

## Behavioral Health

At the March Behavioral Health Board (BHB) meeting, Director Utecht discussed new evaluation and outcome reporting systems that the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) is putting into operation. During this process, BHB had suspended its monthly practice of reviewing specific programs. Now that a new system is in place, the board will begin receiving Outcome Reports from specific programs each month.

In response to BHB's concerns about housing, Director Utecht discussed the work within the department in assessing the housing needs of clients. To assist staff in this task, DBH has hired a consultant who will report to BHB in April.

Members of BHB have begun their annual rounds of meeting informally, one-on-one, with the Board of Supervisors. Members reported that the supervisors have been engaged and supportive, directing the board in ways to be more successful in having their recommendations approved and implemented.

At the suggestion of the supervisors, BHB prioritized their recommendation for 2016, as follows:

1. Move forward with a permanent supportive housing project in 2016.
2. Make additions to our field crisis response services to provide 24/7 services (at least on call) throughout the county.
3. Establish a residential co-occurring (Serious Mental Illness/Substance Use Disorder) program in 2016.
4. Increase Peer Support Specialist pay \$2.00 per hour, all classifications, all steps.

The fourth recommendation has proved to be problematic, involving union representation. BHB formed an *ad hoc* committee to discuss with the union, employees, and DBH about moving forward with this recommendation.

Each month members of BHB visit a program or facility that provides services to DBH clients. In March the board visited the Crestwood Bridge program, which provides transitional services, in a home-like environment, to residents moving from hospital settings back into the community. Members were impressed with the facility and the program provided, and would like to see more such services in the community.

Prior to the April meeting, BHB will continue with visits to BOS, conduct a retreat to educate and energize members, tour Central Stars Psychiatric Health Facility for Youth, and attend, chair, and facilitate its four standing committees: Adult Services, Children's Services, Justice Services, and Substance Use Disorder Services.

## Education Report

The budget and the results of the Local Control Funding Accountability Plan public meetings have been the primary focus of FUSD School Board meetings for the last month. The public meetings are required under the new augmented state funding for districts with large proportions of students who are foster children, homeless, English learners or from impoverished families. The State recently revised Fresno Unified's unduplicated count as 88% of its students.

FUSD outreach has included 62 public workshops with parents, students, staff and community members plus online surveys. More than 30,000 responses from approximately 3000 respondents have been collected and organized by District Goals and prioritized on the basis of numbers of mentions. Related to Goal #1: "All Students Will Excel in Reading, Writing and Math," parents' and students' first priorities were more after school tutoring while staff prioritized smaller class sizes. Parents and students representing English Learners prioritized more training for teachers.

Related to Goal #2: "All Students will Participate in Arts, Activities and Athletics," nearly all groups most often opted for increasing the variety of art, activity and athletic options and promoting those opportunities. Other highly ranked responses reflected the desire for more activities exposing students to careers and colleges.

Goal #3 is "All Students will Demonstrate the Character and Competencies for Workplace Success." Increased career technical education was the overwhelming priority. Expanding adult education was another often mentioned request. Related to Goal #4: "All Students Will Stay in School On Target to Graduate," People most often mentioned expanding efforts to meet the goal plus increase parent involvement and adding school counselors.

As the feedback is being processed, the District is developing its goal #1 and #2 budgets. Budget recommendations include expanding professional development for teachers, adding to previous commitments more days for ELA and math training, implementing new math and ELA adoptions and planning for a revision of history and science curricula and assessments plus increasing the number of GATE classes and training teachers for GATE, IB and AP instruction. Staff is proposing adding \$1.45 million to expand activities and athletics.

Some of the District's new funding will be allocated to pay raises to its bargaining units. Teachers have called on the District to reduce class sizes as recommended in the public forum feedback.

## **Natural Resources**

Parks....A grassroots citizens' group is meeting monthly to find a sustainable funding source for Fresno County and Fresno County's municipal parks. The Trust for Public Lands, a national organization, has offered to work with Fresno to increase the quality and quantity of parks and open space. TLP has offered to fund a study (in collaboration with Fresno County and the City of Fresno) to identify an appropriate funding mechanism, the amount and duration of such a measure, what the measure should be used for and how to present that information to the public, along with a preferred election date, ballot language and important accountability measures. The Parks Coalition (for lack of a better name) is also entertaining the possibility of coupling a funding measure with funding for the arts.

More Parks...League has signed up to participate with a table at Earth Day, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, promoting an updated Fresno City Parks Plan to build more and better parks in healthy places; to provide ongoing park maintenance on a long term basis; and to provide more recreational opportunities for youth throughout the city. League will also be using this opportunity to encourage citizen involvement in public policy issues by letting elected officials know what citizens want for their neighborhoods and communities, and urging citizens to attend local government meetings to speak out about the need for more and better parks.

Friant Corridor Feasibility Study - The draft Study report rejected by the County Planning Commission last year has been cosmetically corrected for errors in its index and the omission of several pages and maps of the report. County planning staff will be presenting it again to the Planning Commission on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Since the report's rejection, three planning commission members have been replaced by appointment so that it will be necessary for League and the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability to repeat arguments urging rejection of the report on the basis of the study's failure to address water resources and transportation in the corridor as requested by the Board of Supervisors in 2013. In addition, the study produced no additional information about development potential than that which was already available in the San Joaquin River Master Plan and the Background Report for the County's General Plan 2000. Efforts to promote the acceptance of the study report by the Board of Supervisors are not transparent. The study was paid for by developers and development interests, but no development representatives have asked for the acceptance of the report either in writing or in an appearance at the first Planning Commission hearing on the study report.

## Measure C Advanced-Technology Program: Request for Proposals

The most exciting recent news on the Fresno transportation front is the March 17, 2016 release, by Fresno COG, of a request for proposals for advanced-technology transit and transportation projects. Selected projects will be funded by Measure C funds that have been accumulating for years and now total approximately \$10 million. More funds will become available in future tax years.

Funded projects would benefit Fresno County residents and help the region meet its air quality goals. The projects would meet as many of these local objectives as possible:

- Reduced traffic congestion and vehicle miles traveled;
- Reduced energy consumption and dependence on fossil fuels;
- Reduced air emissions and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Improved access to safer, more convenient travel for Fresno County residents.

Eligible public agencies may propose projects in the areas of research, development, demonstration, and deployment that will advance public transit and transportation. Eligible agencies must be located in Fresno County, and include the Fresno COG, Fresno County, and the incorporated cities of the county. Private and non-profit entities must partner with eligible agencies in order to propose projects.

The deadline for proposal submittal is June 22, 2016. The proposals will be scored during the first two weeks of July. If the scoring committee deems interviews advisable, the interviews will occur during the third week of July. After approvals by the boards of the Fresno COG and the Fresno County Transportation Authority, the notice to proceed and contract signing will take place in February of 2017.

Mary Savala and Stephenie Frederick represented the League of Women Voters on the ad hoc committee that designed the request for proposals. Recently the League testified before the FCTA board that the final application would fairly treat all types of proposals. Because it was not slanted in favor of any one kind of technology or program, the League urged the FCTA board to approve the application.

## Voter Services

It is definitely election season. In March we oversaw and certified the ASI elections at CSUFresno. Seven volunteers worked during the three-day process. Congratulations to ASI president-elect Tim Ryan and the incoming ASI senators.

We also began working in the Elections Warehouse, assisting with the processing of mailed-in ballots. About 8 people have signed up for various shifts, but many more are needed. Beginning April 1, help is needed to provide voter information to callers to the Elections office. We have a few volunteers, but more are needed to help there as well.

On, March 28, at 7 PM in the Student Activities Center at Reedley College, we sponsored a candidates' forum for the 31<sup>st</sup> State Assembly District Special Election coming up on April 5. All three candidates, Clint Olivier, Joaquin Arambula, and Ted Miller, agreed to participate. Dr. Bryan Tellalian, political science instructor at Reedley College, moderated the discussion

## Student Unit Board Report

This month the Student Unit tabled at Fresno State's Preview Days. Students collected contact information for 16 incoming freshman who are interested in joining the Student Unit of the League in Fall 2016. They also registered several voters at the event including current students, as incoming students. They even managed to register a couple of 17 year olds who will be 18 by Election Day.

Alex has also been busy recruiting new members on campus. She spoke at a sorority event connecting community service to the work the League does. A few people have already joined and are looking forward to engaging in some voter services and registering young people to vote.

Lastly, this month we confirmed our commitment to table for National Voter Registration Day (September) here at Fresno State.



## Water Report

The drought has resulted in increased interest by some San Joaquin Valley politicians and farmers in using produced water (filtered oil and gas wastewater) to irrigate crops. Produced water is currently being used by four water districts in the Kern County area. These districts receive up to 50,000 acre feet of produced water per year, and this water is a significant source of water for 95,000 acres of cropland. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board recently convened an expert panel, including members with expertise in the area of human health and safety, to evaluate the safety of this practice and produce one or more white papers detailing their findings. The LWVC Water Committee forwarded information about this study to the LWVC's consultant who follows hazardous waste matters and legislation. LWVC is also following SB 248, a bill to tighten oversight of both hydraulic fracturing and "conventional" oil and gas production.

At their February 9 meeting, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors discussed whether to sell the 317 acre site of the former Elkhorn Boot Camp near Caruthers. Supervisor Mendez invited geologist Bob Merrill, to meet with him prior to the meeting to discuss the potential for using the property for groundwater recharge with floodwater during wet years. Bob confirmed that this site is rated as having excellent soils for recharge and also is located adjacent to the Liberty Canal. At the Supervisor's meeting Bob recommended doing additional testing of deeper alluvial deposits to determine the best areas of the property for recharge basins. The supervisors voted to move ahead with testing. Supervisors Mendez and Pacheco support selling all, or part, of the property to a local water district with the expertise to implement a project develop and operate recharge basins and enlarge the canal. On a parallel track, Supervisor Perea is consulting with Sheriff Mims about the potential for improving the property and using it as a correction facility.