



Local News RoundUp

October 21, 2013

LEGISLATION

[Governor Does Disservice to All Charter Cities \(Recorder Online\)](#)

Gov. Jerry Brown turned his back on the state's 121 charter cities and their residents when he signed into law a senate bill that will punish those cities for not paying prevailing wages on all projects.

Senate Bill 7 by Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, calls for the state to withhold funds if a city does not pay prevailing wages on projects, a move to circumvent a state Supreme Court ruling that upheld the sovereignty of charter cities and their right to not pay prevailing wages.

REVENUE & TAXATION / FINANCE

[Rohnert Park Voters to Weigh Sales Tax Extension \(The Press Democrat\)](#)

In a thus far notably quiet Rohnert Park campaign season, one would be hard pressed to tell that \$3 million a year for the city budget is at stake Nov. 5.

On that day's election ballot is Measure A, a bid to indefinitely extend a half-percent city sales tax that voters approved in 2010. Officials credit the tax with helping restore Rohnert Park to fiscal stability.

[Surf Museum Forgiven \\$121,000 in City Loan \(San Diego Union Tribune\)](#)

Five years after Oceanside loaned the California Surf Museum roughly \$600,000 to transform an old strip-club building on Pier View Way into a tribute to the state's surf culture, the investment is paying off in good vibrations for the city's tourism industry.

In fact, things are going so well that the bulk of the loan has been forgiven little by little, including a \$121,000 chunk that was written off by the City Council on Wednesday.

CITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

[Proposals Sought for Block Grant Funds \(Santa Maria Times\)](#)

The city of Santa Maria is requesting proposals for the use of 2014-15 Community Development Block Grant Program funds and HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds for public service activities, capital projects and affordable housing projects.

Both are federal grant programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

LEGAL

[U.S. Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Basin Plan Appeal \(Times Press Recorder\)](#)

The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to review an appeal of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin plan, ending some 16 years of litigation.

Attorneys for Santa Maria said the court's refusal to hear the appeal will ensure long-term water supplies

for the city and other water purveyors along the Central Coast — including Nipomo Community Services District.

[Supreme Court Won't Look at Affordable Housing Suit against Napa County \(Napa Valley Register\)](#)

The California Supreme Court has declined to review an affordable housing advocacy group's lawsuit against Napa County, effectively ending the case almost four years since it was first filed.

The Supreme Court's denial leaves intact an appellate court ruling that largely favored Napa County and upheld the county's housing policies and plans, which were legally challenged by Latinos Unidos del Valle de Napa y Solano.

CITY ORDINANCES

[Moratorium on New Tobacco Shops in Norwalk Extended \(Los Angeles Wave\)](#)

The City Council Tuesday night unanimously extended for another 10 months and 15 days a moratorium on new smoke or tobacco shops, with a special concern voiced about the growing use of electronic cigarettes.

A 45-day moratorium on issuing any permits for shops selling tobacco, electronic cigarettes and drug paraphernalia was approved Sept. 17. That will expire Nov. 1. Under state law, the moratorium could be extended for another year after the 10-month period.

[New Rules for Banners to get Final Approval in Santa Fe Springs \(Los Angeles Wave\)](#)

The City Council is expected to give final approval to an ordinance aimed at helping new businesses by reducing restrictions on banners at its meeting Oct. 24.

Tentative approval came Oct. 8, after a public hearing, on a 5-0 vote.

Code Enforcement Officer Luis Collazo, of the department of police services, said the plan to extend the time allowed for banners would be helpful to new businesses, which often do not post a permanent sign until several months after opening.

Currently, a business may post a temporary sign or banner for a 14-day period once a year to announce a special sale or for 30 times within a year to announce a new business grand opening. Under the revised law, businesses may use a banner to announce a sale or new service for four 30-day periods in a year, with at least 15 days between sales.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

[Fracking Foes Shift Focus Toward Local Limits \(San Francisco Chronicle\)](#)

California fracking opponents, frustrated in their push for a statewide ban, are going local.

Santa Cruz County last month slapped a moratorium on the controversial oil and gas production technique. Two members of the Los Angeles City Council have introduced a proposal to do the same. And they hope surrounding cities, some of which sit atop the oil fields of the Los Angeles Basin, follow suit.

[Supermarket Failing to Curb Harmful Emissions, Study Finds \(Merced Sun-Star\)](#)

America's 12 largest supermarkets and retailers are failing to curb their hydrofluorocarbon emissions, adding large amounts of greenhouse gases to the environment, according to a new report.

The report, published by the nonprofit Environmental Investigation Agency, examined 12 retailers, including Costco, Whole Foods Markets, Target, Wal-Mart and the Delhaize Group, whose brands include Food Lion and Bottom Dollar Food.

REDEVELOPMENT

[City to Explore Options for Repaying Loan \(Register Pajaronian\)](#)

Should the city lose a lawsuit against the state, Watsonville will have to pay \$4.6 million to the state Department of Finance, and to prepare for this, the City Council will look at ways to pay the bill during its meeting Tuesday.

The issue began in 2006 when the city made a loan from its general fund to the Redevelopment Agency to build the Civic Plaza, the adjacent garage and the community rooms in the library.

The Watsonville Redevelopment Agency paid the loan back in 2011, but that was the same year when Gov. Jerry Brown dissolved the state's 390 redevelopment agencies.

[Petaluma Loses Redevelopment Case \(Petaluma Argus-Courier\)](#)

In what City Attorney Eric Danly called a "disheartening blow for the city," a state judge recently ruled against Petaluma in its lawsuit against California's Department of Finance over \$7.5 million in redevelopment funds meant to help pay for the Rainier cross-town connector.

Petaluma has been fighting to keep about \$13 million set aside for the East Washington and Old Redwood Highway freeway interchange projects and an additional \$7.5 million for the Rainier Avenue cross-town connector project for more than a year, since local redevelopment agencies were dissolved in late 2011. The city lost its first lawsuit for \$13 million in May and filed a notice of intent to appeal that case soon after. Last week, Petaluma learned it had also lost its second case — the one for the \$7.5 million that would have gone toward Rainier.

PENSIONS / EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

[San Jose Police Staffing Outlook Worsens with Feared Departures of Academy Grads \(Contra Costa Times\)](#)

An ongoing outflow of officers from an overstretched San Jose Police Department reached new depths with the revelation that nearly half the members of its latest graduating academy class are actively considering work elsewhere, mere weeks into their field training.

According to police sources, at least 17 of the 40 SJPD recruits who first got their badges in September are exploring jobs with other police agencies. A handful of those have already committed to other agencies.

The revelation is a troubling harbinger for a department already facing an exodus of officers amid plummeting morale amid a bitter and protracted battle with the city over pay and retirement benefits.

[Editorial: California Ballot Initiative on Pensions is Long Overdue \(Contra Costa Times\)](#)

The federal government may be mired in a political tar pit at the moment, but prospects could be brightening for California's state and local government.

That's partly because of last Tuesday's launch of a statewide ballot initiative, the Pension Reform Act of 2014, designed to scale back unrealistic and unsustainable retirement promises that cities made to employees -- promises that threaten the very stability and safety of our streets and schools and courts and community centers. This initiative will amplify and inform a public debate about state and local pensions that is way overdue.

[Editorial: More Relief Needed from Pension Costs \(The Press Democrat\)](#)

Soaring retirement costs are still shouldering out road repairs, park maintenance, education and other public services throughout the state.

CalSTRS, the state teachers retirement fund, recently recalculated its unfunded liability to reflect new rules requiring a more accurate accounting of pension debt. The result: Its unfunded liability jumped from \$71 billion to \$166.9 billion.

[Orange County Elected Officials May Soon Pay for Own Pensions \(Aliso Viejo Patch\)](#)

The Orange County Board of Supervisors will discuss a proposal to place a measure on the June ballot to require all Orange County elected officials to pay the full cost of their retirement plans at its Nov. 5 meeting.

[Getting Pension Reform Passed \(The Press Democrat\)](#)

One of California's leading advocates for pension reform, San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, has begun an uphill campaign to amend his state's constitution so that governments there can make changes to employee retirement plans. If he succeeds with his voter initiative plan, his effort may spur movements to loosen pension protections in other states.

TRANSPARENCY & OPEN GOVERNMENT

[Citywise: Oakland Makes City Data More Available to Residents \(Inside Bay Area\)](#)

The Oakland City Council unanimously approved a policy this week requiring officials to make city data more accessible to residents.

Within a year the city must publish data already dispersed on its website to an online catalog that will allow residents to easily crunch city data with mapping and spreadsheet tools.

Advocates expect that more accessible data will empower residents to help Oakland improve services and recommend policy.

BANKRUPTCY

[CalPERS Tries to Upend San Bernardino's Bankruptcy Protection: Opinion \(Pasadena Star-News\)](#)

In many civil lawsuits, the loser winds up having to pay the winner's legal fees.

It doesn't work that way in Chapter 9 bankruptcy, where there basically are no winners — just losers to varying degrees.

Still, let's hope that whatever money CalPERS gets out of San Bernardino's bankruptcy case is reduced by the cost for the city to fight the giant pension fund's appeal of the city's eligibility for bankruptcy.

CITY SERVICES

[San Rafael and Larkspur Poised to Share Fire Services \(Marin Independent Journal\)](#)

San Rafael and Larkspur are set to approve an agreement that would expand shared fire services.

The two cities already have an agreement in place that allows the closest engine from either department to respond to incidents on Highway 101 between Lucky Drive and Francisco Boulevard. San Rafael also has been sharing its battalion chiefs with Larkspur since 2009, for a \$93-an-hour fee, and the fire chiefs have been overseeing the departments jointly since 2012.

ENERGY

[Energy Authority Offers Free Audits \(Eureka Times-Standard\)](#)

The Redwood Coast Energy Authority is offering no-cost Energy Efficiency Assessments to homes and businesses throughout Humboldt County.

EDUCATION

[With Money Available for Common Core, California Districts Study Their Options \(The Hechinger Report\)](#)

Making the new national Common Core standards a reality in classrooms is a complicated and expensive business. Unusually for California, the money is there. But the tricky part is how to spend it.

"The thing about this work is that no one here has done it before, so we don't know exactly what we'll need" to spend for Common Core, says David Christiansen, Fresno's associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction. "Frankly, every district is trying to figure it out. We want to make the right investment around our goals."

HEALTHCARE

[Household Key to Tax Subsidy Under New Health Law \(San Francisco Chronicle\)](#)

To determine whether you are eligible for a tax subsidy when buying health insurance on a state-run exchange (such as Covered California), you generally must include the income of everyone on the tax return. One exception: If a dependent on the return earns income, but not enough to file his or her own tax return, the dependent's income is not included. However, that dependent will be counted as part of the household to determine poverty thresholds for your family size.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

[Pacifica's Environmental Leaders Seek Alternatives to Highway Widening \(San Jose Mercury News\)](#)

Pacifica's environmental leaders spoke last Wednesday about a subject that has been dogging them -- trying to find alternatives to Caltrans' plan to widen Highway 1 between Fairway Park and Rockaway. Several key people of a newly formed group named Pacificans for Highway 1 Alternatives addressed the large crowd of about 100 people at Vallemar School about the environmental and aesthetic impacts of the proposed highway widening. Many of the audience members were residents of Vallemar, one of the neighborhoods that would be most affected by the construction, but others came from north and south Pacifica to share opinions and information.

ELECTIONS & REDISTRICTING

[Appeals Court Allows Palmdale to Proceed with City Council Election \(Los Angeles Times\)](#)

A California appellate court has cleared the way for the city of Palmdale to hold its Nov. 5 City Council election, which a trial court had canceled late last month.

Judges in the 2nd District Court of Appeal turned on its head a preliminary injunction, issued Sept. 30 by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Mark V. Mooney, barring the election.

Mooney's injunction said the city was enjoined from holding an at-large election, counting the ballots or certifying the result. If Mooney had meant to prevent the voting, the word "or" should have been "and," said the order signed Tuesday by Presiding Justice Paul J. Turner and Associate Justice Richard M. Mosk.

HIGH SPEED RAIL

[Work Begins on Calif. Bullet Train, Locals Angry \(Associated Press\)](#)

Trucks loaded with tomatoes, milk and almonds clog the two main highways that bisect California's farm heartland, carrying goods to millions along the Pacific Coast and beyond. This dusty stretch of land is the starting point for one of the nation's most expensive public infrastructure projects: a \$68 billion high-speed rail system that would span the state, linking the people of America's salad bowl to more jobs, opportunity and buyers.

Five years ago, California voters overwhelmingly approved the idea of bringing a bullet train to the nation's most populous state. It would be America's first high-speed rail system, sold to the public as a

way to improve access to good-paying jobs, cut pollution from smog-filled roadways and reduce time wasted sitting in traffic while providing an alternative to high fuel prices.

IN OTHER CITY NEWS

[L.A. City Council Weighs Appeal of PUC Ruling on Ride-Sharing Firms \(*Los Angeles Times*\)](#)

The Los Angeles City Council is weighing a challenge to the app-driven ride-sharing companies that have given residents new transportation options while drawing protests from the taxicab industry.

Councilman Paul Koretz is pushing for his colleagues to appeal a recent decision by the Public Utilities Commission to allow companies such as Lyft and Sidecar to operate under regulation at the statewide level. The council is set to meet Friday behind closed doors to discuss the possible appeal with city lawyers.