13 pm): Los Angeles National Forest reports that the fire is 2 acres in size. the fire remains slow spreading. Los Angeles and **San Bernardino County Fire Departments** are assisting the Forest Service.

WRIGHTWOOD – A fire was reported in a Los Angeles County area of Wrightwood near SR-2 and Flume Cyn Road at around 9:25 p.m. on Wednesday night.

Fire officials said that the cause of the vegetation fire is unknown at this time. Firefighters from San Bernardino County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Calfire and both Los Angeles and San Bernardino County National Forest Service responded to the scene.

The fire is reported to be spreading at a slow pace and is between 1 acre and 1 ½ acres according to the San Bernardino County Fire Department. No evacuations have been reported at this time and no injuries are reported as a result of the fire.

<https://247headline.com/vegetation-fire-reported-in-wrightwood-wednesday-night/>

Three Injured in five-vehicle Traffic Accident in Adelanto

Victor Valley News Group

Posted: May 24, 2017



Three people were injured following a five vehicle collision Wednesday night. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

ADELANTO, Calif. (VVNG.com) Three people were injured following a five-vehicle traffic collision Wednesday night.

At about 9:55 p.m dispatch received reports of a traffic collision at the intersection of Mojave Drive and Jonathan Street in Adelanto.

When deputies arrived on scene they located five vehicles, in which two cars sustained minor damage and three sustained moderate to major damage, according to **San Bernardino County Fire** Captain Greg Breiner.

Breiner said three people were transported to local hospitals with minor injuries.

A white Mitsubishi Lancer, a black Kia SUV and a Honda Sedan were blocking the intersection. According to witnesses at the scene, the black Kia failed to stop at the stop sign and slammed into the back of the Honda, causing the five-vehicle collision.

The crash temporarily closed eastbound traffic on Mojave Drive while authorities investigated. The Victor Valley Sheriff's Station is handling the investigation.

<http://www.vvng.com/three-injured-five-vehicle-traffic-accident-adelanto/>

Deputy Discovers Geyser Shooting 30 Feet into the Air

Victor Valley News Group

Posted: May 25, 2017



A Victorville Sheriff's Deputy discovered a water geyser shooting approximately 30 feet into the air while en route to a separate call. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) A Victorville Sheriff's Deputy stumbled upon a geyser of water shooting 30 feet into the air Wednesday night.

Deputy Wallace from the Victorville Station was responding to a disturbance call between two transients living in the desert field when he discovered the geyser around 11:10 p.m.

A lock was removed from the above ground metal cover that is used to house the water valve, in what appeared to be an intentional act to steal brass or copper fixings.

Thieves targeting backflow valves is not uncommon as the scrap metal is typically traded in for \$200-\$400, but can cost upwards of \$6000 to replace and repair.

The backflow valve is part of the water well operated by the City of Victorville near Bear Valley Road and Starshine Street.

The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded in less than 15 minutes and managed to shut off the valve stopping the waste of water.

An exact number of gallons lost was not immediately known, but is estimated to be in the high thousands.

<http://www.vvng.com/deputy-discovers-geyser-shooting-30-feet-air/>

Vacant House Burns In Twentynine Palms...Again

Z107.7 News

Posted: May 25, 2017

A vacant house caught fire in Twentynine Palms Wednesday night. According to **County Fire** Battalion Chief Bobby Cox, the house in the 6400 block of Yucca Avenue had burned before and was uninhabitable, and all utilities had been turned off. Firefighters from Twentynine Palms, Wonder Valley, Yucca Valley, and the Combat Center who were called to the blaze at 8:23 p.m. found the structure fully involved with flames when they arrived. Cox said witnesses who reported the fire to 911 said they heard explosions coming from the house, but there were none when firefighters were on scene, nor were there signs of a drug lab inside the house. The blaze was knocked down about 20 minutes later. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

<http://z1077fm.com/vacant-house-burns-in-twentynine-palmsagain/>