

# DAMON CONNOLLY

2021

SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 1

## **Supervisor Connolly Opening Remarks January 5, 2021:**

Good Morning and congratulations to Supervisor Moulton-Peters. We look forward to working with you.

It is truly my honor to serve our community as the District 1 Supervisor, and I thank the voters and residents of District 1 for giving me the opportunity.

Thank you to Katie Rice for your leadership as Board President in a year of crises. You guided our Board as we adapted and responded and continue to respond. Thank you.

In 2020, we came together and built new and powerful partnerships. And as we enter the New Year, we must continue to forge a path forward to address important evolving issues.

Through the Marin Economic Recovery Task Force, we are working on short-term and long-term economic relief. We have applied for grant funding to support an economic vitality strategic plan. We are working with the Community Development Agency to allocate an additional \$447,000 in federal funding for small business assistance. It is incumbent upon each of us to shop local when possible. It could mean the difference of survival for our small businesses. Local dollars spent are dollars that stay in our community longer and support jobs, fund more school programs, more infrastructure spending, and more community programs for the underserved.

We'll continue to bring a strong focus to equity and work to ensure access and opportunity for all towards health, education, meaningful employment, efficient and effective transportation, and a resilient community.

Looking forward, we have a lot more to do as we continue to address COVID through health, economic hardship for employers and employees, racial inequities, climate change, housing, transportation, and more.

I want to thank our community for all that you are doing and enduring. I know many are wishing to reunite with their grandchildren, go out to dinner and a movie, and get together with friends. I look forward to kids returning to school full time and our healthcare workers taking time off.

I want to express my deepest gratitude for our front-line workers and their families in healthcare, education, and a range of essential services, and that includes our county employee family. In the year ahead, we must challenge ourselves as representatives for the people. All of our lives have been and will be transformed. We have an opportunity for bold action, innovation, community building, and recovery. We have a chance for a healthier and brighter future, and I am committed to seeing that happen.

I want to share a few highlights from 2020 and an outlook for 2021.



## Homelessness and Mental Health

Since implementing Coordinated Entry and the Housing First approach, we have housed over 300 homeless individuals, and the overwhelming majority remain in stable housing.

This year we plan to ensure safe and successful operations of our HomeKey facilities, bolster coordinated entry and rapid rehousing, and enhance our focus on homeless families. Additional initiatives include:

- Expansion of the Mill Street Center is underway and will provide a new shelter and supportive housing.
- Break ground to build permanent supportive housing units in Hamilton. The units will further our goal of ending chronic veteran homelessness in Marin.
- Continue our successful strategy for retaining and recruiting landlords to accept Section 8 Housing vouchers through the Landlord Partnership program.

As part of our Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health work and equity initiatives throughout the County, we are expanding the Mobile Crisis team through June 2021, and I'm exploring the possibility of a permanent expansion. We know that many on our streets are in mental crisis.

## Housing

COVID has further highlighted the importance of housing and the precarious housing conditions many families are facing.

As we pursue local strategies, we need to remain actively engaged as legislation and mandates emerge from Sacramento. This will center on working with localities to take proactive steps for solutions that make sense for Marin.

Our goal is to make meaningful progress on providing a range of housing opportunities for Marin at different income levels.

- We continue to look for opportunities to acquire and secure existing affordable housing and enforce tenant protections.
- We will seek to prevent the displacement of renters and ensure small landlords can continue to operate, and promote dialogue to help understand and resolve rent issues.
- Golden Gate Village remains a countywide priority. Creating pathways to ownership and meaningful opportunities to address historic inequities are critical for revitalization efforts.

## Transportation

At the regional level, we are pursuing a direct connector from Highway 101 to 580, studying the environmental impact of three alternatives for relocating the San Rafael Transit Center, and planning for a Resilient Highway 37.

The coronavirus has disrupted transportation patterns. Our transit agencies have been hit hard. This is an area where we can and need to come back stronger, with a more seamless and coordinated transit system. We must keep our eye on creating opportunities to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles on the road. In the last six months, we have seen significant progress in closing gaps in our bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and we must continue as more people are biking.

I'll be doing #RideWithDamon again this spring to reduce my emissions, use our public transit and bike paths, and invite anyone to join me.

## Protecting Our Environment – is a top priority

The important work to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis continues with an equity lens and consideration for our disadvantaged communities.

We now have two approved plans, Drawdown:Marin's Strategic Plan and an updated Climate Action Plan. We have set an ambitious goal of reducing emissions to 60% below 2005 levels by 2030 and set a target of net-zero emissions by 2045. We have endorsed and are supporting seven Drawdown:Marin solutions. A Drawdown:Marin non-profit will be formed this year to increase fundraising ability and effectiveness and shift decision-making authority from the County to the new Board, made up of local jurisdictions and agencies, community members, non-profits, and business members.

## Marin's Resiliency and Preparedness for all Residents

As a result of climate change, we cannot take our eyes off the threat of wildfires. Vegetation management and fire prevention remain a budget priority and are bolstered with the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. We will continue to advocate for resiliency in our power and telecommunications grid.

We plan to continue to improve Marin's resiliency efforts, including through BayWAVE. Working with Congressman Huffman, we successfully advocated for federal policy to consider sea-level rise in project evaluation. I am hopeful that traction can be gained with a new federal administration that is prioritizing climate and adaptation.

In District 1, we can see local impacts of climate change in Santa Venetia, and in 2021, the community will decide on an important initiative. We are moving forward with the Timber-Reinforced Berm Improvement Project to protect the community from 100-year floods. The project addresses rising sea levels and the existing levees' deteriorating condition, raising the berm one to three feet and increasing the life expectancy by over 30 years.

We have pulled together local and federal dollars, working with community members and county staff to bring a proposal to voters on March 2, 2021. This is an example of efforts to increase the resiliency of our neighborhoods and prepare for sea-level rise.

## Closing Remarks

In 2020, our representative system of government was tested and democracy prevailed with President Biden and Vice President Harris's election. I am optimistic that these federal changes, along with county-level action, provide us the opportunity to have a significant impact on daily lives.

Over the past year, we have witnessed the strength of our community, united. I look forward to continuing to work with and for our community in the coming year and beyond. My door is always open. Thank you.

Damon