



The VOICE

Your independent news source

Greater Shasta County, CA

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Did you know...

- There were **16** single family home permits drawn in the City of Redding in October, bringing the total number of single family permits through October 2015 to **159**. That is 57 more than for the same period last year (a **56% increase**), and 69 more than for the same period in 2013.
- The **Henderson Open Space Grants**, totaling \$726,940, will not be affected by the proposed **Dignity Health Wellness Center Project**. On November 10th, city officials met with representatives with the state's Natural Resources Agency and Division of Boating and Waterways, who confirmed the awards. Dignity has offered to work with the City to leave one of the parcels it is interested in buying in the City's control to guarantee access to the open space and a place to park. Negotiations continue for the land purchase, and, when reached, any potential agreement will come before City Council for public discussion.

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Giving Thanks...

In the spirit of Thanksgiving season, Shasta VOICES would like to take this opportunity to say "thank you" to the people and events that contributed to making 2015 another year of transition towards an improved economy locally.

Simply fed up with low-level crime in and around the City of Redding, the local community is thankful that a "Blueprint for Public Safety" for both the City of Redding and Shasta County is underway. The finished Blueprint will be unveiled by the end of 2015, and open to public input in early 2016.

Stable and reduced development impact fees, largely attributed to the efforts of Shasta VOICES over the past 7 years, have enabled the construction industry to increase building activity by **468 percent since 2010** in the City of Redding, putting many people back to work and purchasing goods and services in the area once again.

Moore's Flour Mill began construction in March for a new 63,000 square foot grain milling manufacturing facility located at 6150 Shasta View Drive off Airport Road. It is on schedule and expected to open in January 2016, bringing potential new jobs and revenues to the area.



The grand opening for the Shasta County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) "**Shasta Venture HUB**", which is 14,000 square feet of space located in the Mountain Lakes Center on Caterpillar Road in Redding, was held on November 4th. It includes 13 office spaces where potential companies will set up their businesses and grow. There are already 5 start-up companies located in the HUB. They will spend 12-18 months in the facility, work with mentors and experts in their specific industry, and eventually make enough progress to move forward on their own.

On August 18th, **Lassen Canyon Nursery, Inc.** completed a purchase and sale agreement with the City of Redding for the **first lot in Stillwater Business Park**. It was an historic event! This is a locally started and owned agricultural business that has operated in Redding for over 50 years. The company has outgrown its current headquarters on Salmon Creek Road in Shasta County, and will be expanding its business of producing strawberry, raspberry and blackberry stock plants for both public and private programs. Plans include the construction of new corporate headquarters, and a 30,000 square foot cooler and shipping and receiving office, within the next 5 years.

Dignity Health North State, the parent company of Mercy Medical Center in Redding, wants to build a **\$50 million wellness center** on 12.5 acres near the former Raley's on the corner of Hartnell Avenue and Hemsted Drive, which is north of the Henderson Open Space area. If eventually built, the wellness "campus" project would create **120 to 180 local high-paying jobs** with \$9 million to \$14 million in annual salaries. The City would receive over \$3 million in building and impact fees. Construction and related jobs would also be created. This is exactly the kind of economic growth our community is looking for. The community is thankful for consideration of such a project, and hopes to see it become a reality in the next two to three years.

Lastly, thank you to all the supporters of Shasta VOICES. We are making a positive difference to the economic opportunity in our community because of you.

Organizational Changes Within City of Redding Approved But Not Proposed Raises

On November 17th, the Redding City Council was asked by City staff to approve a resolution adding, deleting, and modifying certain job titles to reflect proposed organizational changes. In particular, the Support Services Department, which was created in the 1990's, was re-evaluated.

The Support Services Department includes a diverse group of divisions: airports, building maintenance, information technology, fleet maintenance, purchasing, and the solid waste utility. Support Services Director Rod Dinger is retiring in December 2015 (on his 55th birthday). So, City Manager Kurt Starman felt this was a good time to re-evaluate this department and consider changes that could improve efficiency and better align certain areas of responsibility. City Council agreed to make the following changes:

1. **Airports Division**—assigned to Department of Public Works.
2. **Building Maintenance**—assigned to Community Services Department. The Building Maintenance Division and the Parks Division will then be managed by a *new Parks and Facilities Manager*.
3. **Information Technology Division**—will become the Information Technology Department with a *new Director of Information Technology*.
4. The **Fleet Maintenance Division** and **Solid Waste Utility**—will be assigned to the Department of Public Works.
5. **Purchasing Division**—will be assigned to Deputy City Manager.
6. **Support Services Department**—will be *eliminated*.

These changes are to be accomplished without the need for any new hires, although certain job titles will be “modified” to make the changes (as noted above). Mr. Starman projects that this reorganization will save the City around \$115,000 per year.

But the City Council did *not* approve an added request to increase the salary for the Director of Public Works by 5.7 percent to reflect the increase in additional duties described above. And the Council did *not* approve an added request to increase the salary for the Director of Community Services by 5 percent to reflect the increase in additional duties described above.

Councilman Brent Weaver suggested *delaying* these pay increases until after these two Department Directors have had their next employee evaluations. He also expressed that he doesn't prefer to group Department Heads together when it comes to raises. His compromise motion, after discussion with the other Council members, was to amend the staff recommendation by delaying the raises for four months. This will allow time to see how the new duties are handled, and then conduct employee performance reviews to weigh both new duties and overall job performance with existing duties. The Council voted 4-1 to approve his motion. Councilman Gary Cadd dissented, saying that he was not supportive of raises.

Local Candidates Stepping Forward Already for November 2016 Elections

The next election isn't until November 8, 2016, but already, several candidates for Redding City Council and Shasta County Board of Supervisors have announced their candidacy.

For Redding City Council, there are two open seats available, and five candidates so far: **Robert Hale**, an advocate for the disabled; **Adam McElvain**, businessman and co-founder of West Coast Innovations; **Lea Tate**, a psychologist; **Julie Winter**, a nurse-practitioner; and **Gary Cadd**, a current Councilman whose first term expires at the end of 2016. Councilwoman Missy McArthur says she will not run again after completing her second four year term.

For Shasta County, there are three open seats available, and three candidates so far: In District 3, which covers north-eastern Shasta County, **Janet Chandler** will be running against incumbent **Pam Giacomini**; In District 4, covering the northwest portion of Shasta County, **Michael Pohl-**

meyer, a financial advisor, and **Anje Watson Walfoort**, a real estate broker, will be running against the incumbent **Bill Schappell**. In District 2, covering south Shasta County, incumbent **Leonard Moty** is running unopposed so far.

In Anderson, seats held by Mayor Melissa Hunt, Vice Mayor Susie Baugh, and Councilman James Yarborough will be open. Candidates for these seats have not yet stepped forward.

In Shasta Lake, seats held by Mayor Greg Watkins, Vice Mayor Lori Chapman-Sifers, and Councilman Larry Farr will be open. Candidates for these seats have not yet stepped forward.

There's plenty of time for other candidates enter these races. The official candidate filing period is July 18, 2016 through August 12, 2016.

Local Public Services Pressured As Salary and Benefit Costs Go Up

Redding's salaries and compensation packages are again in the spotlight, due to the Record Searchlight's recent annual salary survey of the cities of Anderson, Redding, Shasta Lake and Shasta County.

There are plenty of complaints from the taxpaying citizens in and around Redding that there aren't enough "services" being provided to properly address low-level crimes, loitering, public intoxication, property theft, drug use in parks, trespassing, panhandling, and overall bad behavior that creates the perception that our quality of life is deteriorating. Nor is there any shortage of complaints about the continually rising utility rates, deteriorating roads and other aging infrastructure in need of repair or replacement.

But one doesn't have to search very long to understand *why* such services have suffered over the past few years. The most blatant example to illustrate the "why" is the Redding Police Department. The Record Searchlight is not the only group who has researched our local government salaries and benefits.

"The 30 Best-Paying Cities in the United States for Police Officers," was published by the educational research firm called Start Class (and does not include overtime or any benefits, only salary). We should mention that the information about Redding was checked against the City's own salary data (which is available on their website) for the most currently available fiscal year, and we found it to be quite accurate. Here is the information for just the top five cities:

- #1: San Jose, California—average police salary \$99,700
- #2: San Francisco, California—average police salary \$98,210
- #3: Santa Barbara, California—average police salary \$93,600
- #4: Santa Rosa, California—average police salary \$91,250
- #5: **Redding, California—average police salary \$89,420 (up 38 percent from one year ago)**

Redding actually pays more than the much larger cities of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Seattle, New York, and Chicago, just to name a few. Only seven of the top 30 cities were *not* located in California. The national average salary for police officers is **\$58,720**, but this number varies widely depending on the state and city. The lowest paying city in the nation according to this study is Alexandria, Louisiana at \$31,370.

When studying the Redding Police salaries, or Fire Department personnel, or any other department salaries in Redding, it is clear that our City employees do not leave their jobs, but spend an entire 30 year career in these jobs and retire. Thus, over the years, we have more employees earning salaries at the top of their respective salary scale, and have become *"top heavy,"* with fewer employees available to perform those tasks that are most important (and visible) to the citizenry being served. Currently, for example, there are 9 promotional "steps" available for police officers who want to "move up" in their careers. As they move up, their pay increases, along with annual inflationary increases, and there is not enough money left in the budget to hire additional officers. A similar compensation system is utilized for the firefighters, creating the same "top heavy" situation, and inability to add more firefighters.

Furthermore, the cost to provide the most generous pension programs available just about anywhere, particularly for public safety employees, has increased dramatically. For fiscal year 2016-2017, Redding will pay **\$1.4 million more** just for pension costs than it did in 2014-2015. And increases of this magnitude and even higher will continue through 2020. The situation we find ourselves in today in Redding is that we have a very "mature" group of actively working City employees, as well as a very high ratio of retirees to actively working employees. As of 2013 (most recent study), there were a total of **741 active** employees, and a total of **965 retirees** receiving benefits. So, our cost to provide the agreed upon retirement benefits, according to the actuaries who figure these things out, are high and going higher.

Clearly, there needs to be a balance between the provision of government services and the cost to provide such services in every community. Of course, generating more government revenues—that is, raising taxes to avoid cutting staff and services, or to pay pension costs—has traditionally been the preferred "solution" when cities and counties look for ways to balance the budget. Being a less than wealthy community, that solution proves very challenging in the Redding area.

It is a little known fact (at least to the general public) there is actually a *limit* to the amount of tax that can be charged in California. In 2015, the California state sales tax rate is 7.50%. Cities and municipalities can charge an additional local sales tax of **up to 2.5%**, for a maximum possible combined sales tax of 10%. That "well" could easily run dry at some point in the not too distant future, *if*, and that's a big if, local citizens did vote for additional sales taxes.

It's time for our local government leaders and elected officials to get serious about implementing other solutions that include true cost-cutting measures to address the current unsustainable employee pay and benefits system.

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:

Knighton Road Veterans Clinic Complex— At a City of Redding Planning Commission meeting held on November 10, 2015, K. Maurice Johannessen requested approval to develop a new Veteran's Clinic on about 16 acres located along the south side of Knighton Road. He proposed maintaining a previously approved 96-unit senior housing development and amending the existing Planned Development to change the primary use of the property from an approved 32,600 square foot worship center to a 103,000 square foot Veteran's Clinic. The Planning Commission ***recommended approval***, with conditions. One of those conditions is constructing a future road along the west property line, and Mr. Johannessen objects to this. With the Commission's recommendation to City Council, he plans to discuss this item during Council consideration. Before City Council can consider his applications, however, the County Airport Land Use Commission will need to consider them, so it's not clear when the Council will actually be able to consider the applications.

Back in November, 2014, a forgivable loan for \$28,700 was approved for Mr. Johannessen by the City of Redding to facilitate the development of a medical services facility and independent living apartment complex to serve veterans, to be built on this property. This amount represents the cost of City permit fees, and if the project does not proceed, the forgivable loan would be due and payable at the end of five years. In order to proceed with the project, the City of Redding's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance will now need to be amended to reclassify the property as Public Facilities. The City fees and General Plan amendment, Zoning Ordinance amendment and the use permit will now total about \$30,313. Additionally, when the Council approved the initial forgivable loan, it was to be secured by a deed of trust. But Mr. Johannessen now prefers a promissory note that is not secured by a deed of trust, due to concerns that a deed of trust recorded on the property may hinder his negotiations and future agreements with state and federal agencies. On November 17th, City Council agreed ***not*** to require the deed of trust.

Mr. Johannessen has an impressive record of success, and continues to demonstrate perseverance for this particular project, regardless of all the obstacles he must overcome. He has been instrumental in creating new veterans facilities in Shasta County and throughout the State of California. The medical services facility and independent senior living apartment complex will be a tremendous asset for veterans in Shasta County and throughout the region, as well as bring much-needed economic activity and jobs to the area. We applaud his continuing efforts.

Bethel Church Collyer Campus Project— Bethel Church of Redding submitted an application to construct a church/school campus consisting of two, two-story buildings totaling 171,708 square feet on 37 acres of property located at 2080 Collyer Drive on the east side of Redding. The project consists of two buildings: Building "A" totals 83,955 square feet consisting of a 2,600 seat auditorium for Sunday church services, nursery, child care, café/kitchen, bookstore and maintenance; Building "B" totals 87,712 square feet, consisting of a 1,200 assembly area, Sunday school classrooms, and Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry offices. There will be 1,851 parking spaces, a new gravity sewer line, a new Bella Vista Water District pump station, and a new storm water detention basin. The project requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The firm of Kimberly-Horn was selected from the proposals received to prepare the EIR. The applicants have agreed to pay them \$233,043 to prepare the EIR. Redding City Council officially awarded the contract to Kimberly-Horn at the November 17th Council meeting.

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We depend on membership and other contributions.

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Mary B. Machado, Executive Director