

Dear Friends,

I appreciate hearing from you, and learning what is happening in your neighborhoods. Each day I strive to represent your interests on the County level.

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:

- Silveira Ranch
- Homelessness Update
- Transportation
- Climate Action Plan
- Sea Level Rise Litigation
- McInnis Marsh Restoration



Silveira Ranch

Settlement with the Silveiras Resolves Legal Uncertainty and Advances Conservation

The below appeared as a "Marin Voice" column in the 7/2/16 issue of the Marin IJ

By Damon Connolly & Don Dickenson

Marin County recently settled with the Silveira family concerning their 340 acre ranch alongside Highway 101. This iconic parcel physically separates Novato and San Rafael with a scenic mix of grasslands, valley oaks, and tideland habitats associated with the Miller Creek estuary.

The settlement prohibits development of the ranch for at least the next ten years - and it could pave the way for permanent preservation. We thank the Silveira family for their willingness to achieve a result that will benefit the entire community.

The settlement ends the risk of litigation against the County related to the 2007 Countywide Plan. A history lesson on the land is necessary here for context. In 1967 the Silveira family entered into a Williamson Act contract with the County, meaning the land was limited to agricultural use and would be taxed at a lower rate.

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Silveira Ranch

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The 1973 Marin Countywide Plan effectively designated the Silveira lands to be considered for urban development upon their annexation to the City of San Rafael. Due to this new designation, the property wasn't renewed for its Williamson Act contract, and it resulted in a significant tax increase for the Silveira family.

Contemplating eventual annexation, the City of San Rafael amended its General Plan to designate the Silveira and St. Vincent's properties as "mixed use" allowing for 2,100 homes, 100,000 square feet of commercial space, and 261,000 square feet of office space. This designation drastically upped the value of the lands, and further increased its tax burden.

In 2003 the City Council of San Rafael changed its outlook regarding development of the St. Vincent's and Silveira properties and decided *not* to annex the Silveira ranch, effectively abandoning its plans for urban development on the properties. Subsequently, planning responsibility for them returned to the County and the 2007 Countywide Plan reduced the development potential of both properties to a maximum of 221 homes. This decreased the value of the lands – and was the basis of a possible legal challenge by the Silveira family.

The County weighed the cost of prolonged litigation, the community's interest in protecting the land from development, and the myriad of issues stemming from the realities of affixing a price tag on potentially permanent protection from development.

In exchange for a full release and Williamson Act protection, the County will pay approximately \$2.6 million in unpaid property taxes and related penalties and interest in the settlement.

The settlement removes the final legal threat to the inclusion of these properties in the Baylands Corridor and the strong environmental and resource protection policies contained in the Countywide Plan.

The settlement puts the land back into the Williamson Act for a minimum of ten years. The ten-year term of the Williamson Act contract automatically renews each year unless either the property owner or the County gives notice of non-renewal.

This is all great news, but our work is not done. The authors' objective is to work with the Silveira family and the community to permanently protect the treasured Silveira ranch, either through acquisition or a conservation easement. This would preserve the open countryside and safeguard the agricultural and cultural legacies that exist in the area for future generations.

Additionally, part of the land is within the 100-year flood plain and provides us with an opportunity to adapt to sea level rise. These historic tidelands and diked baylands could provide important natural steps toward sea level rise resilience and habitat restoration, along with connecting the Bay Trail between Hamilton and the Las Gallinas Sanitary District wastewater ponds, and even possibly with the Marinwood trails to the west. It's exciting to be starting a new chapter in the County's long tradition of land preservation.

Homelessness Update

Focusing on the Chronic Homelessness

We continue to see progress in our efforts to tackle homelessness. The County and service providers are coalescing around a Housing First approach to address chronic homelessness - the most vulnerable living on our streets. This population represents fewer than 20% of those who are homeless, yet creates 80% of the impacts to the community, including ambulance service to the emergency room, fire and police response, and transfer to county jail. Without intervention, the “revolving door” cycle continues at high cost to the community as well as the person.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires a Point-in-Time Count every other year of those who are homeless. That count was conducted in January of this year. The results confirmed what we expected to see; that while the numbers of people who are homeless have gone down in the past two years, from 1,309 to 1,117, the number of chronic homeless, people who have been homeless for longer than a year or who have experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years, has increased from 263 to 329.

The longer one lives without shelter, the more vulnerable one becomes, due to declining health, mental instability, and often abuse of alcohol and drugs. Many of the people who are chronically homeless will remain on the street until they die from untreated physical conditions and mental illness, violence and/or overdose. It is not unusual for people in this category to suffer from long term brain injury or developmental disabilities from early and repeated trauma.

A standardized assessment tool is used to evaluate a person’s physical and mental vulnerability when he or she is going through intake for services. *The goal is not just for the service providers to provide services, but to focus their efforts on getting the clients into housing, with the most vulnerable going to the top of the list for available housing.*

Every service provider and agency will be adding people to the list, resulting in what is described as coordinated entry. Putting these concepts together,

- The County and service providers are using a vulnerability assessment tool, to provide coordinated entry to identify the most vulnerable to go into Housing First.
- Housing First offers permanent, supportive housing with case management and supportive services needed to stay housed and avoid returning to homelessness.

Housing First is now a requirement for communities to receive funding for homeless services and housing. Local jurisdictions must house the most vulnerable, using coordinated entry, in permanent supportive housing.

I am also pleased that we have been successful in expanding the County’s capacity and level of mental health service through our Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services. Outreach to people “where they are” is helping to connect people with services, reaching the most difficult to engage.

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District 1 Newsletter



Iain De Jong speaks to crowd about real solutions to chronic homelessness.

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At this year's budget hearing, we approved funding for a two year pilot implementing AB 1421, Laura's Law, which will give us another tool to engage people and connect them to services. I have supported the adoption of Laura's Law since my first day in office.

On July 11, our Board of Supervisors met jointly with the Marin Housing Authority to receive an update on homelessness. We approved assigning 50 Section 8 vouchers for the chronically homeless, and also committed to providing the case management and services necessary to make the Housing First clients successful in housing.

If you want to view the Board of Supervisors housing meeting, go to <http://www.marincounty.org/depts/bs/meeting-archive>; select the first of two meetings listed on July 11. You can also find the Point-in-Time Count and survey, at the following link: <https://www.marinhhs.org/point-time-count-marin>.

Transportation

I have been focused on all things "transportation" in my role as Marin's representative on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Traffic, congestion and mobility are issues that affect us daily.

Between 2009 and 2015 there was a 150% increase in the delay time for those driving on Highway 101 through Marin. My daily to-do list includes looking at all options to reduce your commute times. Toward that end, we are focused on a number of goals:

- **SMART.** We are currently awaiting the federal green light so that SMART can start passenger service. Giving people convenient options to get to and from SMART (the "first and last mile") will be critical. That's why we are working hard with local and regional transit providers to link up service. Employer shuttles, *Lyft* rideshare coupons, and emergency ride home vouchers (up to \$150) for employers enrolled with Transportation Authority of Marin are examples of programs to increase connectivity. We also need to push for adequate bike parking at SMART stations.
- **Alternatives to Single Occupancy Vehicles.** Safe bicycle routes and safe routes to school will collectively help to ease congestion. The roundabout at the Civic Center now connects the SMART station with the Civic Center. The pedestrian and bike path along the tracks under Merrydale Road connects the Northgate area to the Civic Center. I continue to work with stakeholders to push the completion of the Multi-use Path connecting downtown San Rafael to Larkspur as part of the SMART rail extension. The discussions are ongoing, and we are making progress.
- **Congestion Relief.** Opening the third lane on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, improving approaches to the bridge, and exploring congestion relief measures like ramp metering lights and permitting commuter buses to run on the shoulder of Highway 101, are partial solutions. Currently, MTC and the Bay Area's nine counties are also considering an updated bridge toll measure called "Regional Measure 3,"

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that would involve a phased-in toll increase of up to \$3 on state-owned Bay Area bridges (which doesn't include the Golden Gate Bridge). RM3 is working its way through the legislature now, and would be subject to voter approval in 2018. Marin would stand to gain funding for regional infrastructure projects like a direct connector between Highway 101 North and 580 East, completion of improvements to Highway 101 through the Sonoma-Marín Narrows, relocation of the San Rafael Transit Center, and Highway 37 corridor access improvements.

- **Local Roads & Infrastructure.** The Board of Supervisors has made the maintenance and improvement of local roads and infrastructure a top budget priority, and has backed it up by approving the use of available one-time and ongoing funds as part of the county budget passed in June. Part of this is due to SB1, the state gas tax measure recently signed into law by Governor Brown. SB1 is projected to generate approximately \$8 million per year for Marin's road and infrastructure needs.
- **HOV Lane Hours.** CalTrans and MTC are considering changing the hours of the HOV lane southbound on Highway 101. Their stated goal is to encourage greater use of commuter buses and carpools. I have some serious concerns about the proposal. Any plan would need to demonstrate concrete savings in commute times and a reduction in congestion before warranting support. Marin transportation officials are actively considering other congestion relief measures for 101, so the HOV lane discussion should take place as part of a comprehensive approach to congestion management, not as a standalone effort.



The Environment

Climate Action Plan

The County is committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. We have dedicated money and staff toward implementing the County's Climate Action Plan ("CAP"), and also to adapting to sea level rise.

I am proud to say that the Board of Supervisors officially supported the Paris Climate Agreement. The County has taken giant steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

On June 19th the Board of Supervisors voted to switch Marin County to Deep Green energy within County government. We voted to go Deep Green with MCE, enabling the County to meet its municipal CAP goals ahead of schedule. The goal was for municipal reductions of 15% by 2020, and with the switch to Deep Green energy we will reduce emissions by 18% in 2017. My hope is that people will bolster their own efforts, "we're all in this together."

Switching to Deep Green with MCE is a simple way for individuals to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. A quick sign up, you don't even need your PG&E bill, is [here](#), or send an email with questions to info@mceCleanEnergy.org. Deep Green is Green-e certified, 100% California bundled renewable electricity in the form of solar and wind.

Resilient Neighborhoods is another key resource for looking at our personal emissions. [Resilient Neighborhoods](#).

Sea Level Rise Litigation

While the current administration in Washington tries to deny climate change, at the local level, governments continue to face the challenges resulting from sea level rise. Marin County's Board of Supervisors decided it's time for Big Oil to take responsibility for the impacts greenhouse gas emissions are having and prioritize the wellbeing of its customers and neighbors over profit margins. The County of Marin filed suit against 37 oil and gas corporations in Marin County Superior Court. Our goal in filing this lawsuit is that the cost of protecting our residents, businesses, institutions, and infrastructure from sea level rise caused by climate change will be on the shoulders of the defendants—including Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Shell—and not Marin taxpayers.

This lawsuit is really about accountability. Numerous studies have been unearthed revealing that researchers warned oil company executives that their products contributed to global warming and sea level rise. Instead of warning the public of the risks associated with their products, and making major changes to their products, these companies borrowed from the Big Tobacco playbook and launched PR campaigns designed to discredit the scientific evidence regarding the warming effect of greenhouse gases upon earth's climate and the risks of sea level rise.

To date, the County has spent over \$3 million dollars in responding to impacts from sea level rise. Our projections show upwards of \$15.5 billion in damages to people and property, if we were to do nothing. Santa Venetia is a community on the front lines of sea level rise while the rest of District 1 will see flooded roadways and sewer treatment facilities, flooded parks, disappearing beaches and receding shorelines.

Marin County taxpayers will not be fronting the costs or bearing the risks of this lawsuit. Our County Counsel is working with an outside firm, Sher Edling, which has expertise and resources for this kind of litigation. Costs and legal fees will be paid to Sher Edling the same way most attorneys are paid in big impact cases like these: if and when we are successful.

Here is a copy of the [complaint](#), which is before Judge Chernus. I hope you will agree that it is time to hold these companies accountable for their deceptions and profiteering amidst our building climate crisis.

McInnis Marsh Restoration

The County executed a \$550,000 grant with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to complete the design and environmental review for the restoration of McInnis Marsh! Restoring the 180 acre marsh will provide multiple benefits to our communities and region, including increased habitat for endangered species, public trail access and viewing areas, and resilience towards sea level rise. Tremendous thanks to staff from Marin County Parks for spearheading efforts to secure the grant!



District 1 Newsletter

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**LOCAL OFFICE HOURS:
September 13th. 5-7pm.**

**Andy's Local Market
Loch Lomond**

**75 Loch Lomond Drive
San Rafael**

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 their mind. I hope to see you there!



Aides Mary Sackett and Susannah Clark riding their bikes home. Stay tuned for an update regarding #RideWithDamon



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 at least four work days in advance of the event. Copies of documents are available in alternative formats, upon request.