



The VOICE

Your independent news source

Greater Shasta County, CA

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Did you know...

- Shasta County's unemployment rate increased to 10.7 percent in January 2014, up from 9.6 percent at the end of December 2013; the unemployment rate increased in February 2014 to 11.0%.
- There were 8 new single family dwelling permits in February, bringing the total for 2014 to 25. There has been only 1 commercial building permit so far in 2014.
- Public records indicate that the McConnell Foundation owns over 4,040 acres of vacant land in Shasta County.
- The City of Anderson used about 70 percent of its general fund revenues in Fiscal Year 2012-2013 for Public Safety, and is budgeted for a similar amount to be used for Public Safety in 2013-2014.

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Turtle Bay Land Sale Approved REVOLT Group Pursues Petition for Referendum

Negotiations for the purchase of 14.17 acres of land leased by Turtle Bay Exploration Park between the City of Redding and McConnell Foundation have been ongoing since April of 2013. At its March 4, 2014 regular Council meeting, the City Council voted 3-2 to **approve** and execute a purchase agreement for this property with the McConnell Foundation for **\$600,000**.

Since 2010, Turtle Bay has been actively working to construct a hotel and restaurant on its campus with the goal of achieving a steady source of income to support the museum and reduce financial assistance provided by the McConnell Foundation. The City Council gave its approval to Turtle Bay to proceed with the development process, which has included obtaining a use permit amendment, reaching agreements regarding access and utilities, and making technical amendments to the master lease to resolve property boundary lines.

During this process, an issue arose as to whether the construction of the hotel is subject to prevailing wages. In December, 2011, the state Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) issued an opinion that the project was *not* subject to prevailing wage requirements. That decision was appealed by the Northeastern California Building and Construction Trades Council, and in January 2013, the DIR director *reversed* her decision, saying it *was* subject to prevailing wage. Writ proceedings are pending in the Superior Court challenging the DIR director's decision on appeal, so this "fight" will continue until the Court makes its final decision.

The Northeastern California Building and Construction Trades Council have been campaigning against this land purchase, arguing that the value of the property is closer to \$5 million. They believe that the sale of the land for \$600,000 constitutes a public subsidy to the McConnell Foundation, and that they are trying to circumvent prevailing wage obligations. McConnell and Turtle Bay have said they believe the ownership of the property would eliminate any potential prevailing wage requirements for the propose hotel project.

Now, the Trades Council has formed a group opposed to this Turtle Bay land sale, hoping to overturn the Redding City Council's decision to execute a purchase agreement. The name of the group is Residents Entitled to Vote on land Transaction, or REVOLT. They are in the process of pursuing a referendum to be put on the November 2014 election ballot asking the residents of the City of Redding to vote to overturn City Council's decision to approve the land sale.

Apparently, petitions will be circulated by REVOLT to collect the 4,744 valid signatures necessary to place a referendum on the November ballot. They will have 30 days to complete this task. The signatures will need to first be counted by the City Clerk's office to make sure there are enough to meet the required figures, then sent to the County Clerk's office, which has 30 working days to verify that the signatures are valid.

The supporters of Turtle Bay and the hotel project have yet to outline (at least publicly) their strategy to counter the petition. With our forever changed local economy, perhaps it's time to revisit the history of Turtle Bay Exploration Park, how it came about, how it pulled together several local museums into one, and how much it reduced taxpayer subsidies from \$690,000 (long before Turtle Bay) all the way down to zero. Look for a more detailed follow-up article on this subject in our April 2014 issue of "The VOICE."

Park Fund Balances Reviewed: Time for New Strategy?

The City of Redding has two funds which collect park-related fees related to new residential development. The Park In-Lieu Fund receives fees instead of land when residential subdivision maps are approved to offset the costs related to the acquisition of new parkland “necessary” to meet the demands of *new* residents. The Park Development Fund collects impact fees on residential building permits to offset the costs of developing new, and improving existing, parkland.

The Community Services Department maintains and regularly updates a 5-year plan to track and forecast the health of park development funds. This was last done in September, 2013. On March 12, 2014, staff provided a report to its Community Services Advisory Commission (CSAC) as current and up-to-date information.

As of January 2014, the Park Funds maintained a positive cash balance of \$1,665,025, and it is predicted to finish the year with a positive cash balance of \$778,862. The most significant obligations of the Park Funds are the remaining debt service on Enterprise Park (\$509,014, paid as \$51,000 per year through 2023) and the 2004 City Park Bond (\$1,883,375, consisting of \$893,625 remaining in fiscal year 2013-2014 and \$939,750 due in fiscal year 2014-2015).

Unfortunately, revenues are not keeping pace with projections. The revised projection in the report foresees a positive fund balance throughout the life of the plan, with a low point of \$733 in fiscal year 2014-2015. Essentially all Park Fund resources are dedicated toward debt service currently. The Park Development Fund also will need to repay the Park In-Lieu Fund about \$2.5 million in inter-fund transfers made to cover debt service costs. Therefore, it will be a number of years before there is a balance sufficient to undertake any new projects, and only if new residential construction rebounds in a big way.

Shasta VOICES believes that the reliance of all park fund revenues coming from construction of *only* new residential structures appears to be a flawed strategy. It is based on the assumption that Redding only “needs” new and improved parks when impacted by new residential construction. Yet, the parks are used by everybody in this area and equally as much from outside of this area, not just those who purchase new homes. Perhaps its time for the City to seriously consider revisiting such a strategy and searching for other sources of revenue that can be shared by all people who utilize the extensive park system in Redding, which is considered of great importance to the local economy.

Referendum on Medical Marijuana Ordinance Moves Forward

Shasta County Supervisors approved and adopted Ordinance SCC 2014-02 on January 28, 2014 that created new restrictions on the cultivation of medical marijuana for the unincorporated area of the County.

If effective, the Ordinance would, among other things: (1) prohibit the outdoor cultivation of marijuana; (2) limit the cultivation of marijuana per premises to a total of twelve plants within a structure that is detached from and accessory to a residence of a qualified medical marijuana patient, or primary caregiver of a qualified medical marijuana patient; (3) prohibit the unlawful surface drawing of water and unlawful discharges of water related to marijuana cultivation; (4) require that if the person cultivating marijuana is not the owner of the property, notarized statements from all legal owners consenting to the cultivation must be obtained; (5) make any violation of the marijuana cultivation restrictions a misdemeanor; and (6) amend residential accessory building requirements.

By statute, Ordinance SCC 2014-02 would become effective 30 days after adoption. However, a referendum petition was filed on February 27, 2014, which was before the effective date.

The referendum petition to put the new rules to a November vote was generated, and collected 12,287 signatures. A random sampling of 500 signatures was completed by the

County Clerk’s office, and checked against voter records. Of the 500 signatures, 315 were determined to be valid, which is 63 percent of the 500 signatures. When the 63 percent figure is applied to the 12,287 signatures, a total of 7,741 signatures were deemed valid by the County Clerk’s office. That is above the required 6,545 signatures needed. All Shasta County voters will now have the final say on whether or not to ban the new, stricter Ordinance in Shasta County when they go to the ballot box in November.

Currently, the new rules have been suspended, pending the outcome of the November election results.

There is still an Ordinance in place that passed in late 2011, and those rules remain in effect. Those rules regulate medical marijuana gardens by square footage based on property size. Outdoor grows are not prohibited. Enforcement officers have said these rules are too cumbersome to enforce and not adequate to curtail the number and size of marijuana grows that have sprouted around the County in recent years.

The new Ordinance was created to protect against degradation and misappropriation of water resources, reduce exposure to hazardous materials, protect resource lands for their intended lawful purposes, and guard against encroachment or large scale or illegal cultivation on these lands.

What, Exactly, is Prevailing Wage?

Most people have probably never heard of “prevailing wage” laws, or if they have, they believe these laws have nothing to do with them. Nothing could be further from the truth, according to the Public Service Research Foundation. “Prevailing wage laws ought to be of immediate concern to all Americans because they have a direct impact on their quality of life and the taxes they pay.”

In government contracting, a prevailing wage is defined as the hourly wage, usual benefits and overtime paid to the majority of workers (in a variety of mostly construction trades) within a particular area. For over a hundred years, many state and local governments have required that companies contracting for public works must pay their workers a wage that reflects wages commonly received in the area. The federal government adopted its own prevailing wage requirement with the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931.

At the heart of these laws is the conviction that government, as a major buyer in the construction sector, should not use its buying power to drive down wages. Prevailing wages call for workers on a government contract to be paid the same rate as comparable workers in the private sector.

If that was all there was to it and the wages specified were actually those that prevailed in a community, these laws would be almost harmless and probably unnecessary. But that’s not the way they work. There are powerful special interests that have a strong stake in the outcome of the prevailing wage determinations. Those powerful special interests are the building trades unions and a few mostly union trade associations. They know that if a wage that truly prevailed in a community was used, it would make it very difficult for firms with union contracts to bid competitively.

The fact is that most so-called “prevailing” wage rates are substantially higher than the wages that actually prevail in the area. This can cause public works construction to cost more than it ought to. Because of the increased costs, less construction is done than is needed. Public infrastructure is crumbling because sufficient funds haven’t been available to maintain it, therefore less construction is done than is needed. Prevailing wage rates can drive up the cost of building and maintaining the nation’s highways, bridges, schools, water and sewer infrastructure, and projects needed for a clean environment.

Below is a table showing the prevailing wage determinations for a sampling of the construction trades in Shasta County. The “locality” for which these rates apply include all locations within Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yuba Counties.

| CRAFT Journey Level | Basic hourly rate | Health and Welfare | Pension | Vacation/Holiday | Training | Other Payments | Total Hourly Rate |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Electrician Comm & System Installer | 24.680 | 9.550 | 2.200 | 2.060 | 1.100 | 0.970 | 40.560 |
| Electrician Inside Wireman | 39.060 | 11.130 | 5.000 | included in basic rate | 1.240 | 2.27 | 58.70 |
| Painter Brush, Spray, Paperhanger | 29.970 | 9.700 | 6.310 | included in basic rate | .0310 | .0360 | 46.650 |
| Plumber Plumber, steamfitter, HVAC | 37.00 | 10.98 | 12.810 | included in basic rate | 1.450 | 2.070 | 64.310 |
| Carpenter Hardwood, floorlayer, power saw | 32.12 | 10.70 | 8.85 | 4.10 | 0.68 | 2.44 | 58.89 |

Look for additional information on the subject of prevailing wage in our April 2014 issue of “The VOICE.”

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.

Some building projects have been approved by the City of Redding Planning Commission recently, demonstrating that we may be slowly recovering from the economic recession we have been experiencing for the past six or seven years. It is interesting to note that all three of these particular projects are utilizing already approved property “uses” from prior years. Here are the details:

- ***Holiday Inn Express on Hilltop Approved***—A use permit requested by Maninderjit Bath for construction of a three-story hotel located at 2240 and 2244 Hilltop Drive in Redding consisting of 93 rooms and 51,000 square feet was approved by the City of Redding Planning Commission on March 25th. The project is currently developed with a 70-room residential hotel (Hilltop Lodge) and a retail building that is vacant. The hotel was originally allowed by use permit and developed in 1970 with a 54-room hotel building and then later expanded with construction of a separate 16-room hotel building added in 1975. The vacant 6,000 square foot frontage building fronting Hilltop Drive was most recently used for retail sales (bookstore) but was originally constructed for use as a 206-seat buffet restaurant. The project will include demolition of all existing buildings and grading necessary for construction of the hotel and associated new parking and landscape facilities.
- ***City Lights Project Approved***—A planned development application submitted by Hilltop Development for 7 upscale duplex units (14 units total) was approved by the City of Redding Planning Commission on March 25th. The project is called City Lights, and is located on Hilltop Drive just west of the water tower. Each unit will be about 1,500 square feet and will have a two-car garage. City Lights would feature two-story units on a ridge that overlooks the Sacramento River and Sundial Bridge. The property was previously approved for a project called Tower Ridge Townhomes, consisting of 13 attached single family units. Hilltop Development bought the property for \$200,000, about a quarter of the purchase price the previous owners paid in 2004.
- ***Browning Point Subdivision Approved***—On March 25th, RG Development was given approval to develop a 14-lot subdivision for construction of a duplex unit on each lot (28 units total) on 3.8 acres at 1375 Browning Street at the northeast corner of Old Alturas Road and Browning Street in Redding. All units are about 2,000 square feet in size, are two-story with three bedrooms, and have an attached two-car garage and driveway. Redding City Council had previously approved a subdivision and planned development plan on this property in March 2007 (Traviata Subdivision), and the subdivision approval is currently valid until March 2017.

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