



# The VOICE

Your independent news source

Greater Shasta County, CA

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### Did you know...

- There were **17 new** single family home permits issued in the City of Redding in May 2020, for a total of **88** so far in 2020, and **1 Carr Fire** single family rebuild permit issued in May 2020, for a total of **16** so far in 2020. There were **6** permits issued for new commercial buildings in May 2020, for a total of **12** so far in 2020.
- On June 2nd, Shasta County Supervisors implemented Covid-19 guidelines to allowed limited in-person attendance of Shasta County Supervisors meetings once again. On June 16th, Redding City Council voted to allow limited in-person attendance at City of Redding Council meetings, starting with the July 21st meeting. The guidelines for both jurisdictions include limited attendance at 25% of capacity including staff, and seating on a first come, first served basis, with a designated waiting line area outside the Chambers for others wanting to speak who must maintain six feet of distance apart and will be allowed entry to make their comment and then exit the room. Individuals are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering. Commonly used surfaces will be frequently disinfected.

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## "The Suspension" Research Paper Again Addresses Proposed Redding Rancheria Casino Project

In July, 2019, Shasta VOICES prepared an independent research paper to address the overwhelming amount of controversy surrounding the proposed Redding Rancheria Fee-to-Trust and Casino Project. The 7 page document, entitled "The Double Dip" concluded that the concern and controversy surrounding the proposed project was well founded.

Questions and concerns began in earnest after the release of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on April 5, 2019, by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which was the first time for most of the local community leaders and members to receive detailed information about the project. The Shasta County community had asked some very important questions, and expressed multiple legitimate concerns that were not being addressed.

It wasn't until May 14, 2020 that any further information on the project was brought forward. That is when the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), issued an official notice of "**Suspension of Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement**" for the proposed Redding Rancheria's Fee-to-Trust and Casino Project. The notice said that "by letter dated February 21, 2020, the Tribe notified the Department of the Interior that it would **await a decision from the California Supreme Court** in a case arising under State law and involving the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, 25 U.S.C. 2719 *et. Seq.*, before the Tribe decided how to proceed on its application."

The Tribe offered a different explanation when asked by local media, saying they were **pausing** the project due to opposition by local City and County officials that "may prove insurmountable." That is when we determined that some independent research was once again needed to find the truth.

Shasta VOICES prepared a follow-up research document entitled "**The Suspension**" to once again look for the facts and report as much information as possible in an easy-to-read and relatively short document. The 5-page report addresses the conflicting statements from the BIA and the Tribe. It was released on May 29, 2020, and can be found on our website (<http://www.shastavoices.com/studies.html>). In short, this is what we found:

There is more than one California Supreme Court case regarding the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) section referenced above. That section provides **limited** conditions for BIA to take lands into trust for the purpose of gaming for tribes recognized after 1988. Two of these conditions are the "Restored Lands Exception" and the "Two-Part Determination."

It appears that the Redding Rancheria's fee-to-trust application was trying to utilize the "Restored Lands Exception," which provides BIA the authority to take lands into trust for gaming purposes if it's part of "the restoration of the lands for an Indian tribe that is restored to Federal recognition." **This exception does not require approval by the governor or community considerations.** However, BIA's regulations further provide that lands can be taken into trust under this exception **only if the tribe is not gaming on other lands.** Of course, the Redding Rancheria Tribe **is** gaming on other lands with Win-River Casino. The Tribe's application circumvents the standard Two-Part Determination, which must determine that it would **not** be detrimental to the surrounding community, and **does require approval** from California officials and the Federal government.

Our conclusion is that it **does actually matter** if local government leaders, cooperating agencies, and the community they represent determine that a gaming establishment would be detrimental to the surrounding community.

## *City-wide Fiber Optic Installation Plan Moving Forward*

On June 2nd, Redding City Council accepted the “**City of Redding Broadband Master Plan**” report provided by EntryPoint Networks, and authorized the following:

“1) The Redding Electric Utility to complete the design for the fiber optic ring connecting electric infrastructure and City buildings, including the increase of the fiber strand count to 288, and the hiring of a consultant as necessary to fully develop the fiber project for City use; and (2) Authorize City of Redding staff to **continue study of a potential city-wide fiber optic installation** including, but not limited to, funding opportunities, potential partners for dark fiber only, regulatory and legislative impacts of development of an Internet Utility, and identification and mitigation of risks associated with a project of this scope.”

All that complex “talk” in simple terms means that the report and suggested plan for moving forward is focused on better service to the community and on providing greater opportunities for businesses in the region. Along with data provided from a public survey, City officials concluded that the community is generally supportive of a project that provides an **additional option for internet service that could be more reliable, more affordable, and allows for local control.**

Redding Electric Utility is currently developing a plan to lay fiber to connect critical electric infrastructure and City buildings. The Broadband Master Plan takes REU’s efforts into consideration and provides information that can be used in a strategy that would allow broadband service to the entire community.

## *Shasta County Impact Fee Increase Postponed After Request by Mary Machado*

On June 2nd, the Shasta County Board of Supervisors **unanimously approved** a request by Mary Machado from Shasta VOICES to postpone the County’s scheduled July 1, 2020 Facilities Impact Fee rate increases. Here is some background information explaining why this request was made (and approved).

A required 5-year report related to the County’s impact fee program was presented to the Board of Supervisors on December 11, 2018, marking **10 years** since the program was established. At that time, County Resource Management Director Paul Hellman chose to search for and hire a consulting firm (David Taussig & Associates) with the proper expertise to evaluate the status of the program and to make recommendations for adjusting the fee structure. There had been **no review or update** to the program since its inception, other than regular inflationary increases each and every year since 2008.

It wasn’t until December 3, 2019, that stakeholders including Shasta VOICES, representatives from our local Economic Development Corporation, the Shasta Builders Exchange and some local developers, participated in a meeting with the consultants to provide what we believe is invaluable input in crafting a **balanced approach** to impact fee programs that will provide enough incentive for development to actually occur while being mindful of infrastructure improvements that may need to be included in a fee program. Since the County has not revisited their fees since 2008, they have not adjusted the fees for the grossly over-projected population growth figures used in the existing fee program (which did not, in fact, occur), among many other issues. The cities of Redding, Anderson and Shasta Lake have all readjusted their impact fee programs **downward**, more than once, over the last several years—they had all used the same flawed projections in the past.

On April 28, 2020, Mary Machado submitted a letter to the Board of Supervisors explaining that County staff is still in the process of preparing a development impact fee study for the unincorporated area of Shasta County. Progress on the study was slowed down by the Coronavirus pandemic. This study is intended to serve as the basis for the adoption of a **new** development impact fee program that would supersede the existing “Facilities Impact Fee Program,” and also consolidate traffic impact fees established prior to the existing program into a single, new development impact fee program.

The draft study is currently being reviewed by County staff, who are making some revisions. Once revisions to that draft have been made by the consultant, it will be provided to stakeholders, including Mary Machado, for their review and comment. Then a final draft will be prepared and presented to the Board of Supervisors along with a proposed new impact fee program ordinance.

Unfortunately, the current development impact fee rates were established by Ordinance No. 665 in 2008, and subsequently adjusted annually in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance. In order to postpone the scheduled July 1, 2020 annual increase, **an amendment to Ordinance No. 665 must be prepared** by staff and presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Therefore, such an amendment will be prepared, brought back to the Supervisors for consideration, and once approved, **won’t become effective for 30 days**, as is customary for such changes.

Therefore, this means that, although the postponement is approved and effective for impact fees paid after July 1, 2020, the ordinance amendment will not actually take effect until at least the end of July. Any fees collected at the increased rate in effect from July 1, 2020 and until the end of July will be retroactively refunded if paid.

## *City Council Unanimously Approves Dignity Health Redding North State Pavilion Project*

Dignity Health Redding has been seeking approval for several years now for their planned 129,600 square-foot, \$50 million Dignity Health North State Pavilion Wellness Center project, to be located on 10.55 acres at the southwest corner of Cypress and Hartnell Avenues. They purchased the property on August 25, 2016.



On May 12, 2020, the Redding Planning Commission unanimously approved the following recommendation to Redding City Council for the Dignity Health Redding North State Pavilion Project: (1) certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR); (2) approve and adopt the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations; (3) approve and adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Program; and (4) approve General Plan Amendment GPA-2017-00003, Rezoning Application RZ-2017-00004, Use Permit Application UP-2017-00001, and Parcel Map Application PM-2017-00002, subject to the draft conditions of approval.

On **June 16th**, Redding City Council held a public hearing to consider approval of the Planning Commission's recommendation, and **unanimously approved** the project as recommended (3-0 vote). Mayor McElvain and Council member Winter had recused themselves from the discussion and vote on this project, citing business interests with Dignity Health. All public comments received during the meeting were in support of the project.

The Dignity Health project will be a wellness center for ambulatory medical offices and clinics distributed amongst three buildings totaling 129,600 square feet with 549 parking spaces: Building A, considered the main building, will be four stories with 80,000 square feet; Building B will be three stories with 27,800 square feet; and Building C will be two stories with 21,800 square feet.

The project is proposed to develop in two phases. Phase I will include Building A, which is projected to be completed in 2022. Buildings B and C are considered Phase 2, expected to begin in 2024. The project will create construction and related jobs, provide the City with over \$3 million in building and impact fees, add traffic improvements, and greatly improve the existing environment. When completed, it will create **180 local high-paying jobs** with up to \$14 million in annual salaries.

## *Shasta County Budget Includes New Fire Station*

The proposed 2020-2021 Shasta County Budget document was unveiled during a public hearing on the subject at the June 9th Shasta County Supervisors meeting. Although the County's Chief Administrative Officer Matt Pontes presented a "status quo" budget, he did indicate that, due to the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 reimbursement issues, the Supervisors would likely be making adjustments moving forward.

The recommended budget totals **\$569.7 million**, which is a \$175 million increase over the prior fiscal year. At least part of that increase is due to some capital projects that are needed in fiscal year 2020-2021.

There are seven capital projects listed in the budget document. The largest of these is the **South County Fire Station**, with a project cost of **\$7 million**. Sierra Pacific Industries has offered to donate a portion of the property where their headquarters is located (19794 Riverside Avenue) to the County for the proposed fire station. The property is located in unincorporated Shasta County, in the City of Anderson Fire Protection District. Funding to build the station will come from the Accumulated Capital Outlay Fund and facilities impact fees of \$1,150,000.

About 80 percent of the overall budget is for non-general fund operating departments. Most but not all non-general fund departments have various State and Federal funds earmarked for specific purposes.

Total funding requirements for the General Fund is \$100.3 million. This will be offset by revenue, \$82 million (taxes provide 87% of this), leaving a structural imbalance of \$18.3 million. This will be offset by use of fund balance carryover and General Fund General Purpose fund balance.

Mr. Pontes stated that the proposed budget prioritizes public safety. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the County of Shasta economy is still being analyzed. Several departments will be affected including Public Safety and Health and Human Services. Shasta County **may** receive an allocation of \$18.4 million from the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund, part of the CARES Act. These funds would have to be spent (not just encumbered) by December 31, 2020, however, this funding cannot be used to backfill lost revenues.

The County must approve a spending plan for FY 2020-21 by June 30, 2020.

## 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.

### ***Shasta County to Release Fountain Wind Project Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)—***

ConnectGen is a renewable energy company focused on working with local communities to responsibly develop best-in-class wind, solar, and energy storage projects that will increase America's supply of low-cost, domestically produced clean energy. They are currently developing a wind farm in Northeastern Shasta County named the **Fountain Wind Project** near the existing Hatchet Ridge wind farm, located near Burney.

The proposed Fountain Wind Project has the potential to provide electricity for more than 86,000 homes, while using up to 72 wind turbine generators. This Project will provide many benefits to Shasta County, including \$50 million in tax revenue during the first 30 years of operations, 200 jobs during peak construction, and up to 12 full-time jobs during Project operations. Additionally, ConnectGen would be providing more than \$1 million in community giving to address local community needs. The Project would also generate funding to improve local roads and other infrastructure in the Project area, while further enhancing fire safety and best practice fire prevention measures utilized by the site's landowner. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was required by Shasta County, based on an initial study dated June 28, 2018. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was completed and is scheduled to be released at the end of June, 2020 for public comment. Additional information can be found at both the County's website; <https://www.co.shasta.ca.us/index/drm/planning/eir/fountain-wind-project> as well as the project website; [www.fountainwind.com](http://www.fountainwind.com).

***Costco Project Opposition Group Wants Referendum***—On May 19, 2020, after several years, much discussion and careful consideration, Redding City Council unanimously approved the River Crossing Marketplace Specific Plan, General Plan amendment, and rezoning by Costco Wholesale, in association with Rich Development, to develop 25 acres of undeveloped land, at the northeast corner of South Bonnyview Road and Bechelli Lane, with a 152,000 square foot discount warehouse, including a fuel station with up to 30 fueling stations, and about 62,000 square feet of complimentary retail, service and restaurant uses.

Opponents of this project, the Bonnyview Bechelli Coalition, have been fighting the project for about two years, saying that it would cause unwanted traffic and pollution. They now want to attempt to overturn the project's approval via a local ballot referendum on the General Election ballot in November. They will have until **July 18th** to collect the needed **5,100 signatures** of registered voters who are **City of Redding residents** to get the measure on the ballot.

The Coalition originally wanted a court order that all approvals for the project be suspended until 30 days after the State lifted its current stay-at-home order due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to give them enough time to collect the 5,100 signatures. Otherwise, the approvals for the General Plan Amendment for the Project would have taken effect on June 18th, and the rezone on July 2nd. But an agreement to extend the deadline by 30 days to July 18th was reached in Shasta County Superior Court on June 18th, which **limited** the Coalition's request for an indefinite suspension of the Costco Project approvals **to 30 days**. The Coalition also agreed that after their members have had 30 days to gather signatures, they will dismiss an underlying lawsuit associated with the project.

***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