

## **Happy New Year and On to 2015!**

2014 was a busy year and, for many of us, seemed to go by in a flash. I write this newsletter to provide a brief update about key activities and accomplishments in 2014, and to highlight issues that will move forward with us into 2015.

I was honored to be President of the Board of Supervisors in 2014 and am pleased to pass the gavel to Supervisor Katie Rice in 2015. We bid farewell to Supervisor Susan Adams at the last 2014 Board meeting on December 16, and welcomed Supervisor Damon Connolly to the Board on January 6, 2015.

2014 was a challenging and productive year at the Board of Supervisors. Among other things, we:

- Adopted the County's first 2-year budget
- Worked hard to get state legislation passed that reduces housing densities from an urban to a suburban standard that better fits Marin
- Received voter approval to extend the County Free Library parcel tax for another nine years, supporting our 10 library branches and bookmobile
- Increased the living wage in unincorporated Marin to \$13 per hour
- Completed the new public safety building on time and on budget
- Received voter approval for a parcel tax to support the next generation 911 system so our emergency response is up-to-date
- Adopted a new housing element for the next eight years
- Adopted a comprehensive road and trail management plan for our County parks and open space
- Reduced unfunded retiree liabilities by \$98 million and allocated an additional \$14 million in the FY 2014-16 budget to further reduce pension and retiree health liabilities.

For much of the year, we were worried about drought conditions, particularly the impact on agriculture and livestock in west Marin and on fish habitat, but also the impact to our gardens and the need for all of us to enhance our water conservation and stewardship. December storms filled our reservoirs but also brought flooding, mudslides, winds, high tides and other storm damage that

highlighted how important it is for us, right now and in the years ahead, to work together, across communities and jurisdictions, to address the challenges that confront us.

### **Marin Storm Damage Estimated to Exceed \$13.3 Million**

Marin County sustained an estimated \$13,321.134 in damage from flooding, mudslides, winds, high tides and other storm damage since the December 10-11 downpour, according to an initial damage estimate. The total represents combined storm damage estimates from the County of Marin and all other municipalities, special districts and government agencies.

Public damage estimates included:

- \$4,640,000 for landslides on Highway 1 (Shoreline Highway), Tennessee Valley Road, Manzanita Road and Throckmorton Avenue
- \$4,089,000 for levee damage in Novato and a dune washout in Stinson Beach
- \$294,000 for leaks and collapses in County-maintained buildings
- \$191,422 for extra staffing during the storm
- \$108,712 for damage and debris clearing countywide

Marin residents suffered private storm-related losses in an estimated amount of \$3,997,000, for damages to 34 homes, 11 businesses and two outbuildings.

California Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency on December 22 to help pay for storm-related road damage in four counties, including Marin. That declaration followed a December 16 proclamation of a state of emergency by the Marin County Board of Supervisors. The state declaration launched procedural steps to create the possibility for local reimbursement for storm damage.

Although individual assistance is only available if the federal government declares a major disaster – which is unlikely – some Marin residents may be eligible for tax relief if they have sustained \$10,000 or more of storm-related damage.

Information and an application for individual disaster relief may be obtained by writing to the Office of Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk, County of Marin, P.O.

Box C, San Rafael, CA 94913 or by telephone at (415) 473-7215 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. [Forms](#) also are available at the Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk's website.

Sign up to receive emergency alerts on your cell phone at [www.alertmarin.org](http://www.alertmarin.org). Learn more about emergency preparedness at [www.readymarin.org](http://www.readymarin.org).

### **Flooding, Sea Level Rise and Southern Marin**

The December 2014 storms and their coincidence with King Tides reinforced for many of us in southern Marin our vulnerability to rising seas. Prior to the recent storms, we have experienced flooding on sunny days with no storms on the horizon due to King Tides alone. At those times, the impact was most noticeable in the flooding in and around the Manzanita park-and-ride lot, the 101 off-ramp at Marin City, the Waldo Point Harbor area, and in the inundation of the Mill Valley-Sausalito multiuse path. The higher tides coupled with storm surges of December did all of that and more, submerging Miller Avenue and closing the southbound Sausalito-Marin City off-ramp, halting bus service and effectively isolating the Marin City community until the waters receded. With traffic snarled, our lives came to a halt.

In the wake of that experience, some residents have pushed for immediate action to stop the flooding by raising roads. There is no question we need to take appropriate measures to address the significant flooding we experienced and to prepare for future storms. Flood control staff in our Department of Public Works is working closely with Caltrans, which controls any work on Highway 101 and the exit ramps at Pohono/Manzanita and Marin City/Sausalito, to address the problems we encountered during the recent storms.

Going forward, raising roads is one option, along with a host of others, including seawalls, breakwaters, tide gates, barriers, levees, dikes, wetlands restoration, living shorelines, buffer zones, relocation of structures, ecotones or horizontal levees, and "floodable" housing and retail districts. We need to look seriously at all of these options and determine what works best for specific areas in southern Marin as well as surrounding communities.

Reducing and managing the risks we face from flooding and sea level rise requires not only identifying how to remedy the specific local impacts we are experiencing but also partnership and collaboration between and among our communities to ensure that an adaptation option chosen for one area does not worsen conditions elsewhere. One thing is clear: when it comes to storm events and rising seas, we are all in this together since the rising waters do not distinguish one neighborhood, or city, from another.

To more closely examine the anticipated impact of sea level rise in southern Marin, in 2013, I convened a small group of local residents and business owners who live along the shoreline areas of Richardson's Bay. No one who participated on the "Southern Marin Sea Level Rise Pilot Study Steering Committee" is a climate change expert, but everyone has local knowledge and a collaborative spirit.

On November 1, 2014, we brought what we had learned about identifying assets and assessing the vulnerability of a stretch of southern Marin from the Sewage Agency of Southern Marin (SASM) plant on Sycamore Avenue in Mill Valley to Marin City and the Waldo Point shoreline, to a larger audience. That program, "Living With Water," engaged 100 southern Marin residents in a crash course on adaptation options and a small-group interactive table-top exercise that resulted in a host of good ideas about how we might deal with sea level rise in our community.

A link to the video of the ["Living With Water" workshop](#) is here for your viewing.

Also, in late 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved the launch of a countywide sea level rise vulnerability assessment that will involve the collaboration of various towns and cities adjacent to the Bay. Collaboration is key to achieving comprehensive sea level rise adaptation planning for our County.

In 2015, we will push the state of the art in using visualization technology to engage the public with our pilot "OWL" viewers funded by FEMA. A [recent article](#) in the Marin Independent Journal featured this exciting opportunity to see with your own eyes what changes may be in store with rising waters. The County also

has engaged an intern from CivicSpark, an environmental program of Americorps, who will research how we can best incorporate sea level rise planning into our county work programs and planning process.

None of this work would be possible without the commitment of staff in our Community Development Agency (CDA), Department of Public Works (DPW), and Parks and Open Space, to being at the forefront of climate adaptation planning.

All of these projects are about expanding individual engagement and working together to improve and protect our communities. I hope everyone will get involved – sharing your ideas, knowledge and energy -- as we develop strategies for addressing flooding and sea level rise in southern Marin and elsewhere in the County.

### **Strawberry Visioning Open House**

During the summer and fall of 2014, residents of Strawberry engaged in a visioning process intended to encourage a community conversation, gather information about what residents appreciate as well as their concerns about the Strawberry community, and provide input for future community planning.

Sixteen members of the Strawberry community volunteered to serve on a Strawberry Visioning Committee to guide and plan the process. After several planning meetings, nearly 150 members of the Strawberry community came together for a half-day open house on September 27 at the Strawberry Recreation Center gymnasium. Participants completed a survey developed by the Steering Committee that asked for feedback in six key areas: parks and open space; land use and community character; mobility and circulation; community services and facilities; commerce and economics; and public health and the environment. Participants also added comments to maps, photographs and information boards for each topic area and shared their thoughts in informal discussions.

Based on the community's comments and input at the September 27 open house, the Strawberry Visioning Committee is drafting a vision statement that highlights what residents cherish and value about living in Strawberry, and explores areas of concern, including potential changes in land use at the recently-purchased Golden

Gate Baptist Seminary property and other places, as they look ahead to the future.

A final vision document is expected to be completed and available in early 2015. I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the residents who participated in the Visioning Committee and who shared their thoughts at the community open house. This visioning process is part of an ongoing conversation about Strawberry and its future – a conversation I look forward to continuing in 2015.

### **Mill Valley-Sausalito Multiuse Pathway Improvements**

In early September 2014, an accident occurred on the Mill Valley-Sausalito Multiuse Path involving a bicyclist and 2 young children, resulting in serious injuries. Immediately, local government jurisdictions, interest groups, and organizations came together to address safety issues along the path, including Marin County Parks and County Public Works Departments; Marin County Sheriff's Office; Mill Valley City Council and City Manager; Mill Valley Police, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation Departments; California Highway Patrol; Marin County Bicycle Coalition; and my office.

Immediately after the accident, the City of Mill Valley took steps to slow bicycle traffic by posting additional signs and deploying a changeable message trailer urging pathway users to slow down. In addition, the City of Mill Valley Police Department and the Marin County Sheriff stepped up speed limit and stop sign enforcement, with assistance from the California Highway Patrol. Marin County Parks trimmed vegetation overhanging the path at Bayfront Park to provide better sight distance for path users and sports teams.

The Marin County Bicycle Coalition initiated a multifaceted outreach and education campaign to its members, 4,000 plus subscribers, and affiliated cycling groups in San Francisco and the region. MCBC also began a full-court press to reach out to riders on the path and to the many Bayfront Park sports and recreation teams, handing out safety brochures and explaining the need to slow down and promote safety for all users.

The new Sycamore Avenue roundabout, located on the multiuse pathway and designed by the Marin County Department of Public Works and Marin County Parks, was nearing construction when the accident occurred. The roundabout is designed to slow down cyclists and to help all pathway users more safely access the path and Bayfront Park fields and the Dog Park. Construction is expected to be completed in January 2015.

Working together, the various agencies and jurisdictions brainstormed additional ways to further enhance safety. New signs will be installed at the Almonte and Miller Avenue crosswalk encouraging fast riders to exit the pathway onto Miller to complete their journey, and “Stop Ahead” signs will be posted on either side of the Pohono intersection, near Manzanita. Installation of rumble strips and/or stamped asphalt is being considered for various key locations on the path to alert path visitors to congested areas.

In January 2015, the Marin County Board of Supervisors will consider an ordinance reducing the speed limit along a segment of the path from 15 to 10 mph.

Stay tuned for progress reports as the County of Marin and the City of Mill Valley continue collaboratively to pursue safety improvements. To learn more, please subscribe to [Supervisor Kate Sears’ news and information updates](#).

### **Marin City Community Center Campaign**

Marin City has embarked on an ambitious plan to advance the health, education and economic vitality of its residents, and revitalize its communal gathering and program spaces by upgrading and expanding the Marin City Manzanita Community Center. The plan has been guided by a Steering Committee comprised of Joshua Barrow, Al Boro, Everett Brandon, Chuck Collins, Andrew Giacomini, Noah Griffin, Dana King, Jay Paxton, William Stephens, Ida Times and Herb Weiner, and co-chaired by Marin City Community Services District Board Chair

Nancy Johnson and myself. District General Manager John Logan provided professional support to the Steering Committee.

A facilities master plan, developed by Group 4 Architecture and Mack 5 Project Management, was approved by the Marin City Community Services District Board in December 2014. The plan is exciting, providing space for learning in science, engineering, technology, arts and math; early childhood services to the youngest children and their families; health and fitness; and community gathering. 2015 will see the launch of a capital campaign to make this vision a reality.

Change is already well underway in Marin City. The Bayside/Martin Luther King Jr. Academy is now a thriving K-8 school with innovative programs. Revitalization of outdoor spaces is proceeding with the construction of Rocky Graham Park, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land. Soon, the community's ball fields will be upgraded for year-round day and nighttime use.

Marin City, with a long and proud history stretching back to the construction of Liberty ships in Sausalito during World War II, is transforming itself from the inside out.

*A bit of history: During World War II, Marinship was a busy shipyard where three shifts of 20,000 workers each worked around the clock. From 1942 to 1945, a total of 93 vessels were built, including 15 Liberty cargo ships and 78 tankers and oilers. During the three years in which it operated, Marinship became known in shipbuilding circles as the nation's most advanced and efficient shipyard, building vessels at a faster rate than the better-known Kaiser in nearby Richmond or the other yards on the East Coast or the Gulf of Mexico. The work attracted more than 75,000 workers from around the U.S. to the Marinship. Marin City was built to house some of these workers and within a year it became the second largest city in Marin County. Given the shortage of males due to the war, 25% of this large workforce were women. A few of these "Rosie the Riveter" Marinship workers are still living in Marin City today. If you want to learn more about Marinship Shipyards, visit the exhibit at the [Bay Model Visitor Center](#).*



This is Just a sampling of issues and activities important to our southern Marin communities in 2014. We can only make progress in addressing these and other important issues in our county – meeting the needs of our aging population, alleviating health and education disparities, combating prescription drug misuse by our young people and seniors, reducing traffic gridlock, and easing barriers of race and equity – if we work together to understand our options and constraints, and to brainstorm solutions.

As we move ahead into 2015, I hope you will stay engaged, share your thoughts, and keep in touch with my office. Feel welcome to call me at (415) 473-7331 or send a message to [ksears@marincounty.org](mailto:ksears@marincounty.org). We all look forward to a happy, productive and collaborative 2015!