



Perris News

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Perris Mourns Sudden Passing of Planning Commissioner Henry Martin

Perris Planning Commissioner Henry Martin, a man who served his country in the Peace Corps and U.S. Army before becoming the conscience of the City's planning board, died suddenly Friday from an apparent heart attack. Mr. Martin was 71.

Mr. Martin, who served as a Perris Planning Commissioner since 2002, was stricken in his residence early Friday. He was taken to Kaiser Hospital in Riverside where he died about 1:30 a.m. Friday.

"Right now, I am in a complete state of shock," said Perris City Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers, who knew Mr. Martin personally and professionally. "It is unbelievably difficult knowing someone who was so giving and so caring about his community has left us so suddenly. I take great comfort in knowing that he was a servant of God his whole life." Mr. Martin was remembered Friday as the conscience of the Planning Commission, said fellow Commissioner Dave

Stuart. He was particularly concerned with how development would affect the noise, pollution and quality of life around the residents who lived nearby.

"Henry was deeply concerned about the ordinary guy," Stuart said. "He did not speak a lot at meetings but when he spoke what he had to say was definitely worth listening to."

Mr. Martin was appointed as a Planning Commission alternate in 2002 and the following year was appointed to a four-year term. In 2007, he was re-appointed to another four year term.

During his time on the Planning Commission, Perris underwent significant residential, commercial and industrial growth. Mr. Martin was on the Commission when it approved the Downtown Specific Plan, the North Perris Gateway

Plan, the Perris Crossing Shopping Center, the Ross and Whirlpool Distribution Centers and HanesBrands distribution center, the largest green building in the world.

During Mr. Martin's tenure, the Commission also approved the Perris Valley Commerce Center and the South Perris Industrial Area, both massive projects aimed at bringing commerce and jobs to Perris. Mr. Martin also provided input and leadership during the City's General Plan update, a massive undertaking that laid out the long-term blueprint addressing Perris' needs over the next 20 years, including housing, traffic circulation, noise control and conservation of resources.

Henry James Martin felt the call to service early in life.

He attended Southern University in Louisiana. After college, he volunteered for the newly created Peace Corps and served in Caracas, Venezuela, where he taught local residents how to produce more and better food supplies. He later served as a Peace Corps teacher and mentor in Puerto Rico. While in the Peace Corps, he was drafted into the Army and served in Vietnam.

Returning from military service, Mr. Martin became an administrator for Modesto Junior College, where he worked in the office responsible for providing tuition and other assistance for deserving students. He also worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a food inspector and was on the battle lines during California's long struggle to prevent the Mediterranean fruit fly from gaining a permanent foothold in the state. His work with the Agriculture Department also took him to San Bernardino.

Mr. Martin moved to Perris about 12 years ago. He became active in Trinity Missionary Baptist Church in Moreno Valley, where he served as Chairman of the Board of Deacons.

Mr. Martin is the third prominent Perris leader to die in recent weeks. On June 26, former Perris Mayor Lenwood

Long was killed when his car was struck by a motorcycle. On July 4, Perris Planning Manager Bradley Eckhardt was killed when he lost control of his motorcycle and was stuck by an oncoming vehicle in San Diego County.

Mr. Martin's survivors include sons Nkrumah Martin, Modesto; Henry Martin Jr., Boston and daughter Twyla Sanders, Modesto; 12 grandchildren; brothers Ezekiel Martin, Perris; Molese Martin, Houston; Jimmy Martin, Louisiana; sister Elnora Green, Louisiana and sister-in-law Betty Martin, Perris.

Funeral arrangements were incomplete Friday evening.



Planning Commissioner Henry Martin.