



CITY NOTES

January 2, 2014

Each new year presents an opportunity to look back on the past year's accomplishments and to reaffirm priorities for the coming year. In this column, I've identified some highlights of the City of Fort Bragg's work efforts in 2013 and key projects that we hope to move forward in 2014.

2013...

Over the past year, the City's greatest resource, its staff, experienced considerable transition. A number of staff members left the City's employment, some retiring, others moving on to new jobs. As a result, the City hired 14 new employees (including seasonal and part-time employees) in 2013 and currently we are recruiting to fill six staff positions. In addition to changes in staff, a new City Councilmember, Heidi Kraut, was welcomed to the City's leadership after a special election in early May.

The City implemented an ambitious street improvement program in 2013, including the Street Structural Repairs Project, the Residential Streets Resurfacing Project and the Safe Routes to Schools Project. In August, Fort Bragg voters approved an extension of an existing half-cent special sales tax for street repairs, thus ensuring that the City will be able to continue its street repair program and expand it to include repair of alleys. The City also worked to finalize plans for the Main Street Merge Lane Relocation Project, meeting a number of times with local merchants and property owners to identify ways to minimize impacts on local businesses during the construction period. That project is still in the design phase and, depending on permitting timeframes, it will be constructed in either 2014 or 2015.

2013 was a year of intensive work preparing for construction of the Fort Bragg Coastal Trail project. This \$11 million project has been in the planning and permitting phases for eight years. The City Council took action last July to "de-federalize" the project by returning \$750,000 in federal funds, in order to stay on track for construction of the trail to begin in 2014. Through a lengthy dialogue with the Sherwood Valley Rancheria, the project design has been modified to address Native American concerns. We expect to put the project out to bid in spring of 2014 and construction will span two seasons. Once developed, the Coastal Trail project will reconnect Fort Bragg to its coastline for the first time in over a century.

In June, a 72-foot long Blue Whale skeleton was unearthed from two pits in which it had been buried since washing ashore in October 2009. The City has been granted permission to possess the Blue Whale skeleton for public display and educational purposes. The bones have been cleaned and sorted, and await further cleaning and assembly. The magnificent Blue Whale skeleton will be a premiere exhibit at the Noyo Center for Science & Education. The City Council made a commitment to moving forward with the Noyo Center project last August when it authorized a temporary, part-time staff position to coordinate a fundraising campaign and to spin-off a non-profit organization to develop and operate the Noyo Center. The Center will be located on an 11-acre parcel next to the Coastal Trail that was purchased by the City's former redevelopment agency. The Noyo Center is a key economic

development initiative that will support local marine research, provide educational opportunities, attract students and visitors, and create local jobs. In 2013, the City also began the process of updating its comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, holding dozens of meetings to obtain community input and issuing a draft report in early December. The updated Economic Development Strategy will be completed in early 2014.

July 2013 marked one full year of operation of the C.V. Starr Community Center under the new structure which was put in place after Fort Bragg voters passed Measure A, a half-cent special sales tax to support the Center. In May, the City Council lowered user fees at the C.V. Starr Center in an effort to maximize community access to the facility. In September, the Council and the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District entered into a new Operating Agreement whereby the MCRPD will continue to operate the facility for the coming year. The facility continues to be a shining star among public recreational facilities serving our coast.

2014...

As always, the City's overarching priority for 2014 is to continue providing excellent services and facilities to our community. From an infrastructure standpoint, a major priority is to upgrade our water and wastewater systems. Given record low rainfall thus far, 2014 is shaping up to be a drought year. The City is moving forward with a number of actions to help address water supply constraints. The City Council will update the City's water conservation ordinance this spring to ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to balance water consumption with water supplies during drought conditions. The City is also moving forward with a number of projects to improve the reliability of our water system. A contract has been approved for replacement of a portion of the City's raw water transmission line (from Brush Creek Road to Newman Reservoir). The City is also moving forward with permitting for a new water storage facility, the Summers Lane Reservoir. The City also hopes to purchase the MCRPD's regional park property on Highway 20 for watershed protection purposes and possible future water source development.

In 2014, the City will be moving forward with engineering and design, permitting and financing of major improvements to its aging Wastewater Treatment Facility. The plan is to replace the trickling filters with an activated sludge treatment system that will add decades of new life to the facility and improve its treatment capacity.

With regards to digital infrastructure, the City is implementing a complete overhaul of its governmental website. The new website is currently under development and will be unveiled in late spring. The new website is intended to improve public access to information and documents, and to provide interactive tools to enhance citizen engagement with our local government.

2014 promises to be another busy year for the City of Fort Bragg. We are fortunate to have an active and informed community, a dedicated and thoughtful City Council, and hard-working and caring staff. One of the many things I love about Fort Bragg is the ability of our community to work together to achieve common and extraordinary goals. Happy New Year!

City Notes is published on the first and third Thursday of each month. If you have questions or suggestions regarding the column, feel free to contact City Manager Linda Ruffing at (707) 961-2823, ext. 118 or L.Ruffing@fortbragg.com.