City Hall News

From the desk of
Fort Bragg City Manager Linda Ruffing
June 4, 2009

1. **Spotlight Award for May.** This month, the "spotlight" is on Finance Technician Carl Audo. Carl joined the Finance Department team in January of this year. His primary job focus is to provide a front-line response to incoming calls and inquiries. His work involves a considerable amount of problem-solving, combined with explaining City policies to the public. He is also responsible for the processing of all accounts payable transactions for the City. Carl has excellent customer service skills and he represents the City well in his interactions with the public. To many residents of Fort Bragg, this is the only interaction they have with City government. Thank you, Carl, for your contributions to our City!

2. **State Budget Almost Certain to Impact City Revenues.** With the failure of the ballot measures last month, it's quite likely that the State will seize local government revenues to help offset its massive budget deficit. As discussed at the Council's budget workshop in May, the State has proposed to "borrow" $115,500 in property tax revenues. The Legislative Analyst's Office has also presented a proposal to "take" (i.e., no pretense of repayment) a significant share of the City's gas tax revenues (estimated at $225,000 in FY 2009-10). The League of California Cities held a Budget Action Day in Sacramento yesterday to provide an opportunity for city officials to meet with legislators on budget issues. Mayor Doug Hammerstrom and Councilmember Jere Melo attended this event. Hopefully our legislators understand that balancing the State's budget on the backs of local government is not acceptable.

3. **State Appeals ERAF Decision.** Last week, the State of California filed an appeal of the recent Sacramento Superior Court decision in *California Redevelopment Association v. Genest* that found the State had violated the Constitution when it required redevelopment agencies to pay $350 million to help offset the State's FY 2008-09 budget deficit. The State's attorney said no effort will be made to stay the lower court judge's decision to permit agencies to withhold payments to ERAF that would have been due on May 10. It will likely be many months before a final decision is made by the appellate court. If the State prevails, the Fort Bragg Redevelopment Agency will need to submit a payment of $110,000 for 2008-09 and we can expect the State to continue stealing local agencies' redevelopment funds to address the State budget deficit.

4. **Meeting with Congressman Thompson.** Mayor Doug Hammerstrom, Councilmember Dan Gjerde and I met with Congressman Mike Thompson and his field representative, Heidi Dickerson, last Friday to review the City's priority funding needs. We emphasized that funding to help repair the Wastewater Treatment plant is our top priority and explained that, while our 2009 appropriations request sought $1.5M for three wastewater projects, an estimated $17M is needed over the next 10 years to keep the City's wastewater collection and treatment system functioning. We also reviewed the Highway 1 Circulation & Safety project, the North Fort Bragg Coastal Trail project, and the Noyo Center for Science & Education project with Congressman Thompson. As always, the congressman seemed genuinely interested, asked good questions, and offered the support of his congressional staffers to assist with our search for funds.

5. **Eco-Motion Event.** A local event organizer has proposed an "EcoMotion Mendocino" event to be held in Fort Bragg in mid-August that would attract visitors and promote sustainability.

The event, which was estimated to attract up to 8,000 people, would involve closing off 12 blocks in the central business district for a very large block party with music, food, beer & wine, vendors, non-profit booths, etc. After a considerable amount of trouble-shooting and discussion, the City has informed the event organizer that the event cannot proceed as planned. Our concern was that bringing 8,000 people to town, on what is already one of the busiest weekends of the summer tourist season, would create gridlock on City streets and exceed the Police Department's capacity to ensure public safety. We suggested that the event be scaled back and scheduled for an off-peak weekend after Labor Day or before Memorial Day when it will have a lesser impact on traffic and public safety. We understand that the event had a lot of public support and we're hopeful that it will be resurrected at a scale and time that is sustainable in our community.

6. **Tsunami Exercise.** The City's management team participated in a "tsunami exercise" in mid-May that was initiated by the National Weather Service West Coast Alaskan Tsunami Warning Center. The exercise was intended to test the interoperability and redundancy of communications systems at local and regional emergency operation centers (EOCs). The management team activated the City's EOC and participated in a mini-tabletop exercise with our counterparts at the Mendocino County EOC. The exercise provided a great opportunity to troubleshoot technology and equipment issues at our EOC and to strategize about future training needs.

7. **Mill Site Specific Plan – Joint City Council/Planning Commission Work Session.** A joint Council/Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 24, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at Fort Bragg Town Hall to review the revised Land Use Concept Plan for the Mill Site Specific Plan. Based on direction received, the consultants will begin to prepare the policy and regulatory framework for the specific plan. While there will be many future opportunities for public and policy-maker input into the Mill Site Specific Plan, identifying the basic layout of land uses and the circulation network is a key milestone in the planning process.