

Board of Supervisors' Report
For the Angwin Community Council
December 9, 2008

To: Directors of the Angwin Community Council
From: Herb Ford

Today's Board meeting began with the honoring of 16 new graduates of the county's Management Academy. That honor was followed by the introduction of 19 new county employees, which, since we saw 16 such introductions not more than two months ago, makes one wonder what the employee turnover rate of the county is. The director of Personnel Services who led out in this honor/introduction time said that the 19 management grads represents about one tenth of the entire county work force, probably meaning about 200 persons.

A big retirement honor was given to Robert Peterson, the county's director of Public Works for the past 12 years, including the reading out of a resolution of appreciation by the California Legislature. Bob is retiring after a 36-year career in county work. He has done a number of good things for Angwin, and it might not be a bad idea for the ACC to consider send him a letter of congratulations/appreciation for his help hereabouts. No successor has yet been named to fill his post.

In the public comment period, I made bold to tell the Supes that a number of folk have spoken to me about two matters that seem to be trends in the county's doing business: 1. That there seems to be an increase in the number of departments using consultants (at very high cost) to do what many feel the departments themselves should do; after all, the top personnel in each department are expected to be quite expert in the field they direct. 2. There seems to be an increase in the number of multi-year commitments the county is making to various independent firms or individuals they hire to run various programs. (In one of today's Consent Items, this action voted: "Approval of and authorization for the Chair to sign an agreement with B.I. Incorporated for a maximum of \$1,500,000 per fiscal year for the term January 1, 2009 through June 30, 2012.) This sort of thing, I told the Supes, has the shadow of conyism in it, and it disallows bidding in the short term by others who might do just as good a job at a lesser price to the county. In a later part of the morning's doings, I was pleased to hear Supervisor Dillon ask Hillary Gitelmann, head of Planning and Development, if she didn't feel that because of a slack-off of work in her department, the hiring of a consultant Gitelmann wanted to hire couldn't be bypassed in favor of asking personnel in her department to do the work rather than hire a consultant.

That down-turn in Planning & Development was interesting. Gitelmann in a "Performance Management" portion of the morning's doings, noted that her department usually expects to handle some 500 building permit applications per year, but that in the past five months the department has handled only 150 applications, and the application study period has been reduced from 37 days to 28 days. This means that if an unlikely 100 applications were received in the sixth month, Planning and Development will be handling 50% less applications than it did last year; all Gitelmann said, related to the downturn in the country's economy.

And at that point, as if to support Supervisor Dillon’s call for greater discretion in engaging consultants, county Chief Executive Officer Nancy Watt announced that at next week’s BOS meeting “a list of ways we can economize will be presented to the Board.”

In the “Performance Measurement” (PM) section of the morning’s business (which took fully half the 9 a.m. to noon session time) Steve Lederer, director of Environmental Management noted that the State in its great wisdom is planning to issue new directives relating to homeowner septic systems, a directive, said Lederer, that “while containing some good things, goes well beyond what we think is necessary.” And so the screws are tightened more on the poor homeowner. A “Workshop” on this new regulation will be held at Wells Fargo Center for the Arts Merlot Theater, 50 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa, on January 27, 2009, at 7 p.m. The county plans to labor with the State over the “tightness” of this new regulation.

Also in the PM session Lederer noted progress in bringing health practices of restaurants in the county to a higher level, and greater attention his department is giving to the food practices of “snack shops,” including those at Little League ball games. He said as a result of standards toward better health, hamburgers are no longer served at most such shops. He also noted the attention his department gives to water wells and noise pollution.

During the course of the PM session, the assistant director of Public Works was asked by Supervisor Harold Moskowitz about the status of the possibility of a second Napa County airport “in the Upvalley?” He was told that the study on this matter was on scheduled. Later, in the assistant director’s office, I was told that the work of the consulting firm hired to gather information that the county will present to the FAA on this matter is about 25% completed. **There will be a community meeting on this matter at the Howell Mountain Elementary School multi-purpose gym from 6 to 8 p.m., on Thursday, December 11 - open to all.**

The county Agricultural Commissioner reported in the PM session that in the past year some 2,840 inspections have been done on 1,386 traps in search of the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (GWSS) moth which is such a bane to vineyardists. In all that inspection not one GWSS has been found, which is probably one of the exceedingly few times one can claim success at nothing (being found, that is).

The BOS’s afternoon session was highlighted by the 2 p.m., public hearing on “Land Use Map Changes, in which the various “bubbles” in the county was given final hearing. The Angwin bubble has undergone two changes: 1. A greater amount of agricultural land now resides in the bubble area than previously (the hope is to forget all about bubbles in the future). 2. A considerable number of lots west of Howell Mountain Road (and north of Clark Way) now have an “RR” designation. This means that no lot smaller than 20 acres can be split, and since there is no lot of that size in the area affected, there will be no lot splits in the future. The action will have no other effect on present homeowners. There has been no significant change in the “PD” (Planned Development) land in the bubble that belongs to Pacific Union College.

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