It is a great time to visit our beautiful parks

Spring has sprung - and it is a great time to visit our beautiful Marin County Parks! To help increase access to our parks, the County has expanded a program that gives library card holders free entry into some of our most popular parks in Marin.

A collaboration between Marin County Free Library (MCFL) and Marin County Parks helps library patrons visit parks that they might not normally visit because of entrance fees. One-week passes are available for checkout at all of the ten MCFL branches: Marin County Civic Center in San Rafael, Bolinas, Corte Madera, Fairfax, Inverness, Marin City, Novato, Point Reyes, South Novato, Stinson Beach, as well as the Bookmobile that travels around Marin.

Here is how it works: you check the pass out from the library as you would a book, hang it from the rear-view mirror of your vehicle, and enjoy free entrance to the parks listed below. If all passes are checked out, you can place one on hold. The parks included in the program are: McNears Beach, Paradise Beach, Miller boat launch, Stafford Lake Park, and Black Point boat launch. In addition, pass holders can visit Marin Municipal Water District lands and Mount Tamalpais State Park through the partnership of the One Tam initiative of the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative.

This is one of the exciting new equity programs the County is working on to remove economic well-being as a qualifier for enjoying County services. The program helps residents who consider park fees a barrier to visitation, but it is for anyone who wishes to enjoy the program.

In other news, many of you are aware that in 2015 the Board of Supervisors adopted its first local ordinance to allow limited licensing of medical cannabis dispensaries in unincorporated Marin. The ordinance allowed for up to four licenses to be granted by the County Administrator. As part of the ordinance, the County Administrator appointed an advisory committee to hear public presentations from the applicants and receive public input from the community. In addition, staff from a variety of County departments reviewed the applications.

Ten applications were received for several of the eligible sites. After reviewing the applications and considering input from the advisory committee, the public, and staff, the County Administrator announced on Monday, April 10 he is not approving any of the applications noting that none of the proposed cannabis dispensary licenses met and exceeded all of the review criteria outlined in the ordinance - with the right combination of experienced applicant/operator, a location that adequately accommodates the use without neighborhood impacts, and an operating plan that fits with the type and scale of the proposed dispensary use.

The County Administrator has recommendations he plans to bring forward to the Board of Supervisors for a revised approach to licensing dispensaries. Possible modifications include a selection process which would disconnect the selection of the operator from that of the location and a delivery only service that provides office consultation on site. As a member of the cannabis sub-committee I am hopeful that these possible revisions will address some of the concerns raised by the community and allow us to move forward with providing safe access to medical cannabis in Marin. If you are interested in this issue, you can subscribe to receive updates at: http://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd/cannabis-programs

And finally, I wanted to share a new addition to our Board of Supervisors meetings. It has become tradition that the Board President incorporates an interesting element to open the first Board meeting of each month – such as music or poetry. I find that many in our community are searching for something additional to calm the stormy seas they find themselves in after the presidential elections and the ensuing controversy in the Country. So for my contribution to this tradition, I am inviting leaders from various faiths in Marin to give an invocation. Recently the City of Novato sponsored a forum on equity. One of the speakers was Dr. Mubarak Muthalif who spoke powerfully about the challenges Muslims face. After the meeting, Dr. Muthalif connected me with Imam Khwaja from the North Bay Islamic Center in Novato, who I invited to give our first invocation at our April 4 meeting. The Imam’s prayer provided a special blessing for our County. If you are a leader of faith in Marin or would like to suggest someone for our next invocation, I would love to hear from you. I can be reached at 415-473-7331 or jarnold@marincounty.org.