



## March News 2013

I am pleased to be able to lead this month's E-news with the excellent news that the County of Marin's credit rating has been upgraded to AAA by Moody's Credit Rating Service—the highest issuer rating possible for a government agency. This upgrade affirms the County's fiscal soundness and prudent and disciplined restructuring strategy implemented over the past five years.

Other issues and topics touched on in this issue: children and education, Plan Bay Area and a wrap-up on the Community Services Program. Finally, D2 enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the launch of my new County facebook page so that we will be able to provide more timely updates on these important issues and others, as well as info about local events and opportunities for your involvement. Please connect with me at [www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice](http://www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice) by "liking" my Facebook page.

As always, if you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to call me at 415-473-7331 or email to [krice@marincounty.org](mailto:krice@marincounty.org).

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### **Moody's Upgrades County of Marin's Credit Rating**

Moody's has upgraded the County of Marin's credit rating to Triple A, the highest issuer rating possible, affirming the County's prudent fiscal management and disciplined approach to reducing our long-term obligations. According to the press release issued by Moody's last week, *"The upgrade primarily reflects the county's sound financial management, demonstrated throughout the economic downturn, and its proactive approach to reducing financial pressures posed by pensions and post-employment benefits. The county's financial profile has consistently compared very favorably with other major metropolitan counties in California and the US, and these recent cost-cutting measures position the county well to maintain that comparative advantage. The county's financial health and sound management is reflected in ample General Fund liquidity and reserves, a low debt burden, and sustained structural budgetary balance."*

Moody's upgrade validates the County of Marin's successful long-term restructuring process—which over the past five years resulted in a 10% reduction in workforce, \$30 million structural budget reduction, the utilization of healthy reserves and one-time funds to decrease unfunded pension liability, and the establishment of a retiree health trust and commitment to fully fund its retiree health liabilities.

My thanks to our County Administrator and his team who have provided the strategic framework for the restructuring of County government, and to every member of the County family. The past five years have not been easy ones for public employees as we adjust at every level of government to a fiscal reality of declining or stagnant revenues versus growing resources, at the same time demands for services and programs is increasing. The County workforce has rolled with the punches, been creative and adaptable, and remained committed to providing high quality service for the residents of Marin.

For more information, go to the [County's press release](#).

### **Education – The “Fourth E” in Achieving a Sustainable Marin**

The Board approved the addition of a fourth “E” to our guiding principles around sustainability (Economy, Environment, Equity and now, Education) with the adoption of a resolution brought forward by Supervisors Arnold and Adams on March 12. The “Importance of Education” resolution recognizes that children are Marin's most important asset and that quality education for all children in Marin is an investment that the entire County will benefit from.

With adoption of this resolution, the Board commits to making education a priority in its advocacy and policy adoption when applicable and supporting initiatives that further the values expressed in the resolution. In addition, the Board will add language to its Federal and State Legislative Programs and Policy Guidelines to support State and Federal Legislative efforts to improve and enhance education.

As an advocate for quality, equitable educational opportunities for all Marin children, I am proud that we have added Education to our goals of sustainability. I look forward to engaging the broader community in the critical conversation about ensuring quality, cradle to career education for all our children. You can read the full [Board resolution](#), and for a report on challenges to full educational opportunity for many children and families in our community, click on [MarinKids 2012 Data and Action Guide Summary](#).

### **Plan Bay Area – Draft Environmental Impact Report and Plan Released**

Plan Bay Area is a long- range regional plan establishing guidelines and goals for integrating transportation, housing and land use for the nine county Bay Area. It does not supersede or override local authority. The Plan was developed by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission

(MTC) and is aimed at supporting a growing economy through housing and transportation planning and development that prevents sprawl, preserves open space and agricultural lands, and reduces greenhouse gases. The coordinated effort grew out of [California Senate Bill 375](#) which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As Marin County's representative on ABAG (replacing Supervisor Susan Adams last month) I will be participating in the public hearings and voting on final certification of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and adoption of Plan Bay Area later this year. While I have not been a participant in the Plan's development at the regional level until now, I have participated in discussions and cast votes at the local level that have resulted in reductions in projections for Marin's jobs and household growth.

The concept of making informed, prospective decisions around land use, transportation and housing going into the future makes sense. In fact, Marin County has developed the way it has because former community leaders and policy makers looked ahead, anticipated economic and development trends and exercised prospective land use decisions. These decisions placed a high value on preventing sprawl, on preserving open space, and on focusing growth in the urban/101 corridor – hence our corridor designations in the [County Wide Plan](#).

Plan Bay Area is a regional effort to achieve similar objectives throughout the Bay Area with the added urgency of addressing our most significant new reality--climate change--- by reducing greenhouse gas emissions of which transportation is the largest contributor. Thus the need to link housing, jobs and transportation.

Many opportunities exist for you to learn more about [Draft Plan Bay Area](#) and the [Draft Environmental Impact Report](#). MTC and ABAG have scheduled public hearings in each of the nine Bay Area counties for comment on the Draft Plan Bay Area. Each public hearing will include an open house to give attendees an opportunity to view displays and ask questions followed by a chance to provide oral comments or use a comment station. The Marin meeting will be held on Monday, April 29 (6-7:30pm open house; 7-9pm public hearing) at the Marin Center in San Rafael. Public hearings are also scheduled for comment on the Draft EIR - the Marin public hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 16 (10am to noon) at the Embassy Suites Hotel in San Rafael.

In addition, you can comment via an online forum, [Plan Bay Area Town Hall](#) or via email to [info@OneBayArea.org](mailto:info@OneBayArea.org) or to comment on the draft EIR, [eircomments@mtc.ca.gov](mailto:eircomments@mtc.ca.gov). Send your comments via mail to MTC, Plan Bay Area Public Comment, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, CA 94607. For more information about the draft plan, meetings and public outreach, visit <http://onebayarea.org/>. And please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

## **Community Services Program Update**

The County of Marin has had a district-based Community Services Program for over 20 years with the purpose of providing small grants to community groups and

organizations, non-profits and local agencies in support of projects, programs and initiatives that benefit our community. The program's value lies in its flexibility and responsiveness, allowing for a time sensitive response to emergency or emerging needs, as well as funding for projects too small, or of such a nature for which typical grant sources are not available.

Over the years, the program has been the target of criticism by some members of the community and the media, despite nearly universal acknowledgement of the positive role the program plays in supporting valuable community programs and projects. The criticism generally revolves around perception of quid pro quo, or potential for abuse because of the Supervisors' role in the approval and disbursement process. A [Grand Jury report](#) released in December 2012, while finding no evidence of improprieties, and agreeing on the community benefit afforded by the program, made recommendations for a series of changes towards improving transparency, fairness, cost efficiency, program administration and design.

In response to this report, members of the Board of Supervisors (myself included) requested that the County Administrator review the current program and present recommendations for revisions. On March 19, the Board approved a revised program that aims to address perception issues, improve transparency, and reduce administrative cost, while maintaining the valuable community benefits of the existing program. The revised program will go into effect beginning in fiscal year 2013/14, which begins July 1, 2013.

Please know that I am satisfied with the revisions to the Community Services Program and believe the changes will work to address the concerns of the Grand Jury and other critics, without diminishing the value of this important community benefit program. For more information, read the [staff report/recommendation](#) and [draft funding request guidelines](#).

## **Upcoming Local Events**

### **California Trail Days**

**Saturday, April 6, 2013, 9am – 1pm**

Meet at the end of Cedar Ave in Larkspur

Help maintain the King Mountain Loop Trail. This project honoring California Trails days will kick off the Adopt-A-Portion of the King Mountain trail program. Dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes, and bring water. Heavy rain may cancel. If questionable weather, call (415) 473-3778 after 7am on the morning of the event to hear a recorded message if cancelled. Questions: Contact Open Space Volunteer Coordinator Greg Reza at (415) 473-3778 or [GReza@marincounty.org](mailto:GReza@marincounty.org).

### **ABC's of Growing Succulents**

**Saturday, April 20, 2013, 10 – 11am**

San Anselmo Public Library, 110 Tunstead Ave. in San Anselmo

Sponsor: Farm Advisor/UCCE

Event Cost \$5.00

Learn about the origin of succulents and how to incorporate these beauties into your garden. Find out how to grow them in the garden and in containers, and how to keep them alive over our wet and sometimes frosty winters. Learn how easily they can be propagated. Speaker: Master Gardener Jessica Wasserman. Email Marie Smith at [marieftmyers@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marieftmyers@sbcglobal.net) or Toni Gattone at [tonight@comcast.net](mailto:tonight@comcast.net) with any questions. [Click here](#) for more information.

### **Tommy's Space Adventure!**

**Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 7pm**

Fairfax Public Library, 2097 Sir Francis Drake Blvd

Puppet Art Theater presents a show for ages 4 and up. Tommy loves books about outer space and space aliens. His greatest wish is to someday meet a real live space alien. Little does Tommy know his wish is about to come true! For more information, call (415) 457-5629.

### **Old Railroad Grade Hike**

**Monday, April 29, 2013, 9am – 12pm**

Meet on Glen Dr and follow .5 mile to dead end

Enjoy a slow stroll along the old railroad grade, a route that goes in and out of a series of forested valleys separated by open grassland and coastal scrub habitats. A car shuttle will be provided. This walk is for adults and we request that no animals (except service animals) attend. Heavy rain may cancel. If questionable weather, call (415) 893-9527 on the morning of the walk for a recorded message to see if the walk is cancelled. David Herlocker will lead. Questions: Contact David at (415) 893-9508 or [DHerlocker@marincounty.org](mailto:DHerlocker@marincounty.org).

For a complete listing of County events and meetings, visit <http://www.marincounty.org/main/calendar>.

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