



# CITY NOTES

February 8, 2018

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## A Final City Note

Next Wednesday will be my last day as Fort Bragg's City Manager. After 12 years and more than 250 City Notes columns chronicling the day-to-day accomplishments and challenges facing the City of Fort Bragg, this is my final column.

More than anything, I want express my gratitude. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this community over the past 18 years, first as Community Development Director and then as City Manager. Fort Bragg is a special place. Not only is it situated in one of the most extraordinarily beautiful settings on this planet, but it is a full-service city which is the cultural and economic hub for the entire Mendocino coast. While I am leaving as your City Manager, I am not leaving Fort Bragg. This is my home and the community I love.

I came to Mendocino County more than 25 years ago to raise my family and with dreams of practicing as a professional planner. I chose to live here for the quality of life and because of the sheer beauty of the Mendocino coast. I moved from Anchor Bay to Caspar and then to Fort Bragg, seeking the right blend of community, good schools and job opportunities. I had no idea how lucky I would be.

I've often said that living in Fort Bragg is like "stepping back in time." As a single mother, I felt blessed to raise two sons in a town where they could walk to school, learn from dedicated and talented teachers, participate in a myriad of extracurricular activities, and then drop by my office at the end of the day. It takes a village to raise a child and that village remains intact in our community. From our beautifully renovated schools, to Wiggly Giggly Playground, to the C.V. Starr Community Center, to Timberwolf Stadium- Fort Bragg is a town that prioritizes the needs of its youth. Now, the Noyo Center for Marine Science is helping to instill in the next generation, enthusiasm for science and a sense of stewardship that will help our community face the challenges to come. I am proud of the work that our City does to provide opportunities for people of all ages to play and recreate, to embrace healthy lifestyles, to appreciate the splendor of our natural environment, and to prepare for the future. It is a reflection of the values of our community.

I am a planner. Most of my professional life has been spent working in the realm of community planning. For me, Fort Bragg has been a planner's dream. When I first started working for the City, I was tasked with finishing up a long overdue General Plan update. Following that, we rewrote the City's archaic zoning regulations, creating the Land Use & Development Code. We prepared a Downtown Revitalization Study that laid the groundwork for the multi-phased Downtown Streetscape Project. We created a capacity for pursuing grants that, over the years, has brought tens of millions of dollars in grant funds to help community nonprofits, to plan for our future, to support local businesses, and to fund capital improvement projects within the City. I am proud of the strong foundation that has been laid for community development in Fort Bragg.

When the Georgia-Pacific timber mill permanently shut down in 2002, Fort Bragg was given the opportunity to plan for reuse of a 425-acre waterfront property that comprises a full one-third of the area within its city limits. This has been both a labor of love and an exercise in patience. After the

initial “visioning” of the Mill Site Reuse Study, we spent years working to acquire 95 acres along the coastline of the mill site and more time assembling funds, plans and permits to construct the world-class Noyo Headlands Park and Coastal Trail that spans 3 ½ miles of coastline- reconnecting Fort Bragg to its waterfront after more than a century behind locked gates. My grandson learned to ride his bike on the Coastal Trail. That is satisfying on so many levels. The environmental clean-up of the mill site and rezoning it for future redevelopment are two activities that have gone on for years and years. We are nearing the end of both processes and I am confident that our community will remain engaged and insist on a vision for the future that is worthy of Fort Bragg.

In 2006, after serving as Fort Bragg’s Community Development Director for six-plus years, the City Council asked me to step up and serve as City Manager. This was not a job I sought, but it was a tribute and an opportunity that I could not turn down. What a fulfilling job it turned out to be. Leading an organization of 60 employees who are tasked with implementing an ambitious workload, helping a City Council of five elected officials achieve their goals, overseeing a \$30 million annual budget, serving a community of 7,000—it is a lot of work, and it has been very fulfilling. Our employees are nothing short of amazing. They have tremendous talent and dedication. They live here; they care about Fort Bragg; they work hard to keep our City running and to make this community a better place. They are what I will miss the most about this job.

In early March, Tabatha Miller- Fort Bragg’s next City Manager- will take the helm. She comes with the full support of our City Council and will dive into the many challenges that lie ahead. I wish Tabatha the best and I hope that everyone will welcome her, help her get to know and understand our community, and support her efforts to run the City and to help implement the City Council’s vision for Fort Bragg’s future.

Thank you very much for the privilege of serving as Fort Bragg’s City Manager and Community Development Director over the last 18 years. It has been an honor.

*If you have questions regarding this column or any matter of City business, please feel free to contact City Manager Linda Ruffing until February 14, 2018 at [LRuffing@fortbragg.com](mailto:LRuffing@fortbragg.com) or (707)961-2829.*