

COLAB SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

PRIOR ACTIONS AND COMING ATTRACTIONS REPORT

WEEK OF JUNE 20-26, 2011

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Meeting of Monday June 13, 2011 (Consideration of the Proposed 2011-12 Annual Budget) (Mostly Completed)

The consideration of the Budget turned out to be pretty much a non-event. The Board reviewed the entire 611 page policy document except for a small section on contributions to non-profit agencies (separately scheduled) in about four and one half hours. The Board asked few questions and in the end preliminarily adopted the Proposed Budget as submitted by the County Administrator. The final vote is scheduled for Tuesday June 21, 2011. There was a great amount of mutual congratulation among the Board Members, the County Administrator and some of the Department Heads. It was pointed out that San Luis Obispo County had developed a phased budget reduction strategy four years ago which allowed it to reduce costs and staffing, thus forestalling sudden reductions or layoffs. The Board pointed out that San Luis Obispo County has obtained concessions from its unions limiting salary growth, increasing the employee's share of pension costs, and establishing a lower cost pension tier.

COLAB continued to advocate for reductions in the Planning and Building Department and the County Counsel's Office. On the latter, Supervisor Hill quipped that the Board loved the County Counsel's Office and expected that it would continue to defeat legal actions brought by groups and individuals which opposed the County's strategic land use efforts. Perhaps he had a particular group in mind. For all practical purposes, these Budgets and the ability to prosecute the aggressive land use regulatory strategy remain in place.

In reality, the rosy picture portrayed by the Board was contradicted in the Budget document itself. The impact of the recession and decline in revenue on the one hand and the need for increased services on the other are constant themes in the various department narratives which explain the numbers. Virtually all the welfare, health, mental health, and family support programs have experienced major increases in demand and are stressed. The Animal Control Department reports more abandoned pets, more surrenders to the shelters, and fewer adoptions, all of which it attributes to the economy. The Airport reports lower enplanements and revenue (182,000 in 2008; 125,000 in 2010). Play at the three golf courses operated by the County has declined 18%, resulting in a \$750,000 (20%) drop in revenue since 2008. Accordingly, the County has reduced maintenance, which in turn can reduce satisfaction and play, a potential financial death spiral. The Parks system as a whole is experiencing a similar decline with attendance and fee revenue severely declining. The

general fund contribution to road maintenance fund has been cut for third year in a row. COLAB repeatedly pointed out that the Board needed to recognize these economic trends and take strategic action to counter them. The Board looked bored.

The real drama of the Budget hearing occurred when Supervisor Bruce Gibson displayed his anger at the Director of the non-profit Community Health Centers (CHC) because he had organized his client base to ask for more money to operate the clinics. There was apparently a postcard campaign and a print advertisement which suggested that without a greater County contribution, clinics would be closed. CHC took over a significant part of the outpatient indigent care (those without Medi-Cal) when the County hospital was closed. Speakers argued that when the hospital closed the County promised that CHC would fill the outpatient void. Gibson attacked the CHC Director on the basis that his salary and benefits were too high. When the Director fought back Gibson became enraged and said he had obtained the information from the IRS non-profit filing records which lists the names of board members and compensation of major executives.

This is becoming an increasingly frequent pattern at the San Luis County Board of Supervisors. Those who disagree with Hill and Gibson are attacked personally on whatever basis these two Supervisors can conjure up. These are vintage leftist tactics. Perceived enemies are accused of being racist, overpaid, environmentally ignorant (climate change deniers), and so forth. This behavior by certain Supervisors is calculated to chill public comment and is a growing problem. The California Open Meeting Law requires that, "When a member of the public testifies before a legislative body, the body may not prohibit the individual from criticizing the policies, procedures, programs or services of the agency or the acts or omissions of the legislative body." All this and more is now playing out in the media. The District Attorney has a duty to investigate Open Meeting Law violations.

Board Meeting of Tuesday June 21, 2011 (Scheduled)

Fear and Loathing in America's "Happiest Place". The real issue for this meeting and future meetings is how the Board will treat people who disagree with them in light of the recent reckless, false, and malicious attacks on Andy Caldwell, COLAB of Santa Barbara County, and COLAB of San Luis Obispo County. Will the Board members who were not involved have the courage to repudiate and censor their colleague Hill, or will they by their silence tacitly endorse this disgraceful stain on the reputation of San Luis Obispo County? Will citizens speak out, or are they too afraid of being publicly abused and embarrassed? Will citizens speak out who may have regulatory matters pending before the County now or in the future, or will they be too afraid of retaliation?

Proposed Sale of County Owned Land in California Valley. The County is filing a notice of intent to offer for sale 415 parcels totaling 1,015 acres. These are part of antiquated subdivisions and were acquired over the years through tax liens. The County staff write up indicates that the properties cannot be developed. The land would be sold with deed restrictions which would prohibit development but would allow use by "alternative" energy companies for "mitigation purposes." The report states that the certified appraiser from the State Board of Equalization appraised the land at \$1.9 million. The land cannot be

developed even under the existing zoning, but it's worth \$ 1.9 million? Perhaps an alternative "energy company" needs more mitigation land to obtain or comply with a County land use permit. When Timmy Tomatoes and the wise guys do these deals in Jersey, the Justice Department calls it extortion.

Las Pilitas Quarry Conditional Use Permit EIR. Several months ago staff recommended awarding the contract for the EIR (paid for by the applicant) to a firm called Benchmark. Subsequently, staff withdrew the recommendation because "of comments from community members expressing their concerns with the selection of Benchmark." Community members believed that Benchmark was "too close to the mining industry" because its web site referenced a presentation entitled "Obtaining Permits and Approvals with Entrenched Opposition" which had been given to the California Industrial Materials Association. The contract is now proposed to be awarded to URS Corporation Americas, a Nevada Corporation. URS indicates that it will deliver the Draft EIR in August, 2011. The public and County review process will take until July 19, 2012, in all 77 weeks. The applicant gets to pay \$406,000 for the pleasure.

URS is a big company with many divisions. Its web page shows that among these is a Mining Unit. The page states in part: "URS has over a century of experience in planning, building, and operating mines and metal/mineral processing facilities around the world. Our experience covers energy fuels like coal, oil sands, and uranium." Okay, now what?

OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

Planning Commission Meeting of June 17, 2011 (Completed)

Amendments to the Events Ordinance. This was a continued item from the March 31, 2011 agenda. The Commission spent several hours asking questions and providing detailed direction to staff with respect to specific wording. The proposed ordinance changes with the revised wording are to come back for consideration by the Commission on Thursday, June 30, 2011.

Background. Businesses, farms, ranches, vineyards, nonprofits, and all others who conduct events should pay attention to this one. This is a major ordinance revision which sets requirements for permitting for public events. It is structured on a scale so that the bigger the event (number of attendees), the more complicated and intense the requirements. Some of the conditions include size of the event, traffic control and parking, amplified sound (65db at the property line max), setbacks from boundaries, distance from water courses and wetlands, fugitive dust, fire inspection, Cal Trans permits, use of structures, signs and advertising, site restoration, pre-notification of neighbors, and sheriff notification. If structures are used, they must meet the standards of public assembly buildings.

Shandon Community Plan Update continued hearing. This was the fourth hearing on the proposed plan amendment to allow a larger and denser urban village. It focused on infrastructure, water, and the future sewage treatment plant. The hearing will continue on June 23, 2011.