



Summer 2016

We say goodbye this summer to Ethel Seiderman, champion of children, special friend, mentor and inspiration to hundreds throughout the Ross Valley and beyond. Her work on behalf of children, education, justice, equity and opportunity stretches across decades and will live on in many, many institutions and ongoing programs, and in thousands of hearts and minds.

Ethel passed away on July 26, the morning that the Board of Supervisors took action to place the [“Strong Start” tax measure](#) on the November Ballot. A fitting tribute to Ethel who worked a lifetime to support underserved children and families, and to challenge the broader community to recognize and do something about the disparity in opportunity among Marin’s children. Ethel was the backbone driver of the Strong Start effort. If passed by the voters, Strong Start will provide funding to help make early childhood education/ pre-school, quality childcare, after school and summer programs available and affordable for those children most in need, as well as close gaps in children’s medical and dental care. Education and health – both absolutely critical for a successful launch into life.

Thank you, Ethel, for being you, and being here, for all you’ve done for children and the entire community. We will miss you.

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2016-18 County of Marin Budget Highlights

On June 22, the Board of Supervisors adopted the first year (FY 2016-17) of a proposed two year FY 2016-18 budget. Overall the annual budget is increasing by 4% to a total of \$540 million of which over 70% is for state and federally mandated programs and services.

The budget reflects ongoing strategies aimed at reducing impacts of future economic downturns, and ensuring sustainable delivery of core services while being responsive to changing community needs and priorities. Among the policies that guide our budgeting: restrict one-time monies to one-time expenses versus ongoing programs, build up reserves during good economic times, ensure new positions are fully funded, and seek to reprioritize baseline funding to reflect changes in community needs. This prudent budgeting allows us to focus on long-term strategies, to continue to pay down unfunded retiree obligations and increase investments in public infrastructure, roads, facilities and technology.

While the new budget maintains current service levels and covers cost increases, it also anticipates a slower rate of economic growth and a return to historic norms per increases in assessed property tax value (5-5.5% annual increase versus 6-7% experienced the last budget cycle).

Among the highlights of FY 2016/17 budget:

- Investing in Road Maintenance – \$19 million for road improvement, including \$13 million in General Fund support for ongoing road maintenance, and additional \$6 million in one-time funds to expand and accelerate summer paving program
- Reducing Unfunded Retiree Liabilities - including a \$1 million contribution to the pension rate stabilization reserve (bringing the total to \$7 million), and a \$10 million contribution to the retiree health trust fund, bringing the total balance to over \$70 million
- Preserving Affordable Housing - including a \$1 million contribution to the housing trust for the preservation of affordable housing for families and \$450,000 for a new landlord incentive program
- Enhancing Mental Health Services and Homeless programs – including increasing ongoing mental health programs by over \$2 million, \$400,000 to implement the Homeless Outreach Team, and a one-time allocation of \$525,000 to acquire mental health transitional housing

- Reducing Traffic Congestion/ Addressing Climate Change - \$1 million to implement our Climate Action Plan, including \$500,000 for new public transportation incentives for County employees and \$500,000 for building investments to reduce our carbon footprint
- Implementing the 5-year Business plan – including \$500,000 in ongoing technology investments to provide improved e-government options, and \$1 million in one-time investments to implement e-government and mobile apps

Go to the [County's Budget Page](#) for detailed breakouts of budget and spending by department and programmatic area and [open gov](#) for interactive viewing.

Ross Valley Watershed Program Update

See below for an update on the recent stormwater/flood fee renewal as well as recent activity with regards to the Sunnyside Nursery Growing Grounds property which the Flood District is evaluating for purchase as a potential detention basin site.

Stormwater/Flood Fee Annual 3% CPI increase Approved by BOS

The Board of Supervisors [approved a 3 percent fee increase](#) for Ross Valley property owners as allowed by the voter-approved fee language passed in 2007. Relative to last year, and depending on property size, the proposed 3 percent fee increase equates to approximately \$3 to \$6 in additional annual costs for owners of single-family properties, and will provide an estimated \$85,000 in additional annual fee revenue. Over the course of the twenty-year duration of the fee, roughly \$44 million will be collected. These local dollars will be used to leverage additional outside grant funding necessary to fully fund the program and projects.

To date, nearly half the fee has been collected, close to \$29 million in grants have been awarded, and nearly \$14 million spent moving the program and projects forward and continuing annual creek maintenance activities.

Sunnyside Nursery Growing Grounds

The Sunnyside Nursery/Growing Grounds property in unincorporated Fairfax was identified as a potential stormwater detention site by the Ross Valley Watershed Program as part of the 2015 [Flow Reduction Study](#). The study explored an expanded list of possible detention sites beyond the five original locations (all of which are on publicly owned property) to include privately owned parcels. This expanded list of sites was evaluated and ranked for feasibility, using a range of criteria from flood reduction potential, to environmental and financial feasibility, regulatory barriers, potential

community benefits, impacts and more. As a result of the study, five new sites were added to the program's list of potential sites, among them the Sunnyside Growing Grounds property.

This spring the County entered into negotiations with owners of the Sunnyside site towards purchase of the property for flood mitigation purposes. On July 12, the Board of Supervisors acting as the Flood District entered into contract with the owners for purchase of the 7 acre property. The contract includes a 60-day due-diligence and feasibility review period during which the District will perform a more detailed feasibility assessment. Also during this time, staff will meet with neighbors to discuss the project concept, answer questions, hear concerns, and begin to map out the process going forward should the sale be finalized. Important to note: purchase of property will not bind the District to implementing a project. The District retains the ability to sell the property at a future time to either another public agency or private party should proceeding with a stormwater detention basin be determined unfeasible.

The goal of any detention basin project, including Sunnyside, is to provide community benefit beyond reducing flood risk. Those benefits could include creek/habitat restoration, passive or active recreation, open space preservation, or other neighborhood or community interests. Should the District proceed with the purchase of Sunnyside, a community-based participatory planning and design process will drive the shaping of the final multi-benefit project towards meeting flood district, neighbor and community goals.

I will be working closely with staff, neighbors of Sunnyside and the broader community to ensure the design process is inclusive and responsive. I am hopeful that we can work through issues and concerns together, and design a project that benefits the nearby neighbors and community for decades to come.

More information on Sunnyside is available at the [Sunnyside webpage](#) on the [Ross Valley Watershed Program website](#).

You can find updates on other Ross Valley Watershed projects in the June 21 Flood Zone 9 Advisory Board meeting [staff report](#) including Sleepy Hollow Creek/Morningside Neighborhood Area improvements, Army Corps Corte Madera Creek Project, Phoenix Lake retrofit, and more. In addition, note upcoming meetings: August 22 for [ACOE Corte Madera Creek Community meeting](#) and September 20 for Flood Zone Nine Advisory Board as listed on [Ross Valley Watershed Program website](#).

Corte Madera Creek Path Gets a Facelift

The Corte Madera Creek Multi-Use Path Project has now been completed and provides a safer, smoother, and more enjoyable path for all. The existing pathway from the College of Marin parking lot in Kentfield to the Ross town limit, parallel to Corte Madera Creek, has been widened from 6 to 10 feet, including an unpaved walking/running shoulder on one side. Accessibility has also been improved with smooth asphalt and a rebuilt wooden ramp. Some vegetation had to be removed, but new landscaping has been incorporated where needed into the project. Rave reviews are coming in from locals young and old on the project overall. Our collective thanks to neighbors for putting up with construction disruption this summer and to County Public Works and Parks staff for the excellent job all round!

For more information, read the [press release](#) and recent [Marin IJ article](#).

Reducing Pesticide Use County-wide

Pesticide/herbicide use has been and continues to be a concern of many here in Marin as both a public health and environmental issue. Last year, a sub-committee of the Board of Supervisors (Supervisor Kate Sears and I) worked with staff and outside experts to review the County's use of chemical herbicides generally, and specifically by our Parks and Open Space District in our regional parks, preserves and public spaces. As President of the Board, I convened meetings and a public workshop to share our findings and hear from the public. The goal of the review and public hearings was to ensure that the precautionary principle, sound science and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) best practices are being rigorously applied and to assess Parks and Open Space ability to reduce or eliminate the use of glyphosate-based and other chemical herbicides while continuing to meet goals of responsible and accountable resource management, environmental protections, and public safety.

Through years of commitment to a strong [IPM program](#), the County has been successful in significantly reducing use of toxics generally, and eliminating use of glyphosate and other pesticides from our regional parks, recreation fields, playgrounds, and bike paths. Additionally, within the Open Space District, staff applies a "critical use" policy restricting glyphosate and other herbicide use to: fuel break work, for the control or spread of invasive non-native plants that threaten endangered, rare and protected habitat, or the spread of invasive plants, such as barbed-goat grass, into agricultural lands. For all three of these "critical use" categories, chemical herbicides are used only when alternative, less toxic methods of control (hand/mechanical pulling, goat grazing, burning, mulching, organic herbicides, etc.) have not been effective, or are not feasible.

At last year's workshop and subsequent board meetings, the Board of Supervisors reaffirmed its commitment to IPM principles and goal eliminating chemical pesticide use

on County property. We also took the issue and the cause, one step further--into the private sector – allocating funding towards a multi-stakeholder public education and outreach campaign aimed at reducing pesticide use generally in the community.

It has been a pleasure to join Supervisor Kate Sears in spearheading this new multi-stakeholder initiative to research pesticide use in the private sector, and develop an action plan to encourage property owners, the commercial and residential sectors, pesticide retailers, applicators, and consumers to follow the County's lead in adopting alternative, non-toxic, pest management practices. Stay tuned for updates on this project and how you can be a part of this effort to create a healthier environment and community.

Open Space District: Summer Road and Trail Work Underway

Public engagement with the Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) remains high going into the second full year of implementation. A wide variety of projects are under way this summer in Loma Alta, Camino Alto, and Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserves. Marin County Open Space District staff has received a number of public proposals for future projects and are looking forward to convening a meeting later this summer in Fairfax to present a set of proposed restoration projects related to Cascade Canyon Open Space Preserve. At the meeting, residents will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed projects and learn how they can remain engaged as the planning process moves forward. Stay tuned to www.marincountyparks.org for more details and I will keep you updated as well.

As always, please never hesitate to contact me with your opinions, comments, questions, or 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.

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