

DAMON CONNOLLY

SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 1

April 1, 2015

Dear Friends,

Our first three months at the Civic Center have been action packed! I want to update you on some of the issues that we've picked as top priorities and been working to move forward, including Marinwood Plaza ([see newsflash sent yesterday](#)), Scenic Highway designation of Lucas Valley Road, the Community Service Fund and more.

We have heard from and met with many District 1 constituents and community groups since January 5, and we are committed to continuing these strong lines of communication.

For regular updates on how we are working for you, please like my official County Facebook page by clicking here: www.facebook.com/SupConnolly

Damon



Topics Addressed Below:

- "Local Office Hours"
- Community Service Fund
- Helen Vine Detox Center
- Scenic Highway Update
- RX Drug Abuse in Marin
- Homelessness
- Board-Related Meetings

Future Updates on Marinwood Plaza

To promote consistent, timely and direct communication on the subject of Marinwood Plaza, we've established a dedicated newsflash system where those interested can receive future updates on the issue.

[Click here to receive future newsflashes!](#)

"Local Office Hours" Coming to a Café Near You!

In order to accommodate people who find it inconvenient to get to the Civic Center during normal business hours, we will be scheduling some "local office hours" in communities around the district. Our first office hours will be on Saturday morning, April 4 from 9:30 to 11 at Aroma Café, on Fourth Street in San Rafael, next to the Rafael Movie Theatre. On May 1 we will be at Marinwood Market from 4:30-6pm. These opportunities are intended to provide for informal conversation on issues of interest to you. Future dates will be scheduled for Andy's Market on Pt. San Pedro Road and on Fifth Avenue in Sun Valley, Bogie's Café near the Civic Center and Scotty's Market in Terra Linda.

Assessing the Community Service Fund

After voicing my opinion and voting against the first round of Community Service Fund Grants that came before the board in 2015, I've been appointed to a subcommittee with Board President Katie Rice to explore the future of this program. We have met with the County Administrator to discuss concerns with the program.

The main concerns that I have heard in the community are centered around the Supervisors' role in the process, and the lack of transparency and public trust in that process. This fund was the subject of a Civil Grand Jury Report and Supplemental Report which acknowledged that improvements had been made to the process, but concluded that there is still work to be done: "The Grand Jury congratulates the BOS and the CAO for the steps they have taken thus far in attempting to improve the CSF process. It is clear to us that the Supervisors have made a good faith attempt not only to create greater clarity and transparency for the Fund but also to struggle with the issue of eliminating, or at least lessening, the influence of individual Supervisors over the process - the issue the Grand Jury regards as the most serious of the CSF weaknesses." And, "All the changes thus far are steps in the right direction. Nonetheless, the opportunity for individual Supervisors to direct grants to their favorite causes has not yet been eliminated...which leaves the Supervisors open to legitimate criticism from the community."

[View the entire report online by clicking here.](#)

I agree that existing reform has not gone far enough in addressing these concerns. We are exploring how these types of grants could be part of the regular budget process and be subject to a more public discussion by the Board. Most importantly, we need to determine the appropriate role for the Supervisors in the process. We will keep you updated as this exploration continues.

Helen Vine Detox Center

I am part of the full court press underway to try to find a location for the Helen Vine Detox Center; its current lease expires at the end of March, 2016 and cannot be renewed. The Center needs around 7000 sq. ft. to provide detox services to men and women. The location must be convenient for law enforcement, as many people who come to the center have been picked up by the police as a result of a complaint, and it is up to the officer to determine where the person is best served: the detox center, County Jail or a hospital emergency department.

Failure to find a location for this service means that the public will bear the costs of more unnecessary emergency room visits and detention in County Jail, only to have the person return to the street again the following day. This revolving door serves no one, and takes law enforcement out of circulation making them unavailable to respond to other calls while driving inebriates around from one place to another without resolution. The Helen Vine Detox Center provides people time to regain their equilibrium in a safe and supportive environment; often people choose to stay longer, providing the gateway to making a more serious commitment to recovery.

Lucas Valley Road Scenic Highway Designation Update

Designating Lucas Valley Road as a California Scenic Highway is an issue that many people have asked me to take on as a priority, and now is a good opportunity to bring everyone current on our efforts. The Countywide Plan (CWP), adopted in 2007 includes consideration of “participation in the Scenic Highway Program” as a strategy for preserving and enhancing the County’s scenic highway corridors. In organizing the implementation of hundreds of programs included in the CWP, the Community Development Agency (CDA) assigned long-term and short-term timeframes, and low, medium and high priority with board approval. The Scenic Road program was assigned a “medium priority with a long-term timeframe for implementation.”

As of now, the Scenic Road project is not in CDA’s current two-year work plan. It is my objective to get the project included in the current two year work plan, which we are entering the second year of, by initiating the nomination process where Lucas Valley Road can be considered for designation by CalTrans.

My predecessor requested that this program be included in the CDA work plan at last year’s budget hearings, however, it did not receive the votes needed to direct staff to do so. I have put my Board of Supervisors colleagues and CDA staff on notice that I will be re-initiating the request at the April 20, 2015 public hearing on CDA’s budget for implementation of the CWP. If you are interested in this issue, please attend the April 20 BOS budget hearing, where you will have the chance to weigh in on the issue of including the Lucas Valley Scenic Road project in the CDA work plan. CDA’s budget will be on the morning agenda.



State Scenic Route Sign

This hearing is the only means by which we can advance this project; if the project is not in the CDA work plan and budget, it won’t be pursued.

We are likely to hear that other projects and programs that have been designated as “high priorities” should be given precedence over Scenic Road, at least for now. To be successful in securing the votes we need to advance this project, we will need to demonstrate that this project is important and valuable; that it should not take an inordinate amount of time or cost; that it has strong public support; and that it can be done without displacing other high priority efforts. We are working with a dedicated and mobilized group of community members towards this very goal.

Rx Abuse Takes Heavy Toll in Marin

RxSafe Marin is a grassroots community initiative to address the escalating drug overdose deaths and treatment admissions for prescription drug addiction in Marin County. Here is some information about their efforts and the progress they are making.

One in four Marin adults needs help for drug and alcohol misuse accompanied by behavioral health issues. Increasing numbers of children under 18 are following suit, with easy access to prescription narcotics in their home or provided by peers in schools. **In 2012, more people died in Marin from drug overdoses than of breast cancer or automobile crashes, and the majority of overdoses involved prescription drugs.** More have died from prescription medication overdoses than from heroin and cocaine combined. 1 in 5 of Marin's 11th graders said they have used prescription drugs (painkillers) recreationally. Where do they get these pills? Most, from the family medicine cabinet.

Building on the work of community activists, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, Marin County Office of Education each have officials co-leading the RxSafe Marin initiative alongside families, youth, pharmacists and healthcare providers.

Sean Kensinger, Deputy District Attorney said, "RxSafe Marin was the first time that we sat down directly with providers and treatment professionals and said, how can we work together to help curb this epidemic."

RxSafe Marin can chalk up recent successes, adopting community standards for prescribing narcotics in Marin's hospital Emergency Departments, creating a Facebook ad campaign that reached over 20,000 individuals to promote safe Rx drug

disposal, and increasing communication between patients, doctors and pharmacists about "overprescribing" and prescription drug misuse.

"This issue touches so many in Marin, beyond those with personal or family experience," Public Health Officer Dr. Matt Willis said. "We feel that RxSafe Marin is breaking new ground by bringing together key voices from across the community – law enforcement, schools, community groups and medical personnel – to design some real solutions."

A broader response to providing for safe disposal of unwanted medications is for the Board of Supervisors to consider moving forward with a Medication Disposal Stewardship ordinance. Such an ordinance – similar to one passed in Alameda County – would provide free and convenient access to locations throughout the county where prescription drugs can be safely and anonymously disposed. The Stewardship Plan, to be funded by pharmaceutical manufacturers & producers, would place Take Back Bins in pharmacies, hospitals and police stations – keeping these unwanted, unused or expired medications from our waste system and out of the hands of unintended users.

For more information on the different efforts underway, go to: <http://www.rxsafemarin.org/>

Currently, you can safely dispose of unwanted medications at locations throughout the county; [find a list of locations here.](#)

[Click here to watch the update given to the Board of Supervisors on March 24.](#)

Susannah Clark

Homelessness; There Are No Easy Answers....

The ultimate goal is to reduce the impacts that people who are experiencing homelessness are having on the downtown area of San Rafael, neighborhoods, parks and open space, as well as the community as a whole, and at the same time, to provide opportunities for people to work towards self-sufficiency and into stable housing.

There are many moving parts in the efforts around reducing the number of people in Marin who are homeless including designing and implementing a location that provides shelter and supportive services as people rebuild their lives. Campus models throughout the country have proven successful when they include mental health and substance abuse counseling, as well as career and job development services. The campus idea has the support of the faith community represented by Marin Organizing Committee, many in the business community in San Rafael, and agencies that serve this population. Finding an appropriate and acceptable location is the challenge.

Marin’s congregations are providing nightly shelter and a warm meal shared with congregants, however, this rotates from one location to another every night. Over the past five years REST (Rotating Emergency Shelter) has been available from November to April Homeward Bound of Marin operates nightly shelter in San Rafael throughout the year, but the beds are full every night.

Did you know that in 2014, 1,100 students in Marin County schools were homeless at some point during the year? Almost 700 of those were pre-K to grade 5. Imagine the challenges a young child faces trying to do homework at night in the back seat of a car that is used as shelter?

“Homeless” is defined as living in a place not meant for human habitation, such as in a culvert, under a bridge, in the trees, or in a car. If a shelter bed, hotel room or apartment that is shared with other families is one’s primary nighttime residence, that family is considered homeless. These homeless families are not as visible as the people one sees on the streets or in the encampments, and their spectrum of needs may be different, but the children growing up in these circumstances are innocent victims and face unimaginable challenges achieving at the same level in class as the students sitting next to them.

Many who are homeless have co-occurring issues such as mental health and substance abuse problems. Mental health services is a key County responsibility. The County’s Community Mental Health services include outreach and triage counselors who are meeting people “where they are:” at the Library, at the dining room, at Ritter Center, and on the street, to connect people with services that can help them return to a state of health and stability. If the person is using drugs, such as meth or cocaine, there may be psychotic episodes that mimic mental health diagnoses, but can be addressed only by substance abuse treatment specialists. There are beds available for those ready to take that step.

The almost inhumane reality is that there are fewer beds for those with true mental health diagnoses. The County has increased capacity for crisis intervention beds in the community as an alternative to the institutional setting of Marin General Hospital’s Psych Emergency, but, as with housing in general, stable housing for people with mental health problems is a significant need, the absence of which has impacts throughout the community.

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Continued from previous page... **Homelessness**

The high cost of housing in Marin County impacts people who are looking for housing as well as people who are currently housed and at risk of losing it. Some landlords are evicting people in order to raise rents; some are opting out of the Section 8 program making it even more challenging for people holding vouchers to find a place that will accept them. This is not exclusive to Marin, but is a regional problem; however, Marin holds the distinction of having the highest housing costs in the Bay Area.

Marin has a vibrant network of community based organizations that serve those who are facing these challenges. There are some people who are not ready to commit to sobriety, recovery, medication to treat their mental diagnosis, or who claim they will never “come inside.” There are people who are “just moving through,” but studies show that many of those living on the streets or in the encampments in San Rafael, consider themselves from here.

Many groups meet on a regular basis to develop specific strategies based on the “Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness,” the community’s roadmap. Supervisor Connolly participates as a member of the Homeless Policy Steering Committee, co-chaired by San Rafael City Councilmember Kate Colin and Board President Supervisor Katie Rice,

convening providers, consumers, and community members interested in the issues, to steer efforts towards implementation and funding those efforts.

Some locations in Marin are harder hit or the homeless are more visible and have greater immediate impact, such as in downtown San Rafael. The City and County are working together to support unique approaches such as the Downtown Streets Team that give people a reason to get up, get busy and develop a new routine that will eventually lead to a job and housing. The City hired a licensed mental health professional to accompany police officers, and the County is funding crisis intervention teams, outreach professionals and peer counselors.

Home for Kids will be reconvening to address the unique and heart-wrenching needs of the children and families in our community living who are struggling to have a safe and stable place to live. There is a lot happening, although it may not be apparent. Homelessness is a complex problem with no quick or easy fixes. We continue to focus on a range of services and solutions that will have an impact in the short term as well as the long.

Susannah Clark

[Click here to download the 2014 English Community Resource Guide -](#)

.....”He came closer still and called out ‘Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?’

The young man paused, looked up and replied, ‘Throwing starfish into the ocean.’

‘I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?’ asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, ‘The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them in, they’ll die.’

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, ‘But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles

and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can’t possibly make a difference!’

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean.

As it met the water, he said, ‘it made a difference for that one.’

— *Loren Eiseley*



Picking up a starfish

Board-Related Meetings

The following websites relate to positions Supervisor Connolly holds. You can find meetings schedules, starting times, agendas and board packets for upcoming meetings on these sites:

Board of Supervisors Meetings

- ◆ The cyberagenda is available online the Thursday before Tuesday meeting date at: www.marincounty.org/depts/bs/meeting-archive. The cyberagenda will also advise dates, times and agenda for **Marin Housing Authority** meetings.

Marin Transit District Meetings

- ◆ See website for Marin Transit District agenda and to confirm meeting times: www.marintransit.org

Transportation Authority of Marin Meetings

- ◆ See website for TAM agenda and to confirm meeting times: www.tam.ca.gov

Marin LAFCO (Marin Local Annexation Formation Commission)

- ◆ See website for LAFCO agenda and to confirm meeting times: lafco.marin.org/index.php/commission-meetings

ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments)

- ◆ See website for ABAG agenda and to confirm meeting times: abag.ca.gov/meetings/

Check out the Master Calendar on the County website:

<http://www.marincounty.org/main/calendar>

Also, check out our press releases and library of videos about County programs, services and initiatives:

<http://www.marincounty.org/main/newsroom>

District 1 Newsletter

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