

# DAMON CONNOLLY

Winter 2017

SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 1

## Dear Friends,

Community engagement is essential to good governance and a resilient community. Each day I strive to represent your interests in the County. For routine updates, please follow my County [Facebook page](#).

Beginning with the January meeting in 2018, I will be serving as President of the Board. I intend to make public engagement a hallmark, and I urge you to review the meeting agendas and let us know your thoughts. Public open time is an opportunity to express your thoughts on any topic. I want to know what is on the minds of our community. I look forward to hearing from you.



## Topics Addressed Below:

- **Emergency Preparedness**
- **DRAWDOWN: Marin**
- **Transportation in the North Bay**
- **Medical Cannabis**
- **Office Hours, January 20th**

## Emergency Preparedness

One thing on everyone's mind is fire preparedness. I am repeatedly hearing that we are now in a "new normal." We heard from Marin County Fire Chief Jason Weber that the wind, dry fuel conditions, and heat were the same in Marin as they were in Sonoma in October, and the only thing saving Marin County from a similar fire was an ignition source. Marin is not immune.

The climate is changing. We are experiencing dryer summers, and a longer fire season, due to years of buildup of vegetation that has not burned due to fire suppression. Four years of drought stressed our vegetation, and despite last year's wet winter, our forests are not healthy.

Our regional fire coordination system is as good as anywhere in the world. The collaboration throughout the entire North Bay was tested by the number of Marin firefighters and equipment pulled to aid in the North Bay Fires. I think you will find Chief Weber's [presentation](#) to the Board of Supervisors interesting and enlightening.

The good news is that vegetation management, fire awareness, and prevention strategies were topics of the [Marin County Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) long before October, and the work continues with robust collaboration. I am in close and regular contact with Marin County Fire and our Parks and Open Space to assess where we are and where we need to go.

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## District 1 Newsletter

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We all have a crucial part to play in disaster preparedness, from maintaining firebreaks, to clearing gutters and vegetation, to preparing an emergency kit and educating ourselves on how to respond in an emergency. Creating and maintaining defensive space around our homes saves lives and saves communities.

For a complete list of all emergency alert and warning tools, go to the Marin County Sheriff's Office [website](#). Two that require registration are [AlertMarin](#) and [Nixel](#).

- [AlertMarin](#) is the County notification service. Register your cell phone number if you live, work or go to school in Marin County. You can request notifications for multiple addresses (home, work, school).
- To register for [Nixel](#), text your zip code to 888777. Alerting can be geographically focused from a single zip code to the entire county.

I encourage each of you to reach out to your homeowners' association for a presentation from [FIRESafe Marin](#). The FIRESafe Marin [website](#) is a wealth of information. Becoming a [Firewise USA Recognized Community](#) empowers neighbors to work together in reducing wildfire risk; scientific research has shown the effectiveness and benefits, and some insurance companies offer a discount in recognized Firewise Communities.

Research also shows that in the face of major climate events like fire and flooding, neighborhoods where

people know each other and look out for each other have the lowest mortality rates and recover more quickly.

We saw this first hand with the response to the NorthBay Fires. Local businesses stepped up to provide invaluable services and aid to evacuees from the North Bay Fires. Red Whale Coffee and Equator Coffee and Tea provided coffee each morning at the evacuation centers. EO Products provided sanitation stations and soap at the evacuation centers. Zumba classes, art classes, and symphony performances were offered to the evacuees – uniquely Marin! The Marin Rental Property Association is pulling together landlords with any extra short-term space, and landlords are incentivizing tenants with rent reductions for opening a room to an evacuee. The County of Marin has waived permit and planning fees for building junior accessory dwelling units for the next year.

I am certain that there are other local businesses who have and continue to provide support, Thank You. I would be remiss in not thanking the County of Marin staff who put in long hours at the evacuation center at the County Exhibit Hall. Hundreds of employees rose to the occasion, staffing and providing services to fire evacuees. Restoring a deeper sense of community and stronger connections makes our community more resilient.

As your Supervisor, I work on the County's preparedness for disaster. But the County can't do this alone, we all need to do our part.



## DRAWDOWN: Marin

On October 3<sup>rd</sup> we launched a campaign to put Marin County at the forefront of California's efforts to reverse global warming. DRAWDOWN: Marin drew a sold-out crowd and was effective in connecting with people and starting a conversation about drawing down the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The impacts of climate change are not an abstraction in Marin County. Employees can't get to work when our highways are closed. Our major roads are regularly inundated, as demonstrated by extended closures of Highway 37 this winter and frequent flooding at the Manzanita Park and Ride in southern Marin. When 101 and 37 are closed, San Rafael City streets are jammed beyond their already full capacity. The Canal and Santa Venetia communities are both very susceptible to sea level rise.

When we look at how to adapt to rising seas, we are faced with seemingly impossible questions. Whose land do we build infrastructure to protect? Businesses? Sewage treatment plants? Homes?

We mean it when we say, "we're all in this together." Business cannot single handedly reduce climate change. Government cannot do this alone. Individuals cannot stop climate change alone.

Coming together as a community will pay for itself in many ways.

It improves health. When we eliminate our emissions, we can decrease the incidence of asthma, which a striking 16% of adults in Marin have. We can decrease the incidence of type 2 diabetes and other health problems by improving access to better food and more effective bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

It helps the economy. We now live in an era where the cost of solar powered energy is competitive with, if not cheaper than, coal and natural gas, and is a source of job creation.

The number of local, national and international environmental researchers and leaders who work or live in Marin never ceases to amaze me. That points to a natural strength of Marin, that we have a solid foundation upon which to build. If WE join the movement, it will spread.



High school students, Milo Wetherall and Cameron Evans before they took the stage at DRAWDOWN.

October 3<sup>rd</sup> was a kick-off to an engaged and resilient Marin. The Board of Supervisors adopted a [Resolution](#) committing to working with County staff and community leaders to develop and implement policies and create incentives that will achieve dramatic greenhouse gas reductions. We are now hearing the concept of DRAWDOWN: Marin across all our departments, from Health & Human Services to Parks and Open Space.

There will be a series of follow-up events to drill down further into five key DRAWDOWN strategies. Over the next year you will be invited to participate in community workshops on: 100% Renewable Energy, Low Carbon Transportation, Energy Efficiency, Local Food & Carbon Sequestration, and Climate Resilient Communities. Individual actions will be the difference between meeting Marin's ambitious goals and falling short.



"Today we make change here in Marin, tomorrow we change the world." Milo Wetherall, Sophomore.



## Transportation in the North Bay

Traffic congestion impacts where we live, where we work and where our children go to school. Congestion cuts across all income levels, and affects all of us daily. While there is no silver bullet to ease congestion, there are many avenues to improve traffic flow and capacity.

I spend time each day addressing traffic issues, on the Board of Supervisors, on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and on the Board of Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM). The third eastbound lane across the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge is anticipated to open in the next couple of months. Improvements to Sir Francis Drake approaching the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge are underway. We are exploring congestion relief measures like ramp metering and permitting commuter buses on the shoulder of Highway 101.

Public input is appreciated on the future of State Route 37. A [survey](#) was created to capture your input. In October, Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill into law that could result in a vote to raise bridge tolls by as much as \$3 to pay for transportation projects. If passed by Bay Area voters in 2018, Regional Measure 3 (RM3) will provide construction of major portions of the Marin Sonoma narrows, near-term and long-term improvements to Highway 37, construction of a new downtown San Rafael Transit Center, and a direct freeway connector between Highway 101 North and 580 East in Central Marin, and more.

“Weaving a Regional Transit Hub into a Walkable Hometown” is the vision for the Bettini Transit Center in downtown San Rafael. Golden Gate Transit District will take the lead on the project, with the City of San Rafael intricately involved in the planning. I also intend to be involved in the planning process. Six months from now there should be a decision on where the Transit Center will be located, and what the Transit Center will look like. It will take longer to envision how the Transit Center will weave into the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown. Please share your ideas through the upcoming community engagement opportunities.

The Marin Board of Supervisors has made the maintenance and improvement of local roads and infrastructure a top budget priority, and backed it up by approving the use of available one-time and ongoing funds. Senate Bill 1, the state gas tax measure that went into effect on November 1, also provides significant funding for local roads.

In addition to infrastructure projects, we’re looking at alternatives to single occupancy vehicle trips.

Transit and human-power mobility are viable options if convenient and reliable. For more information, [The Marin County Commuter Toolkit](#), [511.org](http://511.org), [google.com/transit](http://google.com/transit) are great for exploring transit options. If public transportation is an option for you, know about the [Emergency Ride Home](#) program. Once your employer enrolls in the program (at no cost), you can take a taxi, Uber or Lyft home for any “unforeseen need” (child is sick, bike got a flat tire, carpool partner left early, need to work late). [Emergency Ride Home](#) eases the worry of being stranded at the office if an unexpected situation arises, allowing you to leave your car at home.



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SMART is exceeding ridership expectations. As more people sing the praises of their experiences on the train, and as options for the first and last mile connections solidify, I'm optimistic that the SMART riders will ease some of the pressure on the Highway 101 corridor. Bikeshare will be piloted along the SMART line in Sonoma and Marin County, to provide the first and last mile connections to SMART.

While electric vehicles (EVs) don't necessarily address congestion, they do reduce carbon emissions. The variety of EVs has grown exponentially, and the cost of EVs are now reasonable on several models.

Within Marin, TAM has partnered with Lyft for servicing the first-and-last mile connections to SMART. Lyft provides a \$5 discount, funded by Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), after the passenger pays two dollars, available during a six-month pilot on Monday through Friday for connections with SMART (code: GETSMART17). TAM has also partnered with Whistlestop to provide access to-and-from SMART for people with disabilities. Emerging partnerships with on-demand rideshare services is providing transit operators with additional tools to meet customer needs.

## Medical Cannabis Through Delivery-only Dispensaries

Supervisor Judy Arnold and I are the Board of Supervisors subcommittee on medical cannabis. Previous attempts to license Medical Cannabis Dispensaries were not successful due to concerns expressed through public hearings that these retail businesses were not compatible with the neighborhoods.

We now have a delivery only ordinance for up to four medical cannabis dispensaries in unincorporated areas of Marin. These dispensaries will not be open to patients or members of the public. All orders will be made online or by telephone, with the medicine delivered to the patient's residence.

This model provides protection and safeguards so that cannabis does not end up in the hands of youth, which was a chief concern that we heard.

Newly enacted comprehensive state legislation, the Medical and Adult-Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act, protects local control by requiring all cannabis-related businesses to have a local permit, license or authorization as a precondition to obtaining a state license. The timing of our ordinance works extremely well with the enactment of state law. Many ask what happens once recreational adult use of cannabis is legal. We are only licensing medical cannabis dispensaries through this process; the County is not issuing any licenses to dispense cannabis for adult recreational use.

We appreciate the tremendous amount of community input and interest in this process to date. We are confident that we have an effective model that will achieve the goals around safe access to medical cannabis that was envisioned by the voters 20 years ago.

The details on the application process and timeline are [here](#). If you are interested in updates on this issue, please subscribe on the page.

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**LOCAL OFFICE HOURS:**  
**Saturday, January 20, 9-11am.**

**Aroma Cafe**  
**1122 4th St.**  
**San Rafael, CA**

An opportunity for people who might not otherwise have the time to meet and discuss county or neighborhood issues, or connect with me regarding anything on your mind. I hope to see you there!



September 9, 2017 office hours at Red Whale Coffee. Great discussion, touching on many subjects.



All County publications are available in alternative formats (Braille, Large Print, or CD), upon request. Requests for accommodations may be made by calling (415) 473-4381 (Voice) 473-3232 (TDD/TTY) or by e-mail at [disabilityaccess@marincounty.org](mailto:disabilityaccess@marincounty.org) at least four work days in advance of the event. Copies of documents are available in alternative formats, upon request.