

West County Newsletter

DECEMBER 2014

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A message from Supervisor John Gioia



As 2014 draws to a close and we enter the holiday season, I'm reflecting on my goals for the New Year.

I start a new four-year term of office, become Chair of the Board of Supervisors, and end my term as [President](#) of the [California State Association of Counties](#).

I look forward to making progress on a number of important projects and starting new ones. Many of these are covered in this newsletter, including:

My highest local priority continues to be preserving vital medical care services in our community and solving Doctors Hospital's fiscal crisis. For details, check the [OpEd piece](#) that recently ran in the Contra Costa Times, which is also included in [this newsletter](#).

I'm proud that the Board of Supervisors has successfully improved the County's financial foundation resulting in [Standard and Poor's upgrading our credit rating](#) to the highest possible – AAA. As Board Chair, I will continue to focus on strengthening the County's fiscal condition and restoring services as we recover from one of the worst recessions in our history.

I'm excited to work with non-profit Urban Tilth to build an [urban farm and educational center](#) in North Richmond to help young people learn about environmental stewardship and healthy eating.

As a member of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the California Air Resources Board, I will continue providing leadership to improve air quality and address climate change. For example, I'm leading an effort at the Air District to [cut refinery emissions by 20%](#).

Our [West County Family Justice Center](#) moves to its permanent new home in 2015 as part of a visionary countywide system to prevent domestic violence and sexual abuse. I'm committed to making sure Contra Costa continues to be the leader in this area.

I always encourage residents to get involved in local democracy! One way to do this is by serving on a county commission. Consider the openings [listed in this newsletter](#).

As we enjoy the Holidays, it's important to remember those among us who are struggling. Our annual [Verde School Toy and Hoodie drive](#), and [local Food Bank drive](#) are both great opportunities to help others.

Warm wishes,

- John

WE CAN ALL SAVE DOCTORS HOSPITAL

“Op Ed” published in the Contra Costa Times

Those of us who live in West County understand the importance of [Doctors Medical Center](#) (DMC) and we know that its closure will have serious consequences on healthcare. That’s why we have been working diligently to save our public community hospital since its bankruptcy in 2006.

Since 2006, we have successfully cut the hospital’s losses in half and passed a parcel tax bringing in more than \$5 million annually in new revenue. But this hasn’t been enough. Not when Medicare and Medi-Cal do not fully cover the medical care costs of 80 percent of the hospital’s patients.

Since the hospital’s recent downsizing and the August closure of its emergency room to 911 ambulances, the imminent risk of total closure has become very real. Hundreds have rallied to save the hospital.

After discussions with [DMC](#) and [County Health Department](#) staff, nurses and physicians, the [City of Richmond](#), [Chevron](#), the [Hospital Council of Northern and Central California](#), [LifeLong Medical Center](#), the DMC Closure Aversion Committee, as well as community, labor and business leaders, we have developed a multi-stakeholder five-year plan to save our full-service community hospital.

This plan depends on financial contributions from all key stakeholders. Let’s be clear, the situation is challenging. DMC needs to close an \$18 million annual operating deficit and meet new state seismic guidelines. But if all of the stakeholders step up and participate in this plan, discussed at the DMC Governing Board’s November meeting, our public community hospital can be saved. Losing one stakeholder’s participation loses everything. Here’s how it works.

First, Contra Costa County waives repayment of its cash advances to DMC saving the hospital \$3 million annually. Second, other East Bay hospitals provide DMC with a debt service subsidy. Third, additional operating efficiencies are implemented to save money. Fourth, current labor negotiations with DMC employee unions produce savings. Fifth, Richmond provides DMC with \$15 million from its [Chevron Community Benefit Fund](#). Sixth, a revived Hospital Foundation raises funding the corporate and foundation community. Seventh, develop a new teaching and residency program at the hospital to improve revenue reimbursements. Finally, we pass a West County property tax measure— one that is much less than the May 2014 measure that failed.

This strategy includes a plan to meet California’s seismic requirements by 2020. Funding will come from a new property tax measure and accumulation of a capital reserve.

This won’t be easy. It will take commitment, sacrifice and compromise. But, when the hospital filed for bankruptcy in 2006, few believed it would still be open today. We know that innovative strategies and old-fashioned hard work can make a difference.

Some call this a “Hail Mary” pass. It may be. But we are committed to working with others to make it happen. We would not do this if we didn’t think it could succeed. It will take all the stakeholders working together to make this plan work.

John Gioia, *Contra Costa County Supervisor, Richmond*
Eric Zell, *Chair, West Contra Costa Healthcare District, Richmond*

“DMC needs to close an \$18 million annual operating deficit and meet new state seismic guidelines.”

CUTTING REFINERY EMISSIONS BY 20%

“Supervisor Gioia is leading an historic effort at the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to cut local refinery emissions by 20%”

Supervisor Gioia is leading an historic effort at the [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#) to cut local refinery emissions by 20%. At its October 15, 2014 meeting, the Air District Board of Directors approved a resolution proposed by Supervisor Gioia to move forward with plans to prevent refinery emissions from increasing and simultaneously develop a strategy to reduce emissions by 20%.

The Air District is scheduled to adopt a new regulation in Spring 2015 which would limit emissions of the five Bay Area refineries to current levels, disclose the grades of crude oil they use in refining, and expand community air monitoring of emissions.

Air District staff is currently developing a plan to cut refinery emissions 20% by 2020.

Much of that reduction would come through the installation of new technology at refineries to replace older equipment.

Supervisor Gioia (who is Chair of the agency’s Stationary Source Committee) believes that the Air District should be aggressive in requiring refineries to install “best available control technologies” as a means to reduce air pollution and improve public health. He stated at the Air District meeting that “Our goal is to have the cleanest refineries in the nation here in the Bay Area.”

While Bay Area refinery emissions have decreased over the past 25 years, the Air District believes there is still a need for additional reductions to make our air cleaner and healthier.

Urban Farming Growing in West County

Supervisor Gioia is working to expand urban agriculture in West County by increasing the amount of food that is grown locally and providing educational opportunities to learn about urban agriculture, environmental stewardship, and healthy eating.

North Richmond Urban Farm

After visiting a successful urban farm in Portland, Supervisor Gioia was inspired to develop a similar one in West County. He is now partnering with local non-profit [Urban Tilth](#) to develop a new urban farm and educational center in North Richmond. The County is providing Urban Tilth with a three-acre site and funding. Local youth and community members are taking the lead in planning and developing the farm and center.

The project will include a local farm stand, community garden, neighborhood gathering area, classes about healthy eating and environmental stewardship, and jobs for youth. Look for future updates and the chance to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables locally grown in North Richmond.

County Explores New Backyard Chicken & Animal Zoning

After hearing from many residents who want to “grow their own,” Supervisor Gioia has proposed that the County explore zoning changes to allow households in certain residential areas to keep chickens, bees and goats, or other small animals. Currently, these uses are allowed only on larger lots with special agricultural zoning.

The Board of Supervisors has authorized County planners to study zoning changes to allow chickens and small animals in residential areas. Proposed changes will incorporate best practices in order to minimize impacts on neighbors. These include limiting the number of chickens or animals allowed per lot and specifying the type of required enclosures.

County staff is expected to present the Board with options in 2015 after soliciting public input.

For more contact [Terrance Cheung](#) at 510-231-8688 or [Luz Gomez](#) at 510-231-8689.

KEEPING THE COUNTY ON SOUND FINANCIAL FOOTING

Contra Costa County goes into 2015 on stronger financial footing than it has in many years. From 2008 to 2012, Contra Costa County’s property tax revenue declined by over 11%. That trend has reversed and revenue has increased by about 13% since 2013.

The County passed a structurally balanced General Fund budget for each of the past three years by emphasizing strong management, budget flexibility and sound financial policies.

After a period of decreased expenditures and reduced workforce, the County is looking to restore services and address its \$270 million backlog in deferred maintenance of buildings and infrastructure.

The County has recently negotiated wage increases with two-thirds of its employees and is still negotiating with other employee groups to do the same.

Last year, Standard and Poor’s upgraded Contra Costa’s long-term credit rating to the highest possible rating – AAA, in recognition of the strong fiscal leadership by the Board of Supervisors working with management and employees.

The County’s audited reserves are now 18.3% of general fund expenditures. Over the past eight years, the County reduced its retiree health liability by 62%. This liability will be fully paid off by 2040.

“Last year, Standard and Poor’s upgraded Contra Costa’s long-term credit rating to the highest possible rating – AAA, in recognition of the strong fiscal leadership by the Board of Supervisors working with management and employees.”

Contra Costa: Leading the Nation in Domestic Violence Prevention

Contra Costa is the first in the nation to establish a countywide network of Family Justice Centers to provide one-stop services for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The West County Family Justice Center, which has served more than 700 clients since opening in 2011, will join similar centers being planned for Concord and East County to establish a network of seamless services for residents throughout the county.

Our County’s efforts have resulted in Contra Costa being one of four in the nation to recently receive federal funding to expand domestic violence prevention services.

The Board of Supervisors also voted in September 2014 to raise, by one dollar, the fee for death, birth, and marriage certificate copies to help fund the new family justice network.



Family Justice Centers bring together County departments and community organizations to coordinate wrap-around services (such as legal help, housing, food, and counseling) in one location for victims of violence and sexual or elder abuse.

Supervisor Gioia worked with the Richmond Police Department and community organizations to create the West County Family Justice Center, which will soon move to a permanent home in a County donated building. The center is part of the County’s groundbreaking Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence Initiative launched by the Board of Supervisors in 2001.

For more contact Terrance Cheung at 510-231-8688.

The Joy of Giving!

“The hoodies will be part of the school uniform, reminding students to “Work Hard! Get Smart! And Be Nice!” The toy drive continues.”

A traditional part of the holidays is donating to a favorite charity. Supervisor Gioia is gearing up for two holiday giving opportunities -- his 16th annual **Verde Elementary School Toy and Hoodie Drive** and the **Contra Costa County Employees’ Annual Holiday Food Bank fund drive.**

Holiday Food Fight for Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties

Every year since 2002, Contra Costa County employees hold an annual Holiday Food Fight to raise money for the [Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano](http://www.foodbankccs.org), in a friendly competition with Solano County employees. The Food Bank currently serves 125,000 residents in this county alone.

It’s easy to participate. Simply go to www.foodbankccs.org and click on the donate button. The website menu includes an option for “**Friends of Contra Costa County Employees.**” Or, if you prefer, donations can be mailed to P.O. Box 6324, Concord, CA 94524.

Verde Elementary Toy and Hoodie Drive



This year’s holiday drive for Verde School has a new twist! Instead of collecting winter coats, we plan to raise enough money to order printed hoodies for every student. The hoodies will be part of the school uniform, reminding students to “Work Hard! Get Smart! And Be Nice!” The toy drive continues.

Checks or cash donations for hoodies and donations of new toys are being accepted at Supervisor Gioia’s office at:
11780 San Pablo Avenue, Suite D
El Cerrito, CA 94530
(Just north of El Cerrito Del Norte BART)

Donations must be received by December 12. Please make checks payable to “*Neighborhood House of North Richmond*” and write “*Verde Toy Drive*” on your check.

For more on both of these, contact [James Lyons](mailto:James.Lyons@cocobos.org) at 510-231-8792.

New Health Clinic to Open at Kennedy High School

Every high school in West County now has student health services on campus, thanks to a partnership between Supervisor Gioia's office, the West Contra Costa School District, Contra Costa Health Services, Kaiser and local non-profits.

The newest clinic, at Kennedy High School in Richmond, will offer expanded services with the help of a \$500,000 federal grant obtained by Contra Costa County.

After months of planning and construction, the Kennedy clinic opens in early 2015 and will serve the entire school population with possible future expansion to the surrounding community.

At the new site, County Health Services will provide 40 hours per week of primary and preventive health care, along with dental care. Services will be offered when school is in session.

The clinic will be staffed by family nurse practitioners, registered nurses, a dentist, a community health worker, a health educator, and a registered dental assistant.

For more information contact [Luz Gomez](mailto:Luz.Gomez@cocobos.org) at 510-231-8689.

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Other Elected Officials

House of Representatives:

Congressmember-elect Mark DeSaulnier
(510) 262-6500 - Richmond Office

State Senate & Assembly:

State Senate—Vacant
(District 7)
(925) 602-6593 – District Office

Senator Loni Hancock
(District 9)
(510) 286-1333 - District Office

Assemblymember Tony Thurmond
(District 14)
(510) 286-1400 - District Office

Assemblymember Susan Bonilla
(District 11)
(925) 372-7990 - District Office

Commission & Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in community issues? Want to get involved? The County has numerous citizen boards that advise the Supervisors on a range of issues. For a complete list of openings check the county's website at contra.napanet.net/maddybook. Click on Board Advisory Body Information. Applications are available on-line, or through our office. There are current openings on:

Arts and Culture Commission

Roger Renn, 925-646-2278

Commission for Women

Phyllis Gordon, info@womenscommission.com

Emergency Medical Care Committee

Leticia Andreas, 925-646-4690

Family and Children's Trust Committee

Juliana Carson, (925) 313-1696

Fire Protection District—Alternate

Shawn deLeuze, 925-941-3318

Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission

Cindy Nieman, 925-313-4188

Library Commission—Alternate

Kelly Corinne, 925-927-3206

Regular Public Meetings

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Meets at 9:00 a. m. every Tuesday at the County Administration Building, 651 Pine St, in Martinez

El Cerrito City Council

Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of every month at the El Cerrito City Hall, 10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito

El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month at the El Sobrante Library, 4191 Appian Way, off San Pablo Dam Road

Kensington Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 7 p.m. the last Tuesday of every month at the Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington

North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 5 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month at 515 Silver Avenue in North Richmond

Pinole City Council

Meets at 6 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday at Pinole City Hall, 2131 Pear Street, Pinole

Richmond City Council

Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday at Richmond City Hall, 440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond

San Pablo City Council

Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Monday of every month at San Pablo City Hall, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, Maple Hall, Building Two, San Pablo

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www.flickr.com/johngioia2013



www.youtube.com/SupervisorGioia