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# A VIEW FROM HARBOR STREET

March 23, 2016

## A 30,000 Foot Flyover

By David Buckingham, City Manager



I was on a flight across America last week and watched the continent slide by – the East Coast, the Appalachians, the Great Plains, then Rocky Mountains, the Western Desert, and finally the blue Pacific - and green hills of SLO County. While this column often looks at City issues in some detail, this week is a sort of flyover of a few bigger items, using our 10 City Goals as landmarks for navigation.

**Support Economic Development.** Why do we care about Economic Development? The primary reason, from a City perspective, is that we have a significant gap between available revenues, and the funding required to provide the services our residents expect. We need more than \$1.5 million dollars per year to keep our streets in their current condition. Current revenues only allow spending about \$500,000 per year on streets. Rather than increase taxes, developing our local economy to support our businesses, draw new ones, create more jobs and improve the visitor experience and spending is an important step. This can result in higher revenues without increasing the tax burden.

**Ensure Fiscal Sustainability.** This goal focuses on responsible City financial management. One of our sustainability tasks this year is to complete a 10-year budget forecast – reviewing revenues and expenses to ensure we have a reasonable long-term plan. The City completes the forecast this week.

**Enhance Quality of Life.** While some quality of life items require money we don't have – there are many things we can do to keep making this a great place to live, work and visit. We will provide additional dedicated space for Pickleball, a fun, healthy, all-ages recreational activity for all ages. We are also partnering with regional medical providers to host free, quarterly health clinics for residents. The first of these will be on May 15th at the Fire Station where there will be free medical, dental, and vision evaluations and education on regional medical treatment options. We are planning to publish a comprehensive recreation guide this fall, listing everything from City-sponsored recreation programs to free activities and other recreation opportunities provided by local businesses.

**Maintain Core Public Safety Services.** This goal says “maintain” because our Police, Fire and Harbor departments already provide this basic need exceptionally well. Our objectives include assessing speed limits to ensure they provide a safe environment for walkers, bikers and

drivers, and continued education for our Citizen Emergency Response Teams – crucial in case of a major emergency event such as flood or earthquake.

**Develop New WRF.** The largest single project the City has ever undertaken, and written about here many times. We are on track to replace our 62-year-old oceanfront wastewater treatment plant with a new Water Reclamation Facility by 2021. This will allow us to utilize 1 million gallons of water per day we dump into the ocean, and revitalize the 26-acre beachfront site where the existing plant sits next to the high school – a significant economic development opportunity.

**Improve Water Supply Diversification.** The 1 million gallons of water per day the new WRF will recover allows us to rethink our water supply. We purchase nearly all of our water from the state and it is very expensive. That contract expires in seven years and the cost is likely to significantly increase. We are in the early stages of considering what's next when this contract expires, a future that could include providing most, or all, of our water at a significant savings from our Morro Valley wells and existing desalinization plant.

**Improve City Infrastructure, Facilities and Public Spaces.** While we're considering some big projects like revitalization of Centennial Parkway to better link the Embarcadero and downtown, there are many more basic improvement opportunities. This year we plan to complete a number of projects to make our facilities more ADA accessible, and improve public tree trimming, trash collection and bathroom cleaning.

**Improve Streets.** This year we plan to conduct a "Streets Summit" in order to provide our residents a better understanding of challenges to maintaining our roadways, and considering ways to make things better.

**Review and Update Significant City Land Use Plans.** Updating our General Plan and Local Coastal Plan is crucial to providing guidance as we work on all of these goals. This update is in progress and we encourage you to participate to help guide your City for the next 20 years.

We all live, work and play in a wonderful small town. Taken all together, our goals aim to keep this a friendly, funky beach community; to improve it step by step each year; and to ensure the quality of life we enjoy here is sustainable. We look forward to your participation in the process as we work toward this broad goal. You can start by checking out the "hot topics" on our website at <http://www.morrobayca.gov>, or sending me an email at [dbuckingham@morrobayca.gov](mailto:dbuckingham@morrobayca.gov).

*Note: This editorial first appeared in Bay News on March 23, 2016.*