



March/April 2015

Lots going on as usual, from great community work on local projects to more contentious discussions around controversial county-wide issues. I offer information and my position on three hot topics in this e-news, with great respect for the range of views held by others in the community.

Agree or disagree, please never hesitate to contact me with your own opinion, comments, questions, concerns on these or any other issues. Email krice@marincounty.org or call 415-473-7825. You can also connect with me by “liking” my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice and twitter at [@SupervisorRice](https://twitter.com/SupervisorRice).

In This Issue:

Wood Smoke: A Problem Seeking a Fair, Practical, Effective Solution
Community Immunity: SB 277 Tightening Vaccination Requirements
Ross Valley Flood Control Measures Under Review

Wood Smoke: A Problem Seeking a Fair, Practical, Effective Solution

(A version of this article was printed as a letter to the Editor in the April 12 edition of the Marin Independent Journal.)

We know now what we did not in decades past: Wood smoke is bad for our health and the environment. And we get it.

An aggressive public outreach, education and communication campaign on the part of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) has resulted in broad acceptance of the need for strict burning rules. Broad community compliance on “no burn” days/nights reflects that acceptance. Additionally, property owners are voluntarily converting their wood-burning devices to cleaner options, and many no longer use their fireplaces or woodstoves at all!

However, wood smoke is still a problem, accounting for 40% of harmful air pollution (Fine Particulate Matter or PM 2.5) as well as constituting a significant portion of our greenhouse gas emissions during winter months. Hence, [BAAQMD's current proposal](#) to tighten up wood-burning rules.

I am all for strengthening wood-burning rules. We also need programs that encourage and incentivize conversion to cleaner heating options, and enforcement must be stepped up, and then backed up with stiff fines. But requiring residential property owners to retrofit at time of sale is an ineffective strategy for reducing wood smoke given how slowly housing stock turns over. And mandating that rentals with uncertified wood-burning devices be replaced is heavy-handed, not to mention a financial burden that will no doubt be passed on to renters.

While I encourage everyone who still has a fireplace or non-EPA compliant wood burner to consider converting to a clean burning or heating alternative, the fact of the matter is: it's the burning of the wood that creates harmful emissions, not the existence of the fireplace itself. Stricter "no burn" rules backed up with education, incentive programs, and effective enforcement makes more sense than requiring law-abiding folks to convert fireplaces or non-EPA certified wood-burning devices which are only a problem if being used when they shouldn't be.

The Air District is in the process of gathering community comment on the proposed wood burning regulations. As Marin County's representative on the Air District Board, I encourage anyone who is interested to voice their concerns and provide suggestions for improving the proposals. Your comment and input are important towards developing regulations that will not only meet Air District goals for reducing wood smoke emissions, but are also fair, practical, and enforceable.

[Click here](#) for a full list of the proposed amendments. To provide comments, call the Wood Smoke Hotline at 415-749-4989 or via email at public@baaqmd.gov by May 8.

Community Immunity: SB 277 Tightening Vaccination Requirements

(A version of this article was printed as a Marin Voice in the March 20 edition of the Marin Independent Journal.)

Public health is community health. Community health is a shared responsibility. What that translates to around the issue of vaccinations is that, as parents and as members of a community, we not only have a responsibility to our children's health, but to the broader community's as well.

In my position as County Supervisor, responsible for program and policy that support the health and well-being of Marin County residents, I have been concerned about the number of families choosing to opt out or delay vaccinations and the impact this trend is having on the broader community's resistance to serious and potentially debilitating diseases.

Marin has one of the highest exemption rates in California with some kindergarten classes reporting as many as 50% of their children not fully vaccinated. Today, a diagnosis of pertussis (whooping cough) in Marin is not an anomaly, though less than two decades ago, it was. Similarly, measles cases statewide have been on the rise, though to a lesser degree.

The recent measles outbreak has become a tipping point on the vaccination issue for me and for many others, triggering action, both at the local level per encouraging and making vaccinations more accessible and available, and at the state level through legislation.

Specifically, Senate Bill 277 (Pan) will eliminate the personal belief exemption (PBE) and is now making its way through the state legislative process. The PBE has been in place since 1961, but it is only over the past decade that we have seen in Marin (and elsewhere throughout California) a significant increase in the number of families abstaining from vaccinations. A rise in rates of vaccine preventable disease has also occurred.

SB 277 seeks to reverse this trend. It will also tighten up rules with regards to school reporting and accountability. The legislation would reform vaccination exemption laws so that only those with a medical need (and homeschoolers) would be exempted from required vaccinations.

I believe this legislation is a necessary and important step toward re-establishing our "community immunity," and addressing a serious public health issue. As such, at our March 31 meeting, I asked the Board of Supervisors to formally support SB 277. After hearing from residents, health experts, and the County's Public Health Officer, the Board voted in favor of sending a letter of support to the bill authors with the request that the bill be amended to allow for exemptions for homeschooled children.

The Bill is advancing. On April 8, the State's Senate Health Committee passed the bill on a vote of 6 to 2 and it will now be heard by the Senate Education Committee.

Visit the [Marin County Health and Human Services website](#) for more information about measles/vaccinations/exemptions. Bill language and status can be found at [California Legislative Information](#).

Ross Valley Flood Control Measures Under Review

A high level review of a range of alternative flood control measures in addition to those currently included in the Ross Valley Watershed Program is underway and due for completion in June. The review will provide information that will be used in future required CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) alternatives analysis and an opportunity for the current Flood Zone 9 Advisory board and public to review alternative options towards ensuring that the currently identified work program is the most viable and acceptable to the community.

The review, led by CH2M Hill Engineers, is designed to revisit measures included in the District's 2011 Capital Improvement Plan Study and put forth in its 10-Year Work Plan. It will include analysis of alternatives that have been suggested by community members in the years subsequent to adoption of the program.

Alternatives will be laid out at the Flood Zone 9 Advisory Board meeting on April 16 at San Anselmo Town Hall (7pm) and recommendations for any changes to the program based on the alternatives analysis will be made at the FZ9 meeting on June 16. The public is encouraged to attend and provide input. The review results and recommendations will be incorporated into the upcoming County environmental review process on the watershed, a key milestone prior to project construction.

You can find the latest review documents on the [Ross Valley Watershed website](#), and email your input to Russ Eberwein reberwein@marincounty.org. Documents will be posted throughout the review process and input is welcome. Read the [press release](#) for more information.

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