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I used to complain about not having a majority behind me, and now [with the election of Letty Lopez and Dario Castellanos] I got my wish," Wu said. "The full responsibility is on our shoulders now."

---**Tony Wu, Incumbent City Council Candidate**

November 7, 2018, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

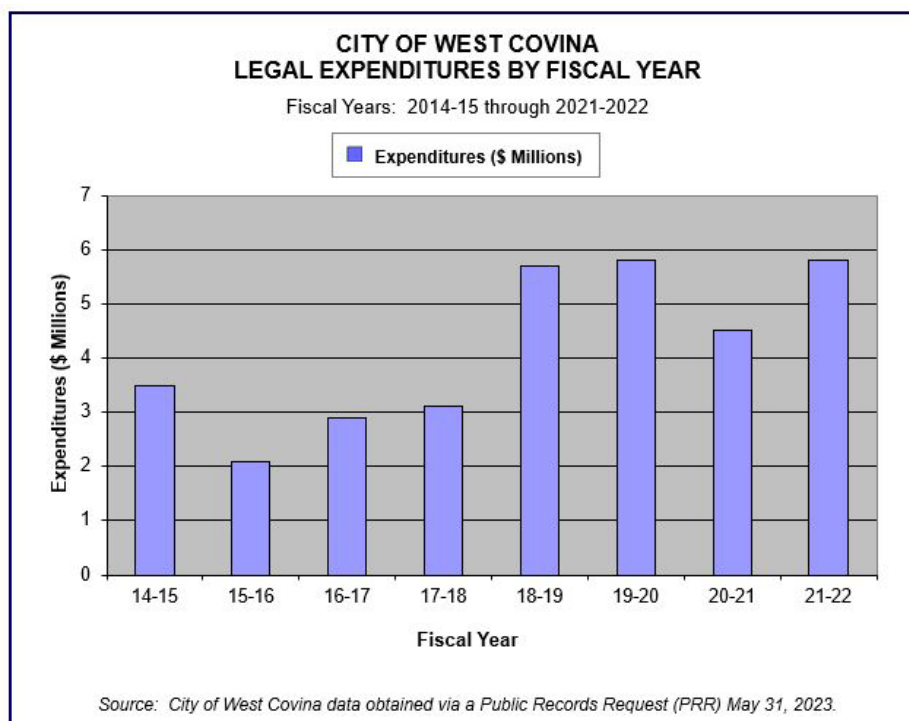
LEGAL EXPENDITURES

## Reckless City Council Decisions Cost City Millions

When Tony Wu bragged in 2018 that he had the three votes necessary to control the West Covina City Council, residents did not fully understand the changes to our city he intended to impose. That situation would soon change.

- At the March 15, 2019 City Council meeting, the City Attorney reported out from Closed Session that the City Council had directed him, by a 4-1 Council vote, to prepare a separation agreement for the then City Manager. That separation agreement was the first in a long line of department heads who were "fired" or forced out.\* Many rank and file employees left. West Covina's "organizational memory" was gone. Change was coming.
- In addition to replacing personnel, the City Council majority authorized preliminary efforts on major projects such as building a large resort hotel development at the BKK landfill, starting a municipal health department, operating a Sportsplex, and selling city property to developers. These projects were all designed to fundamentally change our suburban city to an urban city--with little to no financial analysis and minimal public input.

***The Council majority's actions, although different, have something in common: they increased city legal expenses to almost double what they had been before the Wu council majority took over as the following chart shows:***



Prepared by West Covina Neighbors, June 2023

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## **Our Concern**

The increase in legal expenditures since 2018 is due to mismanagement and a lack of due diligence conducting city business. Future increases in legal expenses will be due in large part to lawsuits filed by employees regarding various wrongful termination charges. Employees, even "at will" employees, have rights.

The recent \$4.1 million awarded to the former Fire Chief on his wrongful termination case, is the first of several wrongful termination lawsuits filed against the city. Additional lawsuits are anticipated. It looks like legal expenditures are going even higher. The metaphor that comes to mind is the Wu council majority is a train wreck.

## **Changes We Would Like to See**

The number of lawsuits filed against the City of West Covina reflects a failure of leadership and management. Elected officials and staff must take steps to proactively mitigate risk by adopting policies and procedures focused on reducing exposure to litigation. West Covina residents deserve and expect elected officials and city staff to recognize they have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure the city is well-managed and its financial condition is sound. Change is needed.

## **Additional Information**

City News Service. (2023, May 12). Former West Covina police chief's age discrimination suit trial delayed. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*.

Henry, J. (2023, May 5). Former West Covina fire chief awarded \$4.1 million in wrongful termination suit. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*.

Montoya, R. (2023, May 18). West Covina holds hearing on event controversy amid criminal investigation against councilmember. *SACMedia*.

Valdes, G. (2023, May 17). West Covina councilmember under LA County Sheriff investigation, officials said. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*.

## **Note**

\* During the first two years of the Wu council majority rule, our city lost the following department heads (senior staff employees) due to firing, resignation in lieu of discharge, or forced retirement: City Manager; two Assistant City Managers; Finance Director; Human Resources / Risk Management Director; Fire Chief; Police Chief; City Attorney; Planning Director; Assistant City Clerk.

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