

Bell ^{WINTER} 2018 Gardens Today

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
DRAWS A CROWD!

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Everything you need for WINTER - Complete recreation program information inside.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CITY MANAGER

This edition of **Bell Gardens Today** is packed with information about successful city programs and plans for future developments in our parks. You'll learn about some money-saving efforts and cooperative programs that improve the quality of life for all of our Bell Gardens residents.

We're pretty proud of our Neighborhood Watch program led by Mary Lou Trevis that is 300 members strong and helps our police department keep the crime rate down. These volunteers help our schools, support law enforcement and get residents involved in the well-being of our community.

The City has been successful in obtaining a grant from the state Alcohol Beverage Control to continue education efforts for our businesses and hospitality workers that will result in fewer underage drinking incidents. Two of Bell Gardens' finest have been promoted to the rank of Sergeant and an Explorer alumnus has returned to become the newest member of the Police Department to keep the streets safe for everyone.

Leasing some of our surplus water rights will bring revenue into the General Fund and speaking of water, the City is moving forward with plans for a new aquatic center that will make Ford Park an oasis during the hot weather. It's notable that staff is seeking grant funding for the project, which eases the impact on the City's budget and still provides a recreational facility that we predict will be popular with residents of all ages.

An issue that has concerned many Bell Gardens residents is the recent legalization of marijuana in California; the City Council has done much research into possible effects on public health and enacted an ordinance that is one of the most restrictive in the state. The details of the ordinance are spelled out in the article in this issue.

Another way for the City to save money is to take advantage of programs that allocate surplus property for municipal use;



Officer Don Leuschen is the point man for a federal program that has allowed the Police Department to obtain emergency preparedness supplies from first aid kits to heavy machinery that will keep the BGDPD functioning in case of disaster.

Pets are important to Bell Gardens residents and the City is excited to sponsor the third annual Pet Care Fair on Saturday, October 27 – bring your furry friend and participate in a fun costume contest for prizes; get vaccinations brought up to date, and learn more about keeping your pets healthy and happy.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony at City Hall on Monday, December 10; the family-friendly gathering will feature entertainment, refreshments and a countdown to the lighting by none other than Santa himself!

Make sure to exercise your rights and vote in the upcoming election and remember that you are welcome at all City Council meetings. Your input on all issues is always welcome and we look forward to hearing from you. Send your questions, concerns and comments to City Hall at Talk2Us@bellgardens.org.

Philip Wagner

CITY MANAGER

COMMUNITY EVENTS

CITY TREE LIGHTING SET FOR DECEMBER 10

Mark your calendars for Monday, December 10 for the City of Bell Gardens annual Christmas Tree Lighting in front of City Hall. Come celebrate the season with your whole family during this fun gathering, see the creative decorations and be there when the City's official holiday tree bursts with festive, colored lights.

"There will be music and crafts and holiday cookie decorating and a countdown to the lighting from none other than Santa," said Chris Daste, Bell Gardens Director of Recreation and Community Services Department.

Festivities start at 5 p.m. and will feature Christmas carols and music from a classic rock band, performances by the Bell Gardens High School Marching Band and ballet dancers from the Recreation and Community Services Department. Enjoy refreshments and get into the holiday spirit with your friends and neighbors.

For more details, watch for posters and flyers at City Hall and City Parks, the City's social media or visit www.bgrecreation.org.



CITY TAPS NEW REVENUE WITH WATER LEASING RIGHTS

The City of Bell Gardens will be leveraging a surplus of water from its Water Well No. 1 to the benefit of the City. Since 1991, the City has owned a potable (drinkable) water system that serves the northerly part of the City, supplied by Water Well No. 1. After meeting all of its obligations to customers of this system, the City is able to lease approximately 750 acre-feet of groundwater to the Golden State Water Company, at the rate of \$195 per acre-foot, for a total of \$146,250 per year.

The lease was recently approved by the City Council for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 fiscal years, which will result in a total of \$292,500 revenue going into the City's Water Fund. The agreement, which includes flex rights, was made after three bidders sought to lease varying amounts of the surplus, with Golden State's proposal being the most beneficial to the City.

BLOCKING RAMPS IS ILLEGAL IN CALIFORNIA

Handicap access ramps are installed at most City intersections to allow all residents and visitors easy movement throughout the area – but some of those ramps are being blocked by thoughtless drivers who park across them.

City officials are aware that parking spaces are sometimes scarce around popular restaurants or residential areas, but it is still illegal to obstruct the ramps. California Vehicle Code 22500 states:

"A person shall not stop, park, or leave standing any vehicle whether attended or unattended, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with the directions of a peace officer or official traffic control device in any of the following places:

(e) (1) In front of a public or private driveway, except that a bus engaged as a common carrier, school bus, or a taxicab may stop to load or unload passengers when authorized by local authorities pursuant to an ordinance.

(f) On a portion of a sidewalk, or with the body of the vehicle extending over a portion of a sidewalk

(l) In front of or upon that portion of a curb that has been cut down, lowered or constructed to provide wheelchair accessibility to the sidewalk."

Drivers should be aware that the Bell Gardens Police Department is actively looking for violators and will ticket offenders.

CITY WINS SIXTH CONSECUTIVE FINANCIAL AWARD, IS ALSO RECOGNIZED BY COUNTY

The City of Bell Gardens was recently awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association. This is the sixth consecutive year that the City's government accounting and financial reporting has been honored by this peer review.

The award recognizes accountability, transparency and the City's financial security.

"We are fortunate to have earned the public's trust by holding ourselves to exemplary standards and meeting them annually," said Bell Gardens City Manager Philip Wagner. "We take our obligations seriously and are constantly reevaluating our fiscal policies, procedures and spending practices to ensure maximum accountability and transparency to the taxpayers we serve."

The City has a very strict set of checks and balances and internal controls in place to ensure the highest standards of financial security are met on a daily basis. Despite the challenging fiscal climate faced by cities across the country, the City is operating this year with \$49 million budget and \$3.1 million reserve, with staff making every effort to maximize resources by seeking grant funds to supplement the budget.

In addition to the award from the Government Finance Officers Association, the City was recently recognized by the Community Development Commission/Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles – Community Development Division for its excellent performance in implementing the Community Development Block Grant Program. The Community Development Block Grant Program, provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs funded by the Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD) federal grants.



Bell Gardens Today is published quarterly by the City of Bell Gardens to provide information to the community about the City's programs, services and activities.

Visit us at www.bellgardens.org for updated City information. Questions? Email us at Talk2Us@bellgardens.org

Go to www.bgrecreation.org for recreation programs and events. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

IT MAY NOW BE LEGAL IN CALIFORNIA, BUT COMMERCIAL GROWING AND SELLING OF MARIJUANA NOT WELCOME IN BELL GARDENS

City leaders in Bell Gardens have taken the final step needed to ban commercial marijuana operations in the city. City Council members voted unanimously to prohibit storefront retail sales, outdoor cultivation, distribution and literally all commercial and medical marijuana-related uses and activities within the City limits.

In November 2016, 57% of California's voters approved Proposition 64, the Control, Regulate and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Act (AUMA) which decriminalized the personal possession and use of marijuana. It regulates the cultivation, processing, manufacture, distribution, testing and sale of nonmedical marijuana, including marijuana products, for use by adults 21 years of age or older. Cities across California were given the option of how much local control they could exercise in their jurisdictions, short of imposing complete restrictions.

The new law guarantees that individuals may cultivate, plant, harvest, process and possess no more than 6 plants for their personal use. It also allows people to possess up to an ounce of marijuana and smoke it in private residences or licensed businesses; but it remains illegal while driving, in public or anywhere tobacco is illegal.

Unfortunately, state law does not allow Bell Gardens to restrict indoor cultivation and personal consumption, however, the City Council adopted an ordinance that is as restrictive as possible within the law, banning marijuana retail shops and commercial growing and distribution.

While the new ordinance is restrictive, the City Council expressed their concerns at a recent meeting about the effects of secondhand smoke from marijuana use.

The City Council was very clear about their concern for the health risks from exposure to secondhand marijuana smoke. While the City can legally control smoking in public places, the City can't legally regulate secondhand smoke coming from within a residence. Nevertheless, the City Attorney was directed to research and provide legal options that the City Council could enact to protect the health of local residents.

Regarding concerns expressed by the City Council about secondhand smoke and its effects on residents, Assistant City Attorney John Lam explained that the City is investigating just what measures can be taken to protect residents that are within the law.

"The City is taking steps to address any additional issues in a highly measured approach, such as the ordinance enacted last year that restricts smoking of any substance in parks," he said. "We are researching how to legally broaden this to protect people who live in apartments."

In 2017, the City Council passed Ordinance 885 which banned smoking in public parks and any enclosed or unenclosed areas of any buildings or facilities owned, leased or operated by the City of Bell Gardens. The current ordinance extends that restriction to the entire City, except within people's private homes.

"The first step in addressing these issues is putting the marijuana ordinance in place," Lam said. "We can continue to work with the people who have to enforce the ordinance and see if there are any more legal options for further protection."

"I am proud of our City Council acting to protect our residents, to do what's right for the community and youth and send the right message to our kids,"

said Bell Gardens Police Chief Scott Fairfield. "The secondhand smoke situation is challenging, especially in a community this compact and densely populated. We've been studying and discussing this issue since medical marijuana was approved and they are always learning, researching and staying on top of legislation."

The City Council's recent action to restrict marijuana use came after holding two study sessions in 2017 where the City Council discussed the approach being taken by other cities and reviewed existing restrictions on marijuana use (marijuana is already technically prohibited under the City's Zoning Ordinance), it was determined that an ordinance expressly prohibiting commercial and medical marijuana uses and activities as well as outdoor cultivation in all zones, district and specific plan areas within the City would address any Council or citizen concerns.

On June 20, 2018, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing and recommended approval of Zoning Code Amendment No. 2018-047 and Ordinance No. 890, amending Chapter 9.21.010 to the City Council. On August 13, 2018, the City Council introduced and waived the first reading of Ordinance No. 890.

Specifically, Ordinance 890 prohibits all of the following activities:

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BGPD GARNERS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SUPPLIES THANKS TO SURPLUS PROGRAM



A patrol officer with the Bell Gardens Police Department is saving the City a lot of money by doing some web surfing. Officer Don Leuschen has been acquiring surplus property at no cost via the government's

1033 Program which allows the Secretary of Defense to transfer excess U.S. Department of Defense supplies and equipment to state and local law enforcement agencies once they are no longer needed. Through the program, law enforcement agencies have been able to acquire vehicles (land, air and sea), weapons, computer equipment, fingerprint equipment, night vision equipment, radios and televisions, first aid equipment, tents and sleeping bags, photographic equipment and more.

Leuschen scans the 1033 website often to check for new merchandise that pops up, in hopes of getting some of the surplus goods for use by BGPD, focusing on disaster preparedness supplies.

"When the federal government shuts down a base or closes a facility, they ship everything back to Michigan, where it is reallocated. Federal agencies have first dibs on the surplus, then law enforcement agencies, then fire departments."

"We have to keep the Police Department running after a disaster," Leuschen explained. "For example, if we have an earthquake and our building goes down, we will have to operate out of another location. So for the last five years, I've been focusing on getting survival supplies for the Police Department."

There's no way to predict what will become available on the site, so Leuschen tries to stay on top of the website, even in

his off hours. He's been successful in acquiring everything from first aid kits to heavy machinery. Five new diesel generators sit in a City yard near a couple of forklifts and stacks of MREs, rolls of barbed and concertina wire, sleeping bags and tents. A trailer and storage containers are stacked along a warehouse wall, and a couple of trucks have joined the BGPD fleet thanks to his frequent online "shopping."

Leuschen said that property on the West Coast is usually stored at Camp Pendleton or in Barstow, and the deal is that the goods are free as long as the acquiring department comes to pick it up or have it delivered. He's traveled for pickups himself in an effort to increase the savings to the City so they don't have to pay for shipping.

Before he became a police officer, Leuschen worked in construction, where his mechanical and building experience pays off. He can drive the heavy equipment, knows how to use it and what to look for in assessing the condition of items (some are new, others are battle-worn) before accepting them.

Looking at the items curated under Leuschen's watchful eye, the savings to the City seem immense. His conservative estimate is about \$200,000, but when the time comes that those items are put into service, they are sure to be priceless.



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- **The establishment or operation of a marijuana cultivation facility, marijuana storage facility, marijuana testing facility, marijuana product manufacturing facility or marijuana dispensary.**
- **The operation or establishment of a marijuana or medical marijuana cooperative, dispensary, delivery service or provider.**
- **Possession, manufacture, distribution, processing, storing, or laboratory testing of marijuana and marijuana products.**
- **Labeling, transportation, delivery, or sale of marijuana and marijuana products.**

- **Cultivation, delivery or distribution of marijuana or marijuana products.**
- **Dispensing, manufacture or sale of marijuana or marijuana products.**

The proposed ordinance allows limited indoor cultivation of no more than six marijuana plants for personal use, pursuant to AUMA requirements, and subject to applicable building, fire, and other applicable health and safety codes. With respect to personal outdoor cultivation, the proposed ordinance expressly prohibits personal outdoor cultivation.



BELL GARDENS AQUATIC CENTER PLANNED FOR FORD PARK

Plans are underway for construction of a new aquatic center that will make Ford Park a water oasis during the hot weather. The state-of-the-art facility will replace the deteriorated and outdated pool and include waterslides, climbable water structures and interactive spray features.

The 60-year-old pool and bathhouse that the City inherited from Los Angeles County in 1993 was closed in 2017 due to deteriorated and obsolete mechanical equipment that jeopardized the public safety. The biggest issues involved the pool's pump, filtration and water circulation systems, which were outdated and impossible to repair. In addition to the safety concerns, the nonstandard dimensions and configuration of the pool made it too expensive to maintain.

During the two seasons that the pool has been closed, City staff introduced new programs such as 'Coolchella,' a park site program of water play, slides and contests for the whole family, as well as field trips to the beach and local waterparks such as Raging Waters and Knott's Soak City. These alternate programs were a tremendous success, with over 6,650 children participating. In addition, to make these excursions more affordable for Bell Gardens residents, the City subsidized much of the costs. These park programs and excursions will continue until the Bell Gardens Aquatic Center is open.

"The residents of Bell Gardens depend on us to provide exceptional recreation programs and facilities. It's heartbreaking that our residents have not been able to enjoy the pool while it's down," said Recreation and Community Services Director Chris Daste. "But there's a light at the end of the tunnel, and that light is a state-of-the-art aquatics facility that will enable the City to provide aquatic programming, heat relief and fun that is on a whole different level."

Since the pool closure, the City Council allocated \$36,000 for the development of a master plan and conceptual designs for the new pool facility, and staff has been working with City Engineers and various consultants to bring the aquatics center back to the residents of Bell Gardens. One plan reuses the existing pool building, while the other calls for the construction of a new building. The estimated cost of each plan is between \$5.7 and \$7.2 million, respectively. After careful consideration of the information gathered, staff has recommended that the existing facility be replaced with a new pool and building.

In addition to a new building, plans for replacement of the pool include two smaller pools featuring a lap pool with 3,375 square feet surface area, a water depth ranging from 3 ½ feet to 10 feet, six 25-yard swim lanes, stair access and a user-operated disabled access lift. An activity pool for children is also planned, with 4,600 square foot surface area, a water depth from zero to 3 ½ feet, a climbable water feature, interactive spray features, stair access and a single flume waterslide.

Staff has also found potential funding sources for the project. By leveraging the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation, the City will be able to apply for a Section 108 loan, similar to the funding used for the Sports Complex renovation. Staff continues to search for additional funding sources, including state grants, to cover the project costs.

The City Council has approved the formation of an Ad Hoc committee which will meet to discuss all aspects of the project, including design, financing, construction and operation. Recommendations from the committee will be presented to the City Council for approval at a later date.



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH KEEPS AN EYE ON COMMUNITY

A national crime prevention program is one of the reasons behind the recent decrease in crime in Bell Gardens and Mary Lou Trevis, the coordinator who leads the 300-strong Neighborhood Watch volunteer group, believes that it's all about community.

"Family means a lot in Bell Gardens. Women – the mothers – play a major role," Trevis said. "They work with me, walking the streets and knocking on doors. Our outreach is not done on computer, it's the personal visit that makes a difference."

"There are four wheels of the community," she explained. "The Community, the City, the businesses and the schools. It's all about collaboration, we don't leave anyone out. If you report crime, you will see a decrease and feel the benefit of being involved in the program."

The Neighborhood Watch program is simple: open a line of communication between the Police Department and the community and give residents the confidence to report what's going on around them. In Bell Gardens, the program goes much further,



"I have to make a difference in the quality of life in my neighborhood," she says proudly.

In 2003, she saw a posting that Bell Gardens was looking to hire a Neighborhood Watch coordinator and applied. She didn't think she would get it, but she was exactly what the

Police Department was looking for.

When Trevis started working in Bell Gardens, she noticed that some of the people she met were reluctant to report crime or suspicious

involving residents in disaster preparedness training and anti-drug programs in the schools. They coordinate events such as National Night Out and Red Ribbon Week and are a constant presence at local gatherings.

Trevis first got involved with Neighborhood Watch when an LAPD police sergeant knocked on the front door of her Boyle Heights home, asking her if she wanted to help her community. That was back in the mid-1980s and she's been a leader in keeping communities safe and strong ever since. She served on LAPD's Hollenbeck Division advisory committee and was one of the founders of Mothers of East LA, an advocacy group that works to improve the character of neighborhoods through citizen involvement.



activity. There was also a language barrier that proved challenging, but she was determined to make the program work and focused on helping them overcome those fears by educating them in preventive action. She also divided the City into four quadrants to ensure equal representation.

After 15 years with the program, Trevis is seeing a generational change; parents involved in the program a decade ago brought their children to meetings and now those children are following their parents' example by being active and helping out. She said they bring "youthful skills" such as computer knowledge to the program.

For more information or to get involved with Neighborhood Watch, contact Mary Lou Trevis at mtrevis@bgpd.org.



TWO NEW SERGEANTS PROMOTED, FORMER EXPLORER BECOMES OFFICER

Mark Cobian and Dano Neslen were recently promoted to the rank of Sergeant after many years of dedicated service and former youth program participant Christopher Sandoval became a sworn Officer.

Cobian is a 28-year veteran of the Department, working numerous assignments including patrol, bike patrol, Special Investigations Unit-gang detective, field training officer, Assistant Team Leader for the Special Operations Team, Metro Gang Task Force, LA Impact, Senior Officer and patrol watch commander.

He graduated from the Golden West Police Academy in 1990, also attending Golden West College and Coastline Community College. He is a graduate of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputy Leadership Institute and the Academy Instructor Certification Course.

Cobian is active in youth mentoring and speaking at the local schools regarding the pitfalls and negative aspects of joining a gang. For his efforts, Cobian has received numerous commendations and was named Bell Gardens Police Officer of the Year in 2006. He and his significant other have a 17-year-old daughter.

Neslen has had a variety of responsibilities since joining the Bell Gardens Police Department in 2003. He's been a patrol officer, worked on the Crime Impact Team, Special Investigations Unit; been a K9 handler, a Task Force Officer at LA IMPACT and Department of Homeland Security, a Field Training Officer and Senior Officer before his promotion.

Raised in Whittier and Orange County, Neslen has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and began his law enforcement career in 1997 with the Orange County Probation Department. He has been married for 21 years and has two children.

Christopher Sandoval was an Explorer with the Bell Gardens Police Department in 2014 and was inspired to take his



commitment to law enforcement to the next step. A recent graduate of the Rio Hondo Police Academy Class #206, he was sworn in as a Bell Gardens Police Officer on July 17.

BELL GARDENS RECEIVES GRANT FOR ALCOHOL ENFORCEMENT

Good work and community response were recognized by the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC), which awarded a \$77,000 grant to the police departments of Bell Gardens, Downey and Whittier to work on alcohol-related issues affecting public safety. Bell Gardens' portion of this grant is \$29,333.

This is the second year that the grant has been received by the three cities for their cooperative effort to improve education, conduct enforcement and take preventative measures against illegal sales and underage drinking. Last year, the grant funded education and training on proper identification checks, underage consumption of alcohol, adults buying alcohol for minors, driving under the influence, public nuisances and intoxicated persons loitering near parks, schools and restrooms.

"Overall, the ABC programs set in place are working fine," said Sgt. Paul Camacho, who coordinates the program for the Bell Gardens Police Department. "For example, our patrol officers were also ABC trained and are being proactive by identifying the problematic areas in our City. Last year, we developed and implemented numerous enforcement operations throughout the City. Our goal with this year's grant is to get the community and business owners more involved by attending our free training classes."

"The BGPD's philosophy is simple: we want to collaborate and build relationships with our business partners and the community," Camacho continued. "We want to work together to ensure that our businesses sell alcohol responsibly and that our residents have the information they need to consume alcohol in the safest manner possible."

"The current ABC grant will allow us to continue educating the community and business owners. The plan is to do more outreach with the community and the K-12 Montebello school system in regards to underage drinking. In addition, we are also providing free 'Responsible Beverage Service' training to the business owners and their employees in Bell Gardens, Downey and Whittier."

Along with conducting seminars in both Spanish and English, Camacho said the officers involved with the program visit Bell Gardens High School to talk about the dangers and penalties of underage drinking.

In addition, the funding covers inspections of alcohol-licensed establishments such as bars, retail stores, and restaurants and the implementation of prevention programs, including minor decoy, shoulder tap (adults asked to buy alcohol for minors) operations, teenage party prevention, beer runs, receiving stolen property, serving intoxicated people, special events and offenses involving drinking in public areas.

VETERANS PARK TO HOST PET CARE FAIR

The City of Bell Gardens is sponsoring its third annual Pet Care Fair on Saturday, October 27 at Veterans Park. Everyone is welcome to bring their dogs and cats to this fun and informative fair that will feature low-cost vaccinations, pet product vendors, and microchipping. The fair will be held between the hours of 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

One of the highlights of the fair will be the popular Halloween costume contest for dogs and cats. In previous years, canine versions of Ghostbusters, Minions and Carmen Miranda walked in the parade, along with dogs dressed as cops, convicts and even the house from the Disney movie "Up." Prizes are awarded for the best in several categories and pet owners are encouraged to post pet costume contest pictures on the Bell Gardens Police Department's Facebook page or on Instagram ([@bellgardenspolice](#)).

A key player in the event is Bell Gardens Police Detective Brett Benson, an animal advocate who has rescued more than 20 animals himself. He organized the first pet fair in 2016 which attracted more than 100 pet owners who brought their animals for vaccinations, information on licensing and pet care and socializing with the other animals in the neighborhood.

"Detective Benson is so passionate about animals – he's rescued 20 animals himself – he had the idea for the pet fair as a way to get stray dogs and cats off the street," said Recreation Supervisor Ana Avalos. "It brings the animal lovers in the community together. We really appreciate all his efforts." She added that Benson has even sponsored vaccinations for several dozen families who might not be able to afford them.

Co-sponsoring the event with the City will be Vetcare Pet Clinic, which will offer \$10 rabies vaccinations and microchipping during the event. Additional vaccines will be available at a variety of prices; for information, visit their website at www.vetcarepetclinic.com.

Attendance and participation in the costume contest is free. For more information on the pet fair, call Benson at **(562) 806-7618** or Avalos at **(562) 806-7650**.

