Passionate Public Servant: Jeff Prang

West Hollywood, California (Thursday, August 14, 2008) - Few people have anything but nice things to say about West Hollywood’s Mayor Jeffrey Prang, and even those who disagree with him carefully make note of their respect for the man and for his contribution to the betterment of the commonweal.

Born in Detroit in 1962 and raised in Warren, Michigan, Mr. Prang graduated from James Madison College at Michigan State University with a B.A. in International Relations. He played the trombone in the St. Claire Shores Symphony Orchestra and the Michigan State Marching Band.

Mayor Prang recently switched jobs from Los Angeles County Sheriff Leroy D. Baca’s Special Assistant to assistant City Manager of the City of Pico Rivera.

He thrives on public service and has spent nearly his entire career in it, having been Director of Public Information for LA Department of Animal Services, Deputy to LA City Council President Ruth Galanter and Asst. to LA County Assessor Kenneth P. Hahn.

A resident of West Hollywood since 1987, Councilmember Prang has been active in civic affairs for over two decades.

He served as President of the West Hollywood Democratic Club, and as a Member and Chair of the Rent Stabilization Commission from 1994-1997 and has been elected to four terms as a Member of the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee and was honored as “Democrat of the Year” in 2000.
He served as an alternate Delegate to the 2000 Democratic National Convention.

Jeffrey Prang was first elected to the West Hollywood City Council in 1997 and re-elected in 2001 and served as Mayor from 2000-01 and 2003-04.

He cruised to a record high vote total and a first place finish in the March, 2005 elections.

WeHoNews.com - What does it mean to you to be Mayor of West Hollywood?

JP - In California contract cities like ours, mayors have little actual power beyond the ceremonial functions and presiding over the council meetings.

That said, being Mayor of a city of such prominence on social issues as West Hollywood provides me a chance to weigh in on and influence the great social issues of the day.

WeHo isn’t only an urban village, it’s part of the world community. We affect the way the world turns by our public policies, such as on gay issues, gun issues and women’s rights.

Because we’re a hub of fashion, entertainment, media and gay culture, we have an effect on the world far larger than you might think our 37,000 population might have. As Mayor, I get to ride that wave and make an outsized impact on our society.

WeHoNews.com - What do you plan to accomplish in this year’s service as Mayor?

JP - I have two main missions - first and foremost, make the city work well.

When people call the Sheriff they want a deputy to show up quickly, when they want their trash removed, they want it done sooner, not later.

Constituent services are at the top of my list whether I’m Mayor or not.

Second, I want to lead the fight to stop the anti-gay marriage proposition (Prop 8) in November and keep our right to marry, as well as lead the fight to elect a President Obama, who shares our city’s progressive outlook.
I earn the right to lead on the symbolic issues by tending to the residents’ needs, so I hope you’ll call my office with any concerns you might have about life in WeHo.

WeHoNews.com - You’ll be kicking off that Capital Improvement campaign - what are you looking most forward to?

JP - Mayors seldom see any project they kick-off because they serve for only one year.

The new Library’s groundbreaking is scheduled for April, 2009, so I’m hopeful I can turn that first spade of dirt for that important project.

WeHoNews.com - Do you have any initiatives on housing or historic preservation in mind?

JP - Our historic preservation review, which we revisited beginning last year, is moving along well.

Our Historic Preservation Commission did a review of other city’s policies to see where we could improve our own, and they’re considering proposing a mandatory Environmental Impact Report on all developments that would demolish any building over a certain age, as other cities do.

That way, when a developer buys a building to demolish and replace, they won’t be blindsided by neighborhood demands for an EIR and they can factor that expense into their plans.

I have nothing but praise for our staff and the commission for attempting to find solutions and to provide stability to developers so they can avoid urban guerrilla tactics.

Another positive step the city is making is seriously considering a Courtyard Thematic District and the Fountain Corridor, two ideas that have great merit.

I also understand that some landlords holding historic apartment buildings have trouble recouping maintenance costs from their tenants because of our rent control laws, so I would be willing to discuss with the Chamber of Commerce how the city could streamline the process to allow them to do the maintenance that will save the buildings.
We’re very strong in our approach to rent control, but we also want to be fair to the landlords.

WeHoNews.com - How will WeHo have changed after a full year of a Prang Mayorship?

JP - Next summer we will have broken ground on the library, set in place a funding plan for the $120 million Capital Improvement campaign, have design plans for most of the projects, see the end of the building moratorium and a new General plan for the City.

The demolition derby has stopped, and we have another ten months to create a plan that’ll grow our city in ways consistent with our progressive ideals.

You can contact Council member Jeffrey Prang at West Hollywood City Hall at (323) 848-6460.

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