



The VOICE

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Greater Shasta County, CA

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Did you know...

- Shasta County's unemployment rate was 11.1% in November, the highest since November 1992, when it reached 12.4%.
- The annual "State of The City" luncheon, sponsored by the Greater Redding Chamber of Commerce, will be held this year on **Monday, February 2, 2009**, at the Redding Convention Center. Tables of eight can be purchased for \$300. Balcony seating is also available for \$30 per person. Contact the Chamber office for more information and tickets: 225-4433.
- A candle-light vigil to protest the City of Redding's practice of evicting people from their homes who cannot pay their utility bills will take place on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in front of City Hall, prior to the scheduled City Council meeting. City officials have said this is necessary to protect lives and property from fire and other hazards. Participants will ask the Council to address the existing code at some future meeting.

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Redding Police Facility Back on Agenda For City Council Meeting on January 20th

More questions have developed about the progress of the proposed new Police Facility for the City of Redding since the December 2, 2008 Council meeting that included a staff update on the subject.

At that meeting, the City reported that the Schematic Design Phase of the project was proceeding, that there was controversy surrounding the legality of utilizing the South City Park site for the project, that the required environmental review process was implemented, and that the City was continuing to explore other potential cost-saving options other than constructing an entirely new building.

The information presented has spurred further discussion about the Police Facility, which has again been put on the agenda for the January 20, 2009 City Council meeting. There is no specific discussion item on the agenda. We have done some research on the subject, and this is what we have learned.

In the last month, Nichols, Melburg, Rossetto Architects, who were selected to handle the design phase of the project, have completed and submitted 5 site plans to the City as part of the environmental review process. These demonstrate the most impact on park land sites versus the least impact, as well as no park land site usage. They also have produced a current actual construction budget for building a brand new facility. The new cost figure is \$20,934,000.

There is a proposal being considered for comparison, submitted by Levenson Development Company, for retrofitting the existing Costco building on Dana Drive/Friendly Avenue for the new Police Facility. The cost, including purchasing the site and doing the necessary construction is about \$21 million (as of last summer). Costco would be able to build a new, larger facility in Redding, potentially at Oasis Road and I-5.

Mayor Bosetti and Police Chief Hansen plan to tour some police facilities in Southern California at the end of January, including the Ontario building, which was a retrofitted big-box retail store, as part of the ongoing research to find out what makes the most sense for the City of Redding.

Redding Electric Rate Hikes Approved

At the December 16, 2008 Public Hearing, the Redding City Council voted unanimously to increase electric rates for all residential and commercial customers, despite deep opposition from the community. It appears that the only way to "weather" this increase is for the users to reduce their consumption of electricity.

The newly approved rate increases will take effect as follows:

- A 7.84 percent rate increase effective December 31, 2008, that will appear on customer bills in February 2009.
- A second 7.84 percent rate increase effective December 29, 2009, that will appear on customer bills in January 2010.

According to City Staff, in the years ahead, "costs will continue to escalate while wholesale revenue opportunities diminish." That's government speak for more rate increases.

Obama Stimulus Package Keeps Changing **City of Redding to Discuss at January 20, 2009 Council Meeting**

Only a few weeks ago, congressional leaders talked of approving a huge stimulus package (\$775 billion) by Inauguration Day. But, the plan for quick action has become entangled in politics. There is broad agreement on the urgent need for economic stimulus in our country, but the “laws of Washington” still exist, and Congress has the right to put their stamp on any large and high-profile bill.

Democrats and Republicans are at odds over the focus of the stimulus. Democrats want more government spending on roads, bridges and other infrastructure. Republicans say too much spending is wasteful, and are pushing for the bulk of the stimulus to come in the form of tax cuts.

Obama has said he will not allow the stimulus to contain any pet spending projects, or earmarks. But lawmakers have their own agendas and are working to tilt the tax cuts or spending their way. This delay also gives interest groups time to try to influence the process, and many have been weighing in with their own wish lists.

You could say that we have our own “interest groups” weighing in right here in Shasta County. The County and its three cities all have submitted separate “lists” of projects that they feel are worthy of stimulus funding, as well as the Shasta County Regional Transportation Agency. In a perfect world, each and every one could be funded. But that’s not what’s going to happen.

This is what we know now:

- There will be Federal money available for California cities and counties, which needs to be used for projects meeting the yet to be determined definition of “infrastructure,” to boost the economy and create jobs.
- We know that the submitted projects need to be “shovel-ready”, at least for the first phase of construction, within 180 to 365 days.
- We know that each jurisdiction in Shasta County has submitted long, *non-prioritized* lists to the appropriate State level people, hoping that additional information will arrive soon outlining more exact criteria for their projects to qualify. They seem to be waiting until then to rank or prioritize their lists.
- Redding City Council plans to discuss *prioritizing* their list (34 projects) at the January 20, 2009 council meeting.
- The best guess bottom-line now, according to our local Shasta County RTPA, is \$30 billion of Federal stimulus nationwide for transportation funding, *one piece* of the whole stimulus package that has been publicized. That would mean \$3 billion for California (using a typical federal formula). That may mean (using the typical formula) \$2 billion for Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPA), cities and counties. That would mean **\$10 million to our local Shasta RTPA, our three cities and the County**. A movement by local business is underway to have more money sent to our North State area.
- The transportation project that appears to give Redding the “best bang for the buck” is the Oasis Road full interchange improvement and reconstruction, with a potential of more than 6,000 long term jobs created if development could move forward. A second possibility is the South Bonneyview/I-5 interchange improvements. Both areas have been stalled because of the excessive costs of infrastructure improvements. Many commercial and residential projects could move forward quickly if these improvements could be made, adding sales and property tax revenues (in addition to long-term jobs) to both the City and County coffers.
- The Shasta RTPA has given priority to adding two lanes (one in each direction) to I-5.
- About 40% of the total Obama Stimulus Package, roughly \$300 billion, is slated to go for tax cuts, including about \$100 billion in breaks for businesses to encourage new investment and job creation.

There are many questions that remain to be answered. President-elect Obama will be officially inaugurated on January 20th, and clearly nothing will be finalized before he becomes the President. It may be mid-February before this emergency measure clears Congress.

Shasta VOICES, together with the Shasta Association of Realtors, the Shasta Builders Exchange and a multitude of businesses in the area, are working diligently to prove our area deserves more than the typical “federal formula” of funds. If you would like to assist us in this effort, please contact Mary Machado, (530) 222-5251, or mary@shastavoices.com.

Proposed Septic Tank Regulations Mandated by the State One Size Fits all Solution Doesn't Work in Shasta County Excerpts From Greg Watkins, P.E., Councilman, Shasta Lake

In 2000, the California legislature passed another of its unfunded mandates upon the citizens of the State. The State Water Resources Control Board is now responsible for developing regulations to comply with this AB 885. The draft regulation, as written, will have significant impacts on all homeowners or existing and future septic tank sewage disposal systems, and will do little to improve public health in most Counties of the State.

The water board has developed draft regulations to serve as a "one size fits all" solution for all areas of California. The legislation appears to be initially drafted to address problems with septic tanks in sandy soils near beaches and lakes, and these draft regulations have little applicability to anywhere in Shasta County, and especially not in the City of Shasta Lake.

Recommendation: The Water Resources Control Board will be developing final regulations following the end of public comments on February 9, 2009. Some of the changes the City (as proposed by Greg Watkins) should request are:

- Exempt all septic tank owners from State required inspections when served with drinking water from tested municipal water sources, such as in Shasta Lake. These citizens have zero chance of drinking domestic water contaminated by septic tank effluent.
- Permit each County Health Department to adopt, some, all or none of the State regulations as their local conditions warrant.
- Septic tank inspections every five years are excessive. Delete all requirements for periodic inspections of septic tanks, and associated reporting to the State, unless a County deems it appropriate. Most home sales already require pumping and inspections of septic disposal systems.
- The study presented no evidence that the effluent from the leach fields with properly operating septic tanks vs. tanks in need of pumping are any different. This basic, unsubstantiated premise is a driving issue behind some of the draft regulations. Septic tanks in need of pumping do not create greater environmental risks. The exception would be systems with surfacing effluent, and the County already has methods and authority to deal with failed septic systems.
- Drop the requirement for 3 ft. of soil instead of 1 ft. if soil below a leach field, unless a County Health Department determines certain geographic areas have excessive layers of sand and would benefit from additional soil depth to remove contaminants.
- Drop the requirement for 3/16" filters on the outlet of septic tanks. Filters will be a maintenance headache and again do nothing to reduce the extent of effluent discharging from a leach field.
- Drop the requirement for the O & M manuals for conventional septic systems.

There was a public workshop held on December 18, 2008 in Redding with an estimated 200 people in attendance to discuss the proposed septic tank regulations. The Water Board representatives were almost apologetic in being required by AB 885 to develop these unpopular rules for septic tanks. Greg Watkins, in his oral presentation, asked if they could determine if a Statewide voter initiative could be used by the citizens of California to overturn the mandates of AB 885 should the Water Resources Control Board be forced to proceed with these new "draconian and unnecessary regulations." To date, an answer has not been received.

Our thanks go out to Mr. Watkins for proposing alternate solutions to the Water Board. We can only hope it will not be necessary for a Statewide voter initiative to overturn these mandates.

EIR Agreement Approved for Knighton & Churn Creek Commons Retail Center

The Shasta County Supervisors approved an agreement with Hawkins Companies, LLC, for the payment of funds in the amount of \$247,551 for the preparation by a consultant of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a Mitigation Monitoring Plan (MMP), and staff costs related to document production and processing of related land use permits for the Knighton & Churn Creek Commons Retail Center project at its December 16, 2008 regular Board meeting. They also approved an agreement with Quad Knopf, Inc. for the preparation of an EIR and MMP for \$237,551. The financing is provided by the project proponent.

The project is proposed to be a commercial retail and entertainment center on 92 acres located at the northeast corner of the Knighton Road/I-5 interchange. It would include 740,660 square feet of mixed commercial development to be phased in over three to four years.

A Glance Back at 2008

Happy New Year to all of our readers! 2008 was a challenging year for just about everybody. There were some bright spots mixed in with all the not-so-bright spots. Here is a partial snapshot of what 2008 looked like, economically speaking, in the Shasta County area.

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|--------------------------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Building Permits: | Redding | Shasta Lake | Anderson |
| New Single Family Units: | 190 | 17 | 3 |
| New Multi-family Units: | 214 | 0 | 1 |
| New Commercial Units: | 31 | 1 | 7 |
| % Change 07-08: | -17% | -46% | -33% |
- **Needed Road Improvements:** Four major projects are under way in the Redding area, including the Cypress Avenue Bridge replacement, the Hwy. 44 Bridge replacement, Dana to Downtown expansion, and the South Bonneyview Road expansion. Another exciting project is the Hilltop Drive Streetscape, which should be completed by the spring of 2009. This is a beautification project that not only adds landscaping improvements, but also buries overhead electric lines. Other notable road improvements include the repaving of Victor Avenue from Hartnell Avenue to Churn Creek Road.
 - **Shasta County Impact Fees:** County Supervisors approved a new impact fees program in July. It will be phased in over a three year period for all new construction in the unincorporated areas of Shasta County only.
 - **Joint Facilities Impact Fees Program Failed:** Shasta County and the City of Redding had proposed a joint fee program which would have been in addition to the already existing City of Redding impact fees. City Council declined to participate in such a program, saving as much as \$4,200 per new home in the City limits.
 - **Stillwater Business Park:** Phase I goes forward, with \$12 million of infrastructure work being completed.
 - **Sales and Property Tax Revenues Decline:** Budget cuts, layoffs, hiring freezes, service reductions, and program funding cuts continue at both the City and County levels of government.
 - **Elections:** We elected Barack Obama President of the United States; Leonard Moty, Linda Hartman, and Glenn Hawes were elected as Shasta County Supervisors; Missy McArthur and Dick Dickerson were elected to the Redding City Council; Melissa Hunt, Norma Connick and James Yarbrough were elected to the Anderson City Council.
 - **Video-on-demand implemented:** The City of Redding Council meetings are now available on the City's website for all to view on-line by just clicking on the items of interest.
 - **Construction Incentive Program:** The City of Redding jump-started residential construction by lowering and delaying fees through October 2008. They agreed to make permanent the collection of impact fee at time of request for final inspection for residential construction.
 - **Redding Electric Utility Raises Rates:** City Council approved a rate increase for all Redding electric utility users, who will be paying 7.84% more in 2009, and an additional 7.84% more in 2010.

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