

Temple City officials hope former mayors' bribery conviction closes sad chapter

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TEMPLE CITY - Closing the book on the largest public corruption case in the city, officials said they can finally move on and regain the public's trust.

"It will bring closure to an unfortunate event in our city's history," said Temple City mayor Tom Chavez. "The charges have plagued us for the past couple of years."

Cathé Wilson, Temple City's former mayor was convicted of six felony counts of bribery and perjury on Monday by a seven-woman, five-man Los Angeles Superior Court jury.

Wilson, 78, faces a maximum of nine years in state prison when she returns for sentencing on June 2, according to prosecutors.

She was indicted along with Judy Wong, a former mayor, and Scott Carwile, who unsuccessfully ran for City Council.

Wong pleaded no contest to 10 felony counts of bribery, solicitation of bribery and perjury. She began serving a 16-month state prison sentence in December.

Carwile pleaded guilty to one felony count of perjury for failing to report a \$3,000 cash contribution to his campaign from developer Randy Wang. He was sentenced to three years' probation and no jail time if he testified truthfully against Wilson.

"I wouldn't say that I was surprised or not, I don't have personal feelings, but as an attorney I have confidence in our legal system," Chavez said. "Initially it affected the city, our citizens had a certain amount of distrust for our elected officials."

The City Council has worked hard to

move away from the scandal and build trust among Temple City residents, Chavez said.

"I think the public has moved on, we don't get as many questions about it or questions in council meetings," Chavez said.

The charges stemmed from bribes that were received from developers as a \$75 million mixed-use project was making its way through the City Hall.

Developer Randy Wang accused city officials of taking bribes after they tried to take the land where the Piazza project was to be built through eminent domain.

A smaller version, now called the Gateway project, is moving forward with Wang under new leadership on the City Council, Chavez said.

During his testimony against Wilson, Wang said



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he gave \$30,000 in bribes to officials through his project manager Jay Liyanage out of fear that his project would not break ground.

Temple City resident Joe Walker, who attended Wilson's trial, said he hopes the community and judge show mercy when it comes to passing sentence.

"I hope the rest of us who work daily to make this city and area a better place can learn from this and acknowledge her many good works," Walker said in a prepared statement.

"For many people in Temple City, this case ended long ago when a new City Council took over and none of them had ties to the previous regime. Everyone I know wants to move on from this."

Temple City Councilman Fernando Vizcarra said he kept an open mind through Wilson's trial and hopes the conclusion of Wilson's trial "lends a certain amount of closure" to the city.

"It's been hanging out there, pretty high profile, hopefully it will go away and let the citizens as well as the Council concentrate," Vizcarra said. "It's a distraction and very sad thing."

He maintains that most residents no longer distrust the Council.

"It cast a shadow on all the workings of the city . .. sometimes you get painted with the same brush when something like this happens."

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