



The VOICE

Your independent news source

Greater Shasta County, CA

Volume XII, Issue XII

www.shastavoices.com

May 2019

Did you know...

- There were **15** single family home permits issued in the City of Redding (for a total of **34** so far in 2019), and **9** Carr Fire single family rebuild permits issued in April 2019. So far in 2019, there have been **42** Carr Fire single family rebuild permits issued. There was **1** permit issued for commercial buildings in April 2019.
- On May 21st, Redding Council approved and sent a comment letter on the **Redding Rancheria Fee-to-Trust and Casino Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**, addressing concerns about socio-economic conditions, transportation and circulation, land use, public services, and aesthetics. The Rancheria is proposing the project on a 232 acre property adjacent to the City limits. The project site is located on Bechelli Lane, accessed via South Bonnyview Avenue, and is bound by private properties within the City to the north, private properties within the County of Shasta to the south, the Sacramento River to the west, and I-5 to the East. A public hearing was held on May 20 to receive community input, and comments on the DEIS must be submitted by June 17, 2019.

Inside this issue:

Shasta VOICES Enters 13th Year	1
REU Wildfire Prevention Plan Will Add 19 Redding Firefighters	2
Concept of Navigation Center Continues to Evolve	2
Cost Recovery Fee Schedule Concept Not Well Received by Community	3
Updated News and Notes	4
Join Shasta VOICES	4

Shasta VOICES Enters 13th Year Under Leadership of Executive Director Mary Machado

Having completed **twelve years**, Shasta VOICES, a private non-profit organization with over **1,300 supporters** has been successful, under the leadership of Executive Director Mary Machado, in our mission to have an impact on decisions being made locally that affect our economic opportunity. We are now in our **thirteenth** year!

Our mission includes **advocating** for City, County, and other government-related policies and programs that will assist in the process of developing a healthy local economy and **participating in the process**, not only for the good of the whole but also for specific businesses, investors and individuals:

- Reducing or eliminating excessive fees.
- Streamlining the permitting process.
- Supporting/assisting projects that create jobs and economic benefits to our community.
- Promoting fiscal responsibility in government.
- Providing solutions for issues that affect our economic opportunity.
- Providing time-intensive research on behalf of those needing assistance to achieve their economic goals in the Redding and Shasta County area.
- Conducting forums resulting in the successful implementation of solutions for developing our economy and making the process easier.
- Participating in the processes of updating local City, County, and Transportation Agency Master Plans.

Our growing list of accomplishments can be found on our website (shastavoices.com), by clicking on the "Accomplishments" tab. We would reprint it here, as we have done in the past, but it simply won't fit anymore! So, here are some of the most recent issues we tackled successfully in 2018 and continue to tackle in 2019:

- Participated in the long overdue update of the Redding Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, approved by City Council in August, 2018, but subsequently rescinded after the Carr Fire when a lawsuit was filed saying the Plan didn't go far enough to **address management of flammable materials in the City's 8,000 acres of open space**. The Plan will likely be properly addressed again soon, and we will participate once again. **Other public safety issues also were not addressed** in the Plan, and we will advocate again, as we did in 2018, for those to be included as well.
- Participating in Carr Fire rebuilding efforts, suggesting and obtaining support for fee reductions, expedited plan reviews, and relaxed rules in outlying Shasta County.
- Supporting/assisting multiple local projects including the Churn Creek Market Place, Lowden Lane Senior Apartments project, River Crossing Marketplace, and small businesses seeking to occupy and remodel vacant buildings.
- Strongly urged and received website improvements that have now made customer access easier when doing business with the County Resources Management Department.
- Participated in the update of Shasta County's General Plan/Housing Element update.
- Participating as stakeholders opposed to Redding "Development Services Cost Recovery" proposal that would significantly increase all building and planning permit fees.

Thank you to all of those who have been so supportive for the past twelve years. We are looking forward to continuing our pattern of success throughout 2019 and beyond!

REU Wildfire Prevention And Improved Response Program Will Add 19 Redding Firefighters

SB901 was signed by the Governor in September 2018. The law requires utilities in California to prepare wildfire mitigation measures if the utility's overhead electrical lines and equipment are located in an area that has a significant risk of wildfire resulting from those electrical lines and equipment. The law requires the wildfire mitigation measures to incorporate specified information and procedures, and requires our local publicly-owned Redding Electric Utility (REU) to prepare a wildfire mitigation plan before January 1, 2020 and annually thereafter.

REU's electric infrastructure is located in and adjacent to both California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) designated Tier 2 and Tier 3 wildfire threat areas. REU has a total of 120 miles of overhead power lines in high risk areas.

On May 7th, Daniel Beans, Director of REU, presented the Wildfire Prevention and Improved Response Program as part of the upcoming REU Wildfire Mitigation Plan (Plan) being developed in response to SB901. REU's strategy is to coordinate with Redding Fire and other City departments and local agencies to identify fire hazards, prioritize prevention efforts, and target fuel reduction. REU personnel will coordinate with Redding Fire, and provide Redding Fire Department personnel assistance as follows:

Wildfire Prevention: Hire **12 Apprentice Firefighters**—will perform vegetation management within easements, soil sterilization, fuel mitigation, fuel breaks, roadway breaks, wildfire incident response.

Incident Response: Hire **6 Firefighters**—will provide third person for rapid fire engagement upon arrival, with two engine companies, two shifts.

Supervision: Hire **One Field Marshall**—performs inspection, tracking, reporting matrix, monthly and annual reports to REU, updates hazard and risk assessment, revises work plans as appropriate.

Public Works Maintenance: Hire **3 Public Works Maintenance Workers**—will perform vegetation management within public parks properties.

The total cost of hiring all 19 of these Fire personnel, and 3 additional maintenance workers, from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2023 is estimated at ***\$8 million***. ***REU will provide funding*** to the Redding Fire Department and the Community Service Department for services rendered under this program. The first two years of the program funding will be presented as part of the next biennial budget. Ultimately, REU's 45,000 customers will bear the cost of the program.

The Plan was approved unanimously by Redding City Council.

Concept of Navigation Center Continues to Evolve

On May 14th, the Shasta County Supervisors heard yet ***another*** proposal for the concept of a homeless Navigation Center. This time, Health and Human Services Director Donnell Ewert told the Supervisors that the independent Navigation Center, or one in conjunction with a transitional rehabilitation facility, would be too expensive after further evaluation.

Mr. Ewert is now proposing to use \$700,000 of the \$1.7 million received from the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) for a ***12-bed medical respite at the Good News Rescue Mission (GNRM)***. He said that they have space in one of their buildings that they want to lease to Shasta Community Health Center, who would finance and operate it with existing funds. He proposed that the remaining \$985,000 in HEAP funds be used to assist a non-profit to purchase and fix up two existing neighborhood homes to shelter homeless individuals and help them transition into more stable housing. The Supervisors preferred that such homes be located in the GNRM area to avoid neighborhood concerns of having homeless people living in their area. They did, however, give him permission to go forward with the medical respite plan, and do more research for the two shelter homes.

Back on February 26th, the first proposal brought forward by Mr. Ewert was for a new 26,000 square foot building referred to as "The Place" that would include a general shelter, medical respite and sobering center, serving a total of 92 individuals, requiring between \$6 million-\$9 million to build, and another \$2 million per year to operate it.

On April 23rd, The Place proposal was modified to be implemented in phases, downsized to a new 13,000 square foot building, still requiring additional funding of from \$6 million to \$9 million for capital costs. But even after downsizing, it became clear to Mr. Ewert that it would be difficult to solicit enough money from the community after reaching out to several potential donors, citing donor fatigue from the Carr and Camp fires, among other issues.

Also on April 23rd, "The Life Center" was proposed by Anderson Police Chief Michael Anderson. It was described as "a collaborative process incorporating accountability, for long term solutions to those experiencing homelessness, and individuals committing low level misdemeanor crimes." The goal would be to ***marry the two concepts of criminal justice and social service***, with two centers—a homeless center, and a transitional rehabilitation facility. Supervisors and law enforcement officials reiterated on May 14th that ***they want a detention center complex for low-level offenders to be part of any alternative shelter***. They believe this would be a more accountable solution to the area's homeless crisis than the originally proposed navigation center. Mr. Ewert will continue to work to bring those two concepts together. He was applauded for his flexibility, and demonstrating that he is very interested in solving this problem.

The Supervisors then approved spending up to \$100,000 to hire an architect to analyze the costs of turning the Sheriff's old detention center off of Breslauer Way into a transitional rehabilitation center. ***Stay tuned*** as the studies come forward!

Cost Recovery Fee Schedule Concept Not Well Received In Community

At the May 21st Redding City Council meeting, Council narrowly approved “in concept” a proposal to increase all building and planning permit fees, looking to provide an additional **\$625,000** in General Fund revenues annually to assist in maintaining four Neighborhood Policing Unit (NPU) officers and three firefighter positions for the City. Council members voted 3-2 to move the concept forward, with Mike Dacquist and Adam McElvain dissenting. Now the discussion and final decision on this concept will be made at the June 4, 2019 Council meeting.

Many comments and concerns were raised at a community and stakeholder meeting that was held on April 26th to obtain such feedback, as well as during the Council meeting, where every single business organization in the area (including Shasta VOICES) spoke in unison **against** the proposal.

The original concept which was laid out in January was for a “program modification.” The concept has evolved into what is called a “**Development Services Cost Recovery Fee Schedule.**” Not surprisingly, those who participated in the discussions were not pleased with this plan to substantially increase building and planning fees to cover **all** of the personnel and administration costs to provide the services, without using General Fund dollars. Although the concept is one that other communities have adopted, it is quite a departure from Redding’s long-standing current (and highly successful) strategy.

Historically, the City has made a conscious decision to keep building and planning fees low enough to provide the proper balance and incentives for residential and commercial building to actually occur in our not-so-wealthy community. Through actual experience, they understood that the City would not be (and has not been) able to recover 100% of the overhead costs for this department by charging exorbitant fees. Each attempt at increasing fees resulted in a decrease in permit activity.

Development Services Director Larry Vaupel and his staff, who were directed by City Council to find the \$625,000 in revenues, were looking for alternatives from community stakeholders, and some were offered. Based on all the feedback, staff revised their initial fee proposal downward, with smaller increases on flat fee permits. But the proposed increases that were presented to Council are still very high, some as much as a 271% increase.

How much is too much to pass along to consumers? We seem to be already there, particularly when it comes to building any multi-family units that pencil out, housing that the average family can afford, and attracting local businesses to fill the multitudes of vacant commercial and retail space available in Redding. The fees are already too high for all of these types of construction. Young new potential business owners are trying to get started building and investing in our City. Unfortunately, now they are seeing a City Council that is an adversary instead of an ally. If the fees are approved, the Council and those that support the increase can expect less and less local investment and presence. “Another nail in the “buy local” coffin” said one.

Additionally, this proposal raises **all** permit fees for **all people** who need to make repairs and improvements, not just new construction. They’ll likely find a way around the fees.

Not too long ago, building did come to a complete halt because of increasing costs and fees. The successful remedy was, in fact, to **lower and/or not raise the fees**. This jump-started our economy during some very difficult years. As recently as December 2017, impact fees were lowered again to address both a huge drop in population projections, and lack of building activity. Then last year, the Carr Fire disaster occurred. Council clearly recognized that in order to provide assistance and incentive for those who lost their homes to rebuild, permit fee **discounts** were needed, and they wisely implemented 20% discounts for those who chose to rebuild.

But, this cost recovery fee schedule proposal goes in the **opposite** direction. The City is not taking into account the **cumulative impact** of all the recent cost and fee increases in place already, including questionable new and increased park fees, inflationary increases to all impact fees, and added regulations requiring in-home sprinklers, rooftop solar panels, and energy efficient standards (to name a few). The City is so focused on finding immediate revenues to maintain public safety personnel that they are not properly assessing whether or not such a plan will actually deliver any new revenues. Their estimate of \$625,000 is, at best, a guess based on 2018 permit activity. And again, the City is not taking into account that the increased permit activity in 2018 and early 2019 due to the Carr Fire will not continue.

The City is trying to find a **permanent** revenue source to keep the four NPU officers and three firefighters, not one that is as volatile from year to year as building fees. This “cost recovery” plan just adds to that volatility, and likely won’t solve the financial dilemma they find themselves in today, which is caused entirely by **rising pension costs**. In order to find the proper permanent solution, perhaps they should be focused on solving that problem, no matter how difficult the task.

As mentioned above, the final decision on whether or not to implement this plan will not be made until June 4th. There is still time to offer alternatives to this plan. Please contact Mary Machado, (530) 222-5251, mary@shastavoices.com if you want to share your thoughts on the subject.

Updated News and Notes

Shasta VOICES is continuing to monitor and follow many issues of interest to our supporters and the community. As part of our efforts to keep you updated and informed, here is a brief update of some of these issues.

City Council Approves Les Schwab Tire Store—On May 7th, the Redding City Council approved the construction of a 9,249 square-foot Les Schwab Tire retail store on a 2.08 acre parcel, owned by California Gold Development, located at 4601 Churn Creek Road. Les Schwab will join Save Mart, Ross Dress-for-Less, and In-n-Out Burger (all three have pulled permits) as the next tenants of the Churn Creek MarketPlace Shopping Center. Site work for the main part of the shopping center will begin around June 1st.

Lowden Lane Senior Apartments Project Impact Fee Deferral Approved—On May 7th, Redding City Council revisited a request by The Central California Housing Corporation (CCHC) and the Community Action Agency of Butte County to defer impact fees, which would greatly enhance their chances to receive state and federal low income housing tax credits to move the Lowden Lane Senior Apartment project forward. The full project will consist of a 97-unit affordable senior housing complex, carrying rent restrictions making them affordable to residents 62 and older with incomes from 30 percent to 60 percent of the area medium income. This infill project off of Bechelli Lane on Lowden Lane is fully entitled and ready to build, and was approved on December 13, 2016. It is now proposed to be constructed in two phases, and the fee deferral request was for the first phase. To date, the Housing Authority of the City of Redding has made a commitment by awarding the Lowden Lane Senior Apartments 96 Project Based Vouchers, and 60 of these will be applied to the first phase to assist with the operational costs of the project and count as local leverage that enhances the project's competitiveness for state low-income housing tax credits. The next round of tax credit funding is in July 2019. Council had denied an impact fee deferral request in the past on this project because it included a 15-year deferral period (for the full project) that was not supported. But this time, Council ***unanimously approved*** the request to defer fire, water and waste water impact fees for a three-year period, as a residual receipts loan secured by a deed of trust in the amount of \$300,000 at 1 percent for a 55-year term. This demonstrates that our City is committed to providing public support for this worthy project, and should make the project highly competitive for tax-credit financing.

City-wide Fire Fuels Management District Will Not Move Forward—On May 21st, Redding City Manager Barry Tippin provided an update on a proposal he brought forward and City Council approved on October 16, 2018 to contract for an Engineer's Report on creating a citywide Fire Fuels Management District. He said that improved management of the fire fuels within the open spaces within the city limits, owned by the City, state and federal governments and private parties has been discussed for decades. Staff began working on an idea to place the entire City in a benefit district for the purpose of managing the fire fuels in the open spaces, and after the Carr Fire disaster and lawsuit that rescinded the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan for lack of an adequate hazard mitigation plan, that effort was pushed to the forefront.

Initially, Mr. Tippin believed that creating a citywide fire fuels management district would follow a process similar to that used to form landscape maintenance districts, which adheres to Government Code and is required by Prop 218. It provides the ability to assess (tax) properties based on the individual benefits received by the property and is subject to a majority protest vote. An Engineer's Report was necessary to establish the proportional property benefits, estimate costs and identify the appropriate and necessary mechanics to accomplish district formation. So a consultant was hired after Council approval to provide this work.

The Consultant has now informed the City that they cannot utilize the same procedure used to form a landscape maintenance district, or a "majority vote." ***A citywide fire fuels management district would require a regular election ballot measure, as well as a 2/3 majority vote to become effective.*** The next regular election is November 2020. With this information, Mr. Tippin suggested, and Council agreed, to set this issue aside for now. He said that the City would be utilizing the "REU Wildfire Prevention and Improved Response Program" instead, which was approved May 7th and is outlined on Page 2 of this newsletter.

Join Shasta VOICES today.

We depend on membership and other contributions.

If you are viewing this issue of "***THE VOICE***" on our website, click on the ***membership tab*** for information and to download a membership application or contributor form. Or, you can obtain more information by going to our website, **www.shastavoices.com**, or calling **(530) 222-5251**.

Mary B. Machado, Executive Director