



The VOICE

Your independent news source

Greater Shasta County, CA

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Did you know...

- The unemployment rate in Shasta County reached 9.9% in July.
- A total of 11 single family home permits were issued in the City of Redding in August.
- A total of 1 single family home permit has been issued for the entire year in the City of Anderson.
- The average salary for a management person working for the City of Redding is \$104,967 per year. The average rank and file salary (including supervisors) for those working for the City of Redding is \$61,311. Full time salaries range from \$28,059 for a clerk to \$204,396 for the top position, City Manger. The City has 839 full time employees.
- A new website has been unveiled as part of a comprehensive marketing campaign for Stillwater Business park: stillwaterbusinesspark.com.

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Redding Not Immune From State Budget Crisis Shasta VOICES Assists Local Government Officials to Prevent Seizure of Local Tax Funds

The California legislature has yet to adopt a budget for Fiscal Year 2008-2009. One of the latest suggestions coming out of Governor Schwarzenegger's office in Sacramento to balance the State budget is "borrowing" or seizing **local** tax funds, redevelopment tax increment and transportation sales tax funds to finance state operations.

Such a seizure could take as much as \$3.6 million in funds from the City of Redding for Fiscal year 2008-2009. Shasta County, the cities of Anderson and Shasta Lake would also be affected, though their actual numbers have not been calculated.

Having learned about this potential injustice from Redding City Manager Kurt Starman, Shasta VOICES immediately sent letters to the Governor, Assemblyman Doug La Malfa, and Senator Sam Aanestead strongly opposing such a proposal. We believe it would be the height of fiscal irresponsibility to take these funds when the voters have overwhelmingly passed measures to stop the destructive process of taking local funds to finance the state budget.

Additionally, Shasta VOICES participated in a press conference August 21st in front of City Hall in unison with City and County officials from the Shasta County area, the Redding Chamber of Commerce, the Shasta Builders Exchange, and the Association of Realtors. We sent a strong and united message to elected officials in Sacramento that stealing local government funds is unacceptable and would cause significant harm to citizens who rely on revenue that flows to local government, as well as suffering additional service or program cuts.

The City of Redding and Shasta County are making difficult budget reductions, implementing additional hiring freezes, and doing everything they can to maintain fiscal responsibility without severely reducing the level of service to the communities that they serve. They should expect no less from the state of California, **we** certainly expect no less from the state of California, and we support their efforts in opposition to fiscally irresponsible state budget decisions that would "borrow" or seize local government funds.

The weak economy is taking its toll on everybody. Our local government investments in infrastructure, affordable housing, and community services are creating much needed jobs to help speed our economic recovery. We urge you all to contact the Governor's office and your legislators in opposition to this proposal:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, California State Capitol, Sacramento, 95814.
(916) 445-2841, Fax (916) 445-4633

Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa, 2865 Churn Creek Road, Ste. B, Redding, CA, 96002.
(530) 223-6000, Fax (530) 223-6737

Senator Sam Aanestead, 2800 Washington Avenue, #301B, Redding, CA, 96001.
(530) 225-3142, Fax (530) 225-3207

City of Redding Makes Budget Adjustments To Reflect Reduced Sales Tax and Building Fee Revenues

The City of Redding has been impacted by the weak economy. Sales tax revenue and building related fees for fiscal year 2008 were \$1,639,110 lower than projected. Higher than anticipated overtime in the Fire Department also caused an increase of \$190,000 over the budget. So the City adjusted their General Fund appropriations to reflect these changes during the Mid-Biennial Budget Review on August 19, 2008.

Based on existing circumstances, the City also made adjustments to the General Fund budget for fiscal year 2009. Altogether, the changes caused a reduction in the General Fund revenues of \$1,937,000.

Some of the significant adjustments include:

- Reducing the sales tax revenue estimate for 2008-2009 by approximately \$2 million. The base figure for 2010-2011 and each year thereafter has also been reduced by \$1.7 million.
- Reducing building-related fees by an additional \$475,000 in 2008-2009.
- Continuing the “selective hiring freeze” that was implemented in October 2007. Public safety positions have been exempted.
- Reducing the medical insurance budget by \$150,000 in 2008-2009, and by \$310,000 in 2009-2010.
- Reducing Street Division budgets by \$645,000 in 2009-2010, \$690,000 in 2010-2011, and \$735,000 in 2011-2012.
- Reducing most general funds budgets by an additional 1% in addition to the 0.5% reduction that occurred in February 2008. The one exception to this reduction is the Fire Department.
- None of the General Fund departments will receive an inflationary increase for operating materials and supplies for 2009-2010.

In this less than ideal economy, it is reassuring to know that our local government officials are trying to do their part to remain fiscally responsible, and plan ahead to live within their means.

“Leadership—The Key to Redding’s Future” Research Project Identifies Election Issues

Shasta VOICES recently completed a research paper that explores the current state of government in the City of Redding, and details important issues highly valued by the citizens of Redding, which need to be addressed in order to determine who can best lead our City in the years to come.

This paper, referred to as a “white paper”, is 12 pages long and entitled “*Leadership - The Key to Redding’s Future.*” It is addressed to candidates running for the position of City Council member in November, 2008, for a four year term to being in January, 2009. Please refer to page 4 of this newsletter for complete election information.

A wide-scale consultation to determine which issues were consistently highly valued in the community ensued between May and July 2008. The process generated considerable interest, and a vast number of suggestions in the content of the white paper itself. The result takes into account the many points made through the consultation process, and does not attribute particular ideas to particular consultees. After each identified issue is explained in detail, questions are posed for the candidates to answer about that specific issue. The general public wants to know how they would answer these questions.

The Greater Redding Chamber of Commerce, as a service to its members, has given a copy of the white paper to each of the candidates, and asked for written responses to each of the questions posed in the white paper.

A summary of the issues detailed in the white paper has also been produced in the form of a 3 page newsletter. Plans are to mail the newsletter in the latter part of September to all households who voted in the last elections.

Here is a very brief outline of the issues and concerns that consistently rose to the top during our research:

- **Fiscal Responsibility** - Unfunded liability for retirees health insurance (\$94 million); Cost of City salaries and benefits; Decline of sales and property tax revenues; Funds to pay for a new police facility; Stillwater Business Park debt.
- **Sales Tax: Increase or Cut Expenses?**
- **Should the City Share Tax Revenues?**
- **Affordable Housing** - Cumulative effect of continually increasing fees and taxes.
- **Job Creation and Job Growth** - How can we streamline the existing permit process to help accommodate those wishing to do business in Redding?
- **How Should Redevelopment Dollars be Spent?**
- **Who Should Control Local Land Use Decisions?**

For more detail, look for your mailed newsletter later this month, or contact Mary Machado, (530) 222-5251.

Rental Acquisition Program Modified Trial Period Extended for 12 Months

The Redding Redevelopment Agency Board authorized a twelve-month extension of the trial period for its Rental Acquisition Program at its meeting on August 18th, after approving modifications to the previous program, which proved ineffective.

The original pilot loan program for the Rental Acquisition Program, which began in October, 2005, was designed to provide financial assistance to investors interested in purchased newly-constructed apartment units in return for long-term affordability covenants being recorded on all of the units. The stated goal of the Program is “to stimulate the development of additional rental units in the community through the provision of below-market rate permanent financing for the purchase of newly constructed units.”

At the conclusion of the first trial period of this Program in October, 2007, staff recommended that the Agency terminate the pilot program due to its ineffectiveness in meeting its stated goal. Despite marketing efforts, the Program was not utilized at all during the two year trial period. Under the current program the rent levels for all of the units must be affordable to low-income households. Debt service requirements made it difficult for such projects to “pencil out”, due to the reduced revenues collected from units with restricted rents. Also, the available funding is restricted to properties with five or more units.

Therefore, the Board authorized the following modifications to the Rental Acquisition Program for another twelve-month trial period, given the fact that the existing budget has sufficient funds available to support the Agency’s housing goals:

- 1) Increase the maximum financing from twenty percent (20%) to forty percent (40%) of eligible project costs.
- 2) Allow the number of units restricted by long-term affordability covenants to be proportional to the amount of the Rental Acquisition Program assistance provided.
- 3) Expand the parameters for properties eligible to use the Rental Acquisition Program financing to include those with as few as two multi-family units.
- 4) Expand affordability levels on assisted units to include moderate income.

For additional information, or if you have an interest in participating in this program, you can contact Larry Morgon at the Redding Redevelopment Agency, (530) 225-4393, or lmorgan@ci.redding.ca.us.

California’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals Will Force Changes in Housing and Transportation Plans “Fix 5” Plan Subject to Scrutiny

In many areas of the State, court rulings are being issued to force studies of greenhouse emissions for planned projects, including major highway widening plans. With the passage of AB 32 in 2006, greenhouse emissions are to be reduced to the 1990 level by 2020. That’s a 30% cut from projections. In order to meet such goals, land use, alternative fuels, and reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled are all considered part of the solution.

In a bit of irony, state highway officials are shelving a major Highway 50 widening plan in Sacramento. The plan was to add lanes that would be designated for carpools, buses and high-mileage vehicles during morning and afternoon commutes. The Environmental Council of Sacramento challenged CalTrans to show that adding new lanes would not encourage *more* car use and pollution. A Sacramento court agreed with them, and ordered CalTrans to look into whether more transit, such as buses and light rail, could serve a similar purpose as a widened freeway.

Locally, CalTrans and the “Fix 5” Partnership who are proposing to add an additional lane in both directions on I-5 from Corning to Mountain Gate, will more than likely face the same scrutiny. They are reviewing the court ruling to determine how to conduct more detailed environmental reviews on future projects, such as “Fix 5.” Adding more lanes on this stretch of highway will certainly “encourage” more vehicle use and pollution.

Another California Supreme Court Ruling issued in July, 2008 has also changed the way special assessments and fees can be levied and challenged. Special assessments (*such as those proposed by the “Fix 5” Partnership to pay for additional lanes*) when applied evenly to all parcels within a district, now run a high risk of being viewed as special taxes requiring a two-thirds vote of residents within a local agency’s jurisdiction. Perhaps it’s time to “shelve” this project, too.

2008 General Election November 4, 2008 *Voter Information*

It's not too soon to prepare to vote in the upcoming General Election, which this year falls on Tuesday, November 4, 2008. You must register to vote at least 15 days prior to each election. This year, the **voter registration deadline is October 20, 2008**. To be eligible to vote in Shasta County or anywhere in California, you must be:

- A United States citizen;
- A resident of California;
- At least 18 years old at the time of the next election;
- Not in prison or on parole for the conviction of a felony;
- You have not been judged by a court to be mentally incompetent to register to vote.

Precinct location information is not yet available, but will direct you where to vote in person depending on where you live. The Shasta County Election Department will provide this information to each voter in advance by mail.

California law allows any registered voter to apply for the Vote-by-Mail Program on a permanent basis. Once permanently enrolled in the Vote-by-Mail Program, you will *automatically* receive your official ballot in the mail for every election in which you are entitled to vote.

If you do not return an executed Vote-by-Mail ballot in two consecutive statewide general elections in accordance with CA Election Code Section 3017, your name will be removed from the Permanent Vote-by-Mail Program. Your Voter Registration will remain active, but you will have to reapply or Permanent Vote-by-Mail status.

If you need additional information, you can contact the Shasta County Elections & Registration Office:

Phone: **(530) 225-5730**; email elections@co.shasta.co.us; Fax: **(530) 225-5454**; Mail: **P.O. Box 990880, Redding, CA, 96099-0880**; Office Location: **1643 Market Street, Redding, CA, 96001 (Downtown Mall)**.

A qualified candidate for elected office in Shasta County is any person who files all of the required forms with the Registrar of Voters during the qualifying period (112-88 days before an election). The candidates name will be printed on the ballot. Here are the local qualified candidates who will appear on the ballot in Shasta County:

Anderson City Council: Phil Burnett, Norma Cornick, Melissa Hunt, James Yarbrough.

Redding City Council: Gary Cadd, Richard "Dick" Dickerson, Russell K. Hunt, Missy McArthur, Jim McDilda, Ken Murray, Terry W. Oxley, John E. Wood.

Redding City Treasurer: Leslie C. Detwiler

The League of Women Voters offers candidates an opportunity to share information about themselves and their campaigns with voters using the Smart Voter web site (www.smartvoter.org). This service is free and provides information such as candidates' biographies, endorsements and positions on issues, as well as information on candidates' forums.

Join Shasta VOICES today. We depend on membership and other contributions.

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(530) 222-5251

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