

TO: City Council

FROM: David Newman, Mayor Pro Tem
Bob Engler, Councilmember

DATE: March 19, 2024

SUBJECT: League of California Cities Channel Counties Division Meeting Update, February 23, 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive report.
2. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

No Additional Funding Requested. Direct and indirect costs are included in the Adopted FY 2023-24 General Fund Budget.

BACKGROUND:

League of California Cities (Cal Cities) is an association of California city officials who work together to enhance their knowledge and skills, exchange information, and combine resources so they may influence policy decisions that affect cities.

Founded in 1898 on the principles of local control and interagency cooperation, Cal Cities has grown from a handful of public officials to include the voluntary membership of 479 California cities. Today, Cal Cities and its member cities are working hard to strengthen the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts. Cal Cities' mission statement reflects this commitment to "restore and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians."

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Cal Cities coordinates quarterly Channel Counties Division meetings to bring together local officials from San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. At the meeting, members discuss regional issues and coordinate legislative efforts. The City of Buellton hosted the recent division meeting, held at the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott. Mayor Pro Tem David Newman, Councilmember Bob Engler, and Legislative Affairs Manager Mina Layba attended.

A. Welcome by Mayor and Division Chair:

David King, the Mayor of Buellton officially welcomed guests. He introduced his council colleagues and welcomed guest speaker Assemblymember Gregg Hart. Division Chair and Mayor of San Luis Obispo, Erica Steward, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

B. Keynote Speakers:

Assemblymember Gregg Hart (37th, Santa Barbara), former Santa Barbara City Councilmember and Channel Counties Division Chair was the keynote speaker. He thanked city council members for their often-unrecognized work in serving the community. He announced his concern for the growing budget deficit beyond \$37 billion the Governor announced in January. The new estimate from the independent Legislative Analyst's Office is now \$73 billion. He mentioned that he too is one of the 30 percent of newly elected officials. He does not have any clear ideas on how to address the deficit and asks that city council members provide suggestions to their representatives.

He also shared his interest in finding a middle ground in solving the housing crisis. He is aware that cities do not build housing but are faced with ongoing mandates by the Legislature. He shared a story of an employer who could not find local employees to work for his company due to the high cost of rent and housing. The company had to sponsor hotel rooms for employees to cover shifts.

C. Division Updates:

1. Board of Directors Update: Chair Steward announced that 2,500 bills were introduced last week. Cal Cities lobbyists are reviewing bills and will be hosting a webinar on March 5th to share bill targets. Thus far 10 percent are focused on housing and 40 percent on public safety. The majority of public safety bills are focused on Proposition 47 reform. Cal Cities President and Executive Director are involved in federal advocacy to support funding investments for the unhoused/homeless via H.R. 7133. Cal Cities will also be hosting in-person policy committee meetings March 21-22 at the Marriott Burbank.

She thanked members who are serving on policy committees and representing the interests of the Division.

2. Cal Cities Update: Channel Counties Division Public Affairs Manager Dave Mullinax announced efforts to oppose the Business Round Table ballot measure that will impact local taxation authority. He urged division members to send letters of opposition or pass a resolution opposing the ballot measure. The measure is a constitutional amendment and can create litigation challenges on fees and taxes already approved by residents. The Division will continue with lunchbox webinars to offer greater discussions on priority bills.

3. Soapbox Statements for Division Members: Representatives from cities shared successes or announcements:

- Port Hueneme will be hosting a beach clean-up and fun run on Saturday.
- Santa Paula announced that Union Oil has donated a building to the City for public facility development.
- San Buenaventura has hired a new city manager and will again be hosting the X-Games, which has been rebranded as X-Games Ventura.
- Thousand Oaks shared the navigation center being developed with tiny homes.
- Simi Valley announced the “Little House on the Prairie” 50th anniversary. Simi Valley was the film site for the popular television show.
- Atascadero has hired a new city attorney, police chief, and city manager. They are developing broadband infrastructure.
- Santa Barbara has a new navigation center in downtown.
- Santa Maria is building a new sports complex. They also built 1,200 new accessory dwelling units.
- Lompoc is turning 113 years old. They are working on a new river project.
- Carpinteria has a new skate park and is establishing a seal sanctuary.
- Buellton is working on developing a river trail connecting Solvang to Buellton.
- Solvang shared the weather damage endured during the rainstorms, including the windmill.
- Arroyo Grande has installed 38 public safety cameras and new sidewalk improvements.
- Grover Beach broke ground on an affordable and market-rate housing development. During the rainstorms, they were hit by a small tornado.
- Morro Bay was also hit by a small tornado. They are currently the film site for “Camera,” a movie with Jeff Bridges.
- Paso Robles is trying to establish their city as a spaceport site. They are working on a parking enhancement program.
- San Luis Obispo was recently named a “pro-housing” city.

They also received a Project Homekey grant and celebrated the Lunar New Year.

4. Announcements/Upcoming Events: The Next Channel Counties Division Dinner will be held in the City of Atascadero at the Atascadero Zoo. The date is to be determined.

A slate of officers for the Division has been finalized and will be sent to each city next week for online voting. Cities will have two weeks to approve and return the slate of officers by email.

COUNCIL GOAL COMPLIANCE:

Meets the following City Council goal:

B. Provide municipal government leadership which is open and responsive to residents, and is characterized by ethical behavior, stability, promoting public trust, transparency, confidence in the future, and cooperative interaction among civic leaders, residents, business representatives, and staff, while recognizing and respecting legitimate differences of opinion on critical issues facing the City.

PREPARED BY: Mina Layba, Legislative Affairs Manager