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New Citizen Volunteer Committees Ready to Get to Work

Perris City Councilmembers recently approved the formation of three citizen-volunteer committees that will target blight and promote community and economic development.

Members of the Beautification Committee, Community Development Community and Economic Development Community are expected to be sworn into office in the next few weeks.

Twenty-three Perris residents have agreed to serve on the committees- nine each on economic and community development, five for the beautification committee.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said he's excited to see the new commissions begin working.

"We're excited about the quality of the applicants," he said. "They bring a lot of experience and expertise to the table. We're expanding out to involve more people in our commissions so we can get fresh looks as we move our City forward."

The Beautification Committee will assist the City in developing and pursuing initiatives that promote beautification and overall appearance throughout Perris.

It will identify areas of improvement, create recognition and incentive programs such as property maintenance awards, coordinate and recruit volunteers to participate in neighborhood cleanups and secure funding to achieve those goals.

The Community Development Committee will promote positive human interaction in all aspects of community life. It will advise the Mayor and City Council on the development of plans, policies and regulations and strategies involving community preservation, recreation, health and human services and programs related to culture, fine arts, seniors, veterans and non-profit capacity building and development.

The Economic Development Committee will promote the City's ability to compete in a global economy by providing leadership, education and tools necessary for Perris to optimize economic opportunities. The committee will be charged with improving the City's business and economic environment in order to meet the shopping needs of local residents. They will make recommendations to the City Council that will create job opportunities through the creation of jobs and businesses that will expand the City's tax base and income.

Members of the Beautification Committee include:

- Flora Eileen Cohen-Sarno, 68, a retired Amtrak sales and security supervisor who has lived in Perris 10 years. As a member of the beautification committee, Cohen-Sarno lists home and business refurbishment and trash removal from residential and commercial properties as top priorities to tackle.
- Buell Talley, 61, a retired bus driver who has lived in Perris for 50 years and graduated from Perris High School in 1972. Talley has participated in numerous charitable and community projects over the years and is active in several programs at his church.
- Alex Mercado, 50, an information systems analyst for the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. Mercado describes himself as a "longtime and caring" resident of 25 years in Perris who has reported neighborhood blight and also performed volunteer work to improve the City's image and pride.
- Pamela Scott, 67, a retired Perris Union High School District special projects secretary who has lived in the City for 40 years. In her application, Scott has been involved with numerous non-profit and community-based organizations and has "volunteered thousands of hours of personal time and resources to help benefit the City and its residents."
- David Gordon Stuart, 62, has served the City of Perris in numerous capacities, including as a member of the Planning Commission, member of the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce, organizer of the annual Christmas Parade, member of the Perris Valley Historical Museum and the Dora Nelson museum. A native of Belgium, Stuart received a PhD in aerospace systems from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The special advisor to the Beautification Committee is Midgie Parker of the Perris Valley Historical Museum. The Beautification Committee City Council Liaisons are Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilman David Starr Rabb.

Members of the Community Development Committee include:

- Cindy Chambers, 61, who has lived in Perris about years. Chambers is a member of the Perris Valley Historical Museum, worked on the City's Centennial celebration in 2011, arranged judging for the fine arts and photography entries at the Southern California Fair. Chambers is the former owner of a pet-services franchise and previously worked as controller of an electrical contracting company. Chambers advocates for public art projects like murals and sculptures and for preserving the City's history.
- Socorro Gomez Huerta, 49, is a Community Services Supervisor for the City of Riverside. In her application, Gomez Huerta called the City's rapid growth in the last decade the "first and most important issue" facing Perris. She said she wants to be part of the team that develops "plans, policies and regulations that may improve the quality of life by providing community, recreation, cultural, health and human services."
- Laurel Rudy, 73, said she is "passionate about bringing the joy of fine arts" to Perris and believes her work will make that possible. She studied art, music, life-drawing, anthropology and computer science at schools in California. Her work career includes jobs as a bartender, record buyer, sales associate and nutrition supplements consultant. She wants as the Community Development Committee, she will work to "favorably impress any and all visitors to Perris...and to hopefully attract potential new upscale businesses to our town."
- Tisa Isabel Rodriguez, 35, is an associate environmental planner for Caltrans and also has experience in community outreach and coordination in in municipal, non-profit and volunteer settings. Rodriguez said she has experience in community outreach and coordination, land-use assessment, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and routinely works with multi-discipline groups to bring projects to reality. Rodriguez said the committee should focus on "fostering and highlighting the unique and attractive characteristics" that make Perris a great place to live, work and open businesses.

Other members of the Community Development Committee are Robert Turner, Michael Weir, Dawn Bucha, Jennifer Bieger and Joseph Dapice, all who previously served on the City's now-defunct Public Safety Commission.

- Bieger, 37, has lived in Perris since 2004. Her employment history includes working in law enforcement, construction management and safety. Bieger is currently with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. During her tenure on the Public Safety Commission, Bieger listed crime reduction, establishing more Neighborhood Watch programs and training community volunteers to respond to emergencies as her top priorities. Bieger is active in the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 595 within the City.
- Bucha spent 28 years as a parole officer for the State of California and as a Public Safety Commissioner, listed her top priority as "providing a safe environment for our youth through community-based programs that provide a safe and active environment for kids after school and during summer months." Bucha's past community service also includes volunteering at a local food bank and with Neighborhood Watch groups.
- Dapice, 48, spent 15 years on the Public Safety Commission, where he worked to implement noise-control and animal-control ordinances. He also worked on getting a traffic signal and left-hand turn signal installed at Perris Boulevard and San Jacinto Avenue. Dapice has supported many community activities, including the National Night Out and various Live Well Perris events. As a member of the Public Safety Commission, Dapice said his mission was to make Perris a safe place where residents can "where residents can live, work and have fun."
- Turner, 59, works as director of Risk Management at the Alvord Unified School District and has previously served as past president of the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce. He holds a degree from Rochester Institute of Technology in New York with a concentration in disaster and emergency management and technical communications. He also is certified as an emergency management specialist from the National Association of Safety Professionals. He is an amateur radio operator.
- Weir, 63, boasts a long and varied career in public safety—21 years as a correctional sergeant with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, 10 years as a firefighter with the U.S. Air Force, a year as firefighter for the City of San Bernardino and seven years as a seasonal and volunteer firefighter with other agencies. His volunteer affiliations also include the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Inland Valley Buffalo Soldiers Association.

Community Development Special Advisors include Katie Keyes, Perris Valley Historical Museum; Jackie Ramos, Boys & Girls Club of Perris and Lovella Singer, Dora Nelson African-American Museum.

Community Development City Council Liaisons are Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Councilman David Starr Rabb.

Members of the Economic Development Committee include:

- Olivia Balderrama, 58, is the legislative assistance to Riverside County Supervisor Chuck Washington and is a former director of planning and community development for the City of Perris. Balderrama's resume includes involvement with a long list of non-profits and community-based organizations—Rotary Club of Perris, Soroptimist of the Valleys, the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce, the San Jacinto College Foundation and various church programs that assist the needy. Balderrama says her skill set and experience allow her to work as part of a team to build consensus. "I am able to listen and value the opinion of others."
- Sabrina Antoinette Freeman, 51, is an educator at Real Journey Academies, a charter-school management organization. A mother of twin daughters—one a nurse, the other a therapist—Freeman moved with her husband to Perris in 2009. "I am a firm believer that all students receive a good education and help with the development of my community." She holds a PhD in Educational and two masters' degrees. Freeman's volunteer service includes feeding the homeless, fundraising events for charities and participation in community events and activities.
- Eric Godoy, 28, graduated from Perris High School in 2005 and is a business student at Cal State San Marcos. Godoy said the major issues confronting Perris include water-conservation awareness, developing relationships with businesses of all sizes to attract them to the City and maximizing limited funds to achieve the greatest economic benefit. The City should exploit its central location in western Riverside County to "attract more home builders, investors and businesses," Godoy said. He lists social media marketing, vendor planning and recruiting, IT support and document reviewing among his skills.
- Virmiecia Green-Jordan, 61, has served on the Perris Elementary School District board of trustees since 1985. In her application, Green-Jordan said she has been "extremely passionate about 'Perris Pride' and economic development for over four decades." Green-Jordan said she has helped the Perris economy by helping create non-profit organizations and committees and by helping build education entities, resource centers and economic development projects. "Over the years, I have tried to participate in endeavors that make Perris sustainable and utilize its best resource: people."
- Fortunate Hove-Cooper, 49, is an administrator at the Concerned Family Ministry in Perris, where she recently moved to from Ventura. She has experience in business circles that includes chairing small to medium enterprise committees and a confederation of industries council. Hove-Cooper holds a master's degree in Public Policy Administration, two bachelor's degrees and two associate certificates. She said her background also includes research and writing skills knowledge about economic development.
- Lorna Hulston, 68, is a retired Perris Union High School District teacher and is a 42-year resident of the City. Her experience in the City has left her with an acute sense of what is needed to improve the lives of its people: "More and better jobs." In her application, Hulston said she is "very well acquainted with many of the people of this town. I know of their hopes and dreams for their children...We need to maximize what we have here and help it to grow." Hulston is a member of the First Congregational Church and the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association.
- Eligio Rangel, 48, is a teacher in Moreno Valley where he has been employed for 20 years. In addition to his classroom duties, Rangel has assumed several leadership positions, including serving as Director for Instruction and Professional Development. Rangel said he brings several positive qualities to the committee—he's bilingual, has an understanding of economics that will help him gain understanding of the City's needs and is in touch with those needs through volunteering for several community groups. "It is important to improve the infrastructure for it will bring businesses to our City," he said in his application.
- Cynthia Serrano, 27, is a lifelong resident of Perris, the mother of two sons and works at a local bank. Her job allows her to interact with many business owners and serving on the committee will allow her to become more active in the City. In her application to serve on the committee, Serrano describes herself as someone who works well with people to gain their trust and is highly motivated. She would like to see more shopping options available to keep sales tax dollars in the City. Serrano has served as a catechism teacher at St. James Catholic Church and has volunteered at the Western Science Center in Hemet.
- Lourdes Zunzunegui-Medrano, 39, works as a counselor at the Romoland School District. In her application to the Economic Development Committee, Medrano said the group should work to "promote the City's ability to compete in the global economy by continuously assessing its current businesses, taxes and economic performance." Medrano said her professional experience and "humble attitude" will benefit the committee as it works to boost Perris' economic standing. She expects to obtain a doctorate in 2017.

The Economic Development Committee Special Advisors are Cindy Espinoza, Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce; Armando Hurtado, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and as yet undetermined representatives from the Oasis Workforce Development, UC Riverside, the Riverside Community College District and Mount San Jacinto Economic Development.

The Economic Development Committee City Council Liaisons are Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke and City Councilman David Starr Rabb.

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