



State of the City:

**Last Year's Accomplishments,
This Year's Goals**

Vernon Quarterly

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Vernon Quarterly is a newsletter for the residents, businesses and other community stakeholders in this city that "means business."

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City Council Members Appoint **A.J. Wilson** to Serve as City's Interim Leader

A.J. Wilson,

a public administration consultant with more than 40 years of public management experience, was appointed by Vernon city council members on January 6 to serve as the city's interim city administrator during the city's ongoing executive search for a permanent city administrator.



Mr. Wilson recently served as executive director of the San Bernardino International Airport Authority and Inland Valley Development Agency. He has served as a senior advisor to city managers in San Bernardino and Riverside.

Mr. Wilson was formerly a deputy mayor in St. Louis, Missouri, and a city manager in Pomona, Santa Ana, Kansas City, Missouri, and Portland, Maine. He also served in an interim city manager capacity in Norco. Mr. Wilson is president of Wilson Communications, LLC, a management services consulting firm.

In September 2015, Vernon council members engaged Bob Murray & Associates, an executive search firm, to recruit qualified candidates for city



administrator. Council members are expected to interview prospective candidates in the coming weeks.

Mark C. Whitworth, former Vernon city administrator, retired on December 28, 2015, after more than 26 years of public service as a Vernon firefighter, fire captain, battalion chief, fire chief and city administrator. City leaders thanked Mr. Whitworth for his years of service and wished him well in his retirement and future endeavors.

State of the City:

**Vernon Department
Directors Highlight
Last Year's
Accomplishments,
Lay Out This Year's Goals**



Vernon Gas & Electric Department



—Carlos Fandino, Director



2015 Accomplishments ✓

The Vernon Gas & Electric Department (VG&E) replaced more than 120 deteriorated wood power poles on city streets. Vernon has more than 7,000 power poles, and VG&E has a capital improvement plan to replace unserviceable poles.

VG&E undertook a comprehensive study to review “distributed generation” and how that will impact the utility and the city’s electric system. Distributed generation refers to relatively small-scale generators that produce several kilowatts (kW) to tens of megawatts (MW) of power and are generally connected to the grid at the distribution or substation levels. Distributed generation units use a wide range of power generation technologies, including gas turbines, diesel engines, solar photovoltaic (PV), wind turbines, fuel cells, biomass and small hydroelectric generators. The city council recently lifted a moratorium on distributed generation, and any generator project above a 1MW

threshold would require an approved conditional use permit (CUP).

VG&E entered into two long-term renewable Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) at historically low prices. This is key to the business community because it keeps renewable portfolio standard (RPS) costs down and affordable. Both projects are scheduled to be operational in January 2017.

VG&E’s Gas Division executed a number of cost-saving and revenue-generation transactions in the areas of resources adequacy, renewable energy purchases and the CAISO market and, as a result, kept electric rates steady.

2016 Goals ||||➔

VG&E goals include an upgrade to the H. Gonzales Turbine Controls system to allow for quicker, automatic starts once dispatched by the control center. These units are used to offset resource adequacy requirements imposed by the California Independent System Operator (Cal ISO).

VG&E will strive to complete negotiations on an agreement to extend the city’s Hoover Dam power contract for an additional 50 years. Extending the Hoover Dam agreement will keep operating costs down and provide an inexpensive resource for the city’s load consumption.

VG&E is committed to the replacement of Leonis Substation transformers and distribution circuit breakers to maintain the city’s electric service reliability at its historic highs.

Finance Department

—William Fox, Director



2015 Accomplishments ✓

Vernon successfully completed a \$111.7 million bond refinancing transaction by issuing the 2015 Taxable Series A Electric System Revenue bonds. This transaction was structured to capture the benefits of the current low market interest rates. This allowed for the smoothing of the existing debt structure in order to provide long-term electric rate stability; lowered the existing debt service payments; and reduced the city’s exposure to market volatility by terminating the two existing interest rate swap agreements.

The city obtained a clean audit opinion from the independent auditors that examined the books and records. They identified that there is a sound system of internal controls where no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses were identified.

The new financial reporting requirements from the Government Accounting Standards Board on pension fund and OPEB reporting were researched and shared with the city council.

These new financial reporting requirements identified the need to proactively address developing mechanisms to fund these obligations.

2016 Goals ||||➔

- Perform a physical inventory of all city-owned infrastructure assets and properly reflect their replacement values, net of depreciation, on the city’s books.
- Develop a finance plan for the unfunded pension and OPEB liabilities that will identify, quantify and systematically fund these obligations.
- Implement a citywide balanced budget where reserves are not utilized to balance the budget.

Public Works Department

—Scott Rigg, Public Works and Water Superintendent



2015 Accomplishments ✓

- Completion and occupancy of the Vernon Village Park Apartments.
- Commencement and completion of several capital improvement projects, including resurfacing of portions of Boyle and Slauson Avenues, Well 21, rehabilitation of two water wells, replacement of an emergency generator, rehabilitation of the city's 10-million-gallon reservoir and reconfiguration of office areas in City Hall.

- Permitting of five new commercial buildings, including Whole Foods Market's Southern Pacific Region Distribution Center.

2016 Goals IIII➔

- Adjustment of city water rates.
- Establishing a light rail route for the proposed Eco Rapid Transit line.

Fire Department

—Michael Wilson, Chief



2015 Accomplishments ✓

The Fire Department fully implemented the Annual Business Fire Inspection Program starting in January 2015. A portion of the fee schedule was implemented in July 2014 and was not fully executed until January 2015. We now have an annual fire inspection and permit required fee program to include false alarms, fire prevention and fire code permit fees. The program is projected to bring in more than \$700,000 in recovered cost.

In July 2015, we hired our first firefighter since 2009. This is part of our succession planning to prepare for potential retirements we have predicted will take place in upcoming years. Three additional firefighters were hired in January 2016. We have a clear succession plan in place for officer development and firefighter recruitment.

Vernon Fire Department (VFD) is likely to experience a mass exodus of personnel due to retirements. VFD personnel have an average age of 48 years with 21 years of experience. In the next three years, we can expect at least 20 percent of the department will retire. In the next five years, we can expect an additional 30 percent to 40 percent of VFD personnel will retire. Hiring over the next one to three years will give us an advantage to prepare personnel for officer development and promotional exams to fill the voids made by these anticipated retirements.

The hiring impact will reduce overtime, but it may increase the economic impact to the city temporarily in bringing new employees to the fire department. As more retirements take place, the costs will decrease because of new retirement guidelines that will apply, reducing the overall costs to the city.

We have secured a \$400,000 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Grant that will pay for half of the department's new state-of-the-art Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) vehicle. This new

apparatus will replace the VFD's 16-year-old unit. In recent years, new equipment requirements have overloaded our current apparatus, and we are in need of replacement vehicles. We expect to receive delivery of the USAR apparatus in March 2016. In addition, we purchased two new Pierce Fire Engines and one new rescue ambulance that will be put into service in 2016.

2016 Goals IIII➔

- Complete the VFD's new grant-funded Training Center at Fire Station #1: This project will bring complex, sophisticated live fire training capability to our department with the proximity convenience of having the new training facility in our own backyard. The new center will increase safety and awareness training opportunities for our personnel, reducing the likelihood of firefighter injury or death in the line of duty. The new training center will increase our ISO points and heighten our department's overall significance in the Southern California region.
- Relocate our city's fire dispatch services to Verdugo Dispatch: We are preparing to enter a public safety communications system that is more advanced and reliable. It will increase firefighter safety and accountability, function with the highest level of professional standards and provide plenty of room for growth for the 14 fire service agencies sharing the system.
- Hire an assistant fire marshal: The fire chief and the fire code inspector currently maintain the fire marshal position. The fire marshal is a management position that needs to be maintained by a certified assistant fire marshal. The assistant fire marshal is a very unique and expertise-driven position that requires numerous specialized certifications. This position is part of the VFD's overall succession plan.

Police Department

—Daniel Calleros, Chief



2015 Accomplishments ✓

- **Maintained Low Crime Rate and Swift Response Times:** Despite reduction in staff, the Police Department continues to maintain low crime rates as well as swift response times for Part 1 Crimes. Providing for the protection of life and property is a core function of the Police Department. The timely arrival of police officers to a reported crime in-progress or other serious emergencies is vital to prevent injury or death, apprehend suspected criminals, identify witnesses and evidence and enhance the solvability of the crime.
- **Implementation of the Police Corporal Program:** As part of the Police Department succession planning and staff development, the implementation of a Police Corporal Program will aid in staff development and encourage police officers to take advantage of city-provided training for personal and professional growth. The program will also provide reduction of overtime costs, as police corporals will have the skills necessary to provide staffing coverage for police sergeants as necessary.
- **Satellite Police Office at the Vernon Village Park Apartments:** The development of the new Vernon Village Park Apartments also included a small office for the Vernon Police Department (VPD). The Police Department purchased two new computers and related equipment to allow police officers to file and

transmit police reports directly to the main police facility. The functional office will not only increase police presence, but also will aid in building relationships with our new community members and enhance our community-oriented policing efforts.

2016 Goals IIII➔

- Continue efforts to maintain quick incident response times and low crime rates.
- Upgrade the Police Department's 911 system with the latest technology (police communications dispatchers use the system 24/7) and replace aging office furniture. Providing the latest technology and upgrading office furniture will enhance the level of service to our community. Funding for these projects will be completely covered through state 911 funds.
- Re-implement crime analysis reporting. The utilization of crime analyst reporting will provide VPD the ability to study crime trends and develop strategies to address crime hotspots as well as high incidents of traffic accidents. Funding for this project will be covered with federal asset forfeiture funds.

Human Resources

—Lisette Grizzelle, Interim Director



2015 Accomplishments ✓

- **Implemented the Vernon Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual** to ensure a more efficient and effective method in maintaining and managing the city's personnel policies. The manual is designed to provide a uniform and consistent system for human resource administration throughout the city. It will promote effective communication among managers, supervisors and employees. The manual will provide specific information that secures the organizational interests and operational effectiveness of the City of Vernon while maximizing the potential for high performance by staff. To date, there have been 43 new and revised policies adopted by the city council, including a Workplace Injury and Illness Prevention Manual.
- **Implemented the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) and Online Applicant Tracking System (ATS) Modules** using the Eden and NeoGov platforms. The implementation of these modules significantly reduced staff time to focus on more critical aspects of human resources management. The HRMS and ATS provide staff with the capacity to monitor and

manage employee benefits and employee personnel updates/changes, track and report on application processes and screen and conduct recruitment operations and personnel actions from a centralized computer terminal. The HRMS and ATS save staff time and increase productivity.

2016 Goals IIII➔

- Lead or assist in the planning, preparation and completion of contract negotiations with the city's collective bargaining groups in the spring of 2016.
- Establish a citywide employee development and succession plan that includes formal and informal training opportunities, in anticipation of approximately 32 percent of the workforce becoming eligible for retirement in the next three to five years.

Office of the City Attorney

—Hema Patel, City Attorney



2015 Accomplishments ✓

We significantly decreased our reliance on outside counsel. In 2015, we came in 30 percent under budget for a savings of more than \$400,000.

We significantly decreased the legal expenditures of other departments. The city's total legal expenses budgeted for all departments were \$784,417 in 2015 (not including the city attorney's office). The actual amount spent was \$215,154, reflecting a nearly 75 percent reduction in costs. We have increased our involvement in legal matters pertaining to the city. We consulted on thousands of independent legal requests.

We have developed an in-house legal library of legal form templates, documents and "cheat sheets" (i.e., CEQA cheat sheet to provide an easy-to-use tool to determine appropriate CEQA language for staff reports) that we developed based on departmental needs.

We significantly increased revenues to the city through negotiation of favorable contract terms and revenue recoveries gained through settlements owed to the city, including

negotiating land deals and Vernon Gas and Electric contract terms and recovering fines through code enforcement mechanisms. Although the money saved or recovered during such transactions is not reflected in the city's budget because it goes directly back to the relevant department, it makes a positive financial contribution to the city.

2016 Goals IIII➔

- Continue working toward developing our office into a premier legal resource for the city that is able and willing to handle all of the city's legal services in-house. Continue to ensure legal requirements and good governance efforts are being followed.
- Continue to develop and strengthen good legal practices, efficiently and effectively.
- Continue to work toward the centralization of legal services in the city through our office.

Health and Environmental Control Department

—Leonard Grossberg, Director



2015 Accomplishments ✓

The Health Department hired a new employee after several long, lean years of working without a full staff. We lost one position to retirement in August 2009 that was not filled, and another position in January 2012 that also was not filled. By the end of 2015, we were able to approve the hiring of the second staff person and expect to have that employee start in January 2016. This will be instrumental in our department's ability to meet its state-mandated programs and inspection frequencies.

With the closing of the Exide Technologies facility, staff was instrumental in coordinating the city's response and conditions of closure. Staff participated in the DTSC and AQMD Community Advisory Board meetings to address Exide's closure. I attended monthly meetings with the public, local environmental justice groups, local politicians and regulatory agencies to work out the technical issues and to provide assurances that the closure will meet their expectations. In this manner, the long process of Exide's closure, that could take five to six years, is approved and accepted by the public.

I helped spearhead a campaign against strict odor regulations proposed for Vernon-based rendering companies. Due to odor complaints, the AQMD targeted several Vernon-based businesses with a proposed "Rule 415 – Rendering Odors." The proposed rule could have a very dramatic, negative effect on rendering businesses. Due to many of our comments and negotiations, AQMD has modified its stance and is willing to work with rendering businesses in reducing many of the odor sources.

2016 Goals IIII➔

- Initiate a return of the Vernon Solid Waste Awards Program (SWAP) that would recognize Vernon businesses for their efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle wastes to minimize waste transport to landfills and support the reduction of greenhouse gases.
- Initiate a paperless file storage program to reduce the storage of paper files and the storage or share-files of materials in electronic format between departments. This would require the copying of all currently stored hardcopy paper files to microfiche for data retrieval purposes.

Office of the City Clerk

—Maria Ayala, City Clerk



2015 Accomplishments ✓

- Southeast Cities Clerk Work/Network Sessions: Our office successfully started Work/Network sessions for city clerks in Southeast L.A. County. The goal was to bring together city clerks from nearby communities to get to know one another, share ideas and cultivate good working relationships with our neighboring cities. Brief discussion sessions on topics specifically related to the city clerk's function have been held. Interest in the group has grown and attendance has also grown since the inaugural meeting on budgeting in May 2015. Two meetings have been held since May 2015. Future meetings have been scheduled through April 2016.
- Resident Information Pamphlet: As a primary resource of information for the public, the Office of the City Clerk wanted to create a marketing piece that would give residents a snapshot of our department's services—who we are and what we do. The intent of the pamphlet is to convey to residents that we are here to help and we're ready and willing to assist them. In July 2015, we created a handy pamphlet with key department services and city contact information.
- Voter Outreach Event: Vernon's Elections Process Informational Meeting: In November 2015, we held an event in the community room and patio at Vernon Village Park Apartments to bring voter registration information to Vernon's residents and provide a briefing on Vernon's mail ballot election process and the importance of registering to vote, adding a new address to your voter registration file and deadlines for casting your vote by mail.

2016 Goals ||||➔

- Citywide Records Management Program: Our office is working to create a formal, citywide Records Management Program (RMP) to create consistency in records retention, transition from paper to digital formats and reduce costs associated with retaining hard copy records. The RMP will help increase our response time to public records requests and enable the city clerk's office to provide greater access to digital public records.
- Community Outreach Efforts: In reiterating the message to our community that we are here as a resource, we want to continue our program of community outreach events and activities. We hope to host additional informational meetings to promote resident and business opportunities for city boards service and commission participation and engagement, municipal governance education and civic partnering with Vernon Elementary School on various activities to benefit students, parents, teachers and school administrators.
- Modernized Access to Public Meeting Agendas: Creating greater accessibility to our public meetings remains at the forefront for our department's work. As the technology becomes more ubiquitous, we need to keep up with tech trends and meet the needs of the public. We hope to automate our public meeting agendas, provide faster digital downloads of our online documents and explore meeting agenda automation programs.

Seal of Approval



Members of the Vernon city council have reviewed conceptual designs for a possible “modernization” of Vernon’s city seal, an official mark of the City of Vernon that has been in use for an estimated 70 years. Along with the council’s review of the city’s official seal, members are reviewing concepts for a new Vernon city logo to be used in less formal circumstances to represent the image of the city.

Vote online for your favorite Vernon city seal and city logo. Should Vernon adopt a new “modernized” city seal or keep its traditional city seal design? Go to www.cityofvernon.org/sealvote to cast your vote online.

Industrial Development Department

—Alex Kung, Manager



2015 Accomplishments ✓

- Established the Vernon Business and Industrial Commission.
- Re-established efforts to visit Vernon businesses and offer assistance.
- Established and begun marketing efforts with Cerritos College to offer Vernon businesses free training programs.
- Named LAEDC “Most Business Friendly City” 2015 Finalist for the second year in a row.
- Celebrated the grand opening of the West Coast Whole Foods distribution center.

2016 Goals

- Continue to develop relationships with Vernon businesses.
- Continue to support programs and activities of the Vernon Chamber of Commerce.
- Continue to work as a liaison to businesses and address their concerns.
- Bring “Manufacturing Week” to Vernon to educate the public on the role Vernon plays in Southern California.
- Continue to find ways to diversify the city revenue sources.
- Work with the public works director to address transportation issues that may impact businesses.
- Begin the process of rebranding the city.
- Continue to recognize the accomplishments of Vernon businesses and their impact to the region.

Election 2016

Vernon will hold its first mail-ballot election of 2016 on Tuesday, April 12. Voters will elect one member to the Vernon city council. The voter registration deadline for the April 12 election is Monday, March 28. For voter registration forms or election information, go to www.cityofvernon.org/election or call the Vernon City Clerk at (323) 583-8811, ext. 546.



Below is the “modernized” Vernon city seal design concept being considered by council members (see Vernon’s historic seal design at left):



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Below are two Vernon logo design concepts being reviewed by council members:



“Gustnado” Hits Southeast Vernon as City Prepares for More El Niño Storms

An El Niño storm-driven tornado-like funnel touched down briefly in Vernon at 12:40 p.m. on January 5, causing extensive damage to three commercial buildings and serious damage to as many as five others in the southeast corridor of the city.

The so-called “gustnado,” or microburst down-draft, occurred in the 4400 block of 49th Street near Loma Vista Avenue, 4700 block of 50th Street near Loma Vista Avenue and 4100 block of Bandini Boulevard. Flying debris from the “gustnado” damaged parked cars and trucks in the immediate area.

The rare tornado-like activity caused downed power lines, resulting in power outages to 30 businesses. Vernon Gas & Electric utility operations personnel and electricity troubleshooting crews responded quickly and fully restored power to affected businesses in less than 10 minutes. Vernon Public Works building inspectors “red-tagged” three buildings that suffered major roof damage caused by the “gustnado” at 4424 49th Street, 4501 E. 50th Street and 5010 Loma Vista Avenue.

Vernon firefighters and Hazmat crews responded to the scene with six units and Vernon police responded with five. Fifteen



public works personnel surveyed and assessed the damage to commercial structures, secured the “gustnado” damage zone and managed debris clean-up efforts. Police and fire officials reported no injuries as a result of the wind-blown damage.

According to Scott Rigg, Vernon Public Works and Water superintendent, the city has better than average street drainage and Vernon roadways typically only experience minor localized flooding during major rainfall. Vernon Public Works crews cleaned the city’s entire inventory of catch basins to

reduce possible flooding during torrential rains. Supplies of sand and bags needed to make sandbags are available at Vernon fire stations and public works yards for any business or resident needing an extra level of property protection from rising water.

With more El Niño storms expected to hit Southern California over the next three months, Vernon Fire, Police and Health Department officials urge residents and businesses to prepare for an anticipated onslaught of wet weather and possible flooding. Follow the city’s storm safety guidelines to help protect your life and property »

Vernon Police, Firefighters Conduct Tactical Drill to Sharpen Coordinated Response to

With the current threat of “active shooter” incidents in schools, movie theaters and other local businesses, the Vernon Police Department (VPD) and Vernon Fire Department (VFD) conducted an active shooter training exercise for patrol officers and fire personnel. The exercise was conducted inside Vernon City Hall and included assistance from local law enforcement agencies, such as officers from the Huntington Park and Bell Police Departments.

Law enforcement officers from different agencies formed contact entry teams and responded to a simulated active shooter event, neutralized the threat and established “warm zones,” which are areas that have been deemed safe.

Once warm zones were established, officers escorted firefighters into the area to treat and evacuate the “wounded.” Having firefighters enter warm areas in an “active shooter” scene is now part of a new concept known as Rescue Task Force (RTF) that public safety departments nationwide have established in the wake of other mass shootings.

Fire personnel enter areas considered a “warm zone” with armed officers covering them while they treat victims. The goal is to get medics to shooting victims as soon as possible and evacuate the wounded. The training exercise provides officers and firefighters the opportunity to work together and establish common tactics, techniques and communication.

Storm Safety Guidelines for Businesses and Residents in Flood-Prone Areas

- Obtain and prepare sandbags before a storm! Bags and sand are available at all four Vernon Fire Stations.
- Fill sandbags one-half full with sand or soil, fold top of sandbag down and rest bag on its folded top. Place in areas where needed. Never underestimate the strength of swift water and debris flows!
- Monitor your radio and television news closely for information concerning weather conditions and flooding in your area.
- Develop an emergency plan that all family members understand. Know how to contact loved ones, in case you are not able to return to your home because of flood-related incidents.
- Clear rain gutters and drains to avoid possible roof collapses and other property damage.
- Clear truck docks of loose material or debris and make sure the water pumps are working.
- Have enough water and food on hand to supply your family for at least a 72-hour period. Also, remember to include a radio and flashlight with fresh batteries in your emergency kit for use, if necessary.
- Be alert! Debris basins can overflow. Be familiar with the area where you live. Have alternate escape routes in mind if you're asked to evacuate your home.

Storm Safety Guidelines for People and Motorists Outdoors During a Storm

- Stay out of flood control channels. Avoid catch basins, canyons and natural waterways that are susceptible to flash floods during periods of heavy rain.
- Do not attempt to cross flooded areas. Never enter moving water.
- If flooding traps you in your car or truck, stay with the vehicle. If necessary, climb to the roof of your vehicle and wait for emergency assistance.
- If you're isolated, seek the highest ground available and wait for help.
- Remember, use common sense. Avoid known problem areas.
- If you see a person who has been swept into moving water, do not enter the water to attempt a solo rescue. Call 911 immediately to summon trained emergency swift water rescue personnel. If possible, throw some sort of flotation device to the person moving in swift water.
- Know how and where to shut off all utilities. Remember, water and electricity do not mix.

For more information, call Vernon Fire at (323) 583-8811, ext. 280 or Vernon Health at (323) 583-8811, ext. 233 on Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. **In an emergency, call 911.**

“Active Shooter” Incidents





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Finance News Brief

The 2015 audit prepared by the city's independent audit firm Vasquez & Company, LLP has resulted in an "unmodified finding" as reported to city council members on January 19. Peggy McBride, Vasquez & Co.'s audit team leader, said, "The city's financial statements are in order, and no adjustments are needed."

According to Ms. McBride, Vernon's 2015 audit found no financial or information technology system control weaknesses or policy compliance issues. Any anomalies that were flagged during the audit review were brought to the city's attention and resolved. She termed the audit's findings "a positive report" with "no red flags" and credited the professionalism of the city finance department staff for their skillful preparation of the city's financial statements.