



MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Minutes

The One Voice Meeting was held Thursday, November 29, 2007 from 9:00-10:30 a.m. at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center.

In Attendance

Frank Amaral, Councilman, City of Gustine	John Alexander, Health Care Consortium
Robin Adam, Legislative Dir. for ASM Galgiani	Jesse Brown, MCAG
Patti Dossetti, Program Development, MUHSD	Julius Pekar, Greater Merced Chamber
Richard Gerbi, Business Owner	Joy Gort, MCAG
Arthur, Jesse, Business Owner	Ashley Leffard, MCEDCO
Marvin Heppner, Business owner	Tommy Jones, Mayor, City of Los Banos
Mike McAdam, KUBB/KHTN Radio	Joe Oliveira, Councilman, City of Gustine
Steve Newvine, PG&E	Gonzalo Rodriguez, Brookfield Land
Sylvia Smith, MUHSD	Mark Hendrickson, PIO, Merced County
Don Bergman, Manager, Courtesy Auto Center	Candice Steelman, MCAG
Rich Green, MCAG	Anna Fuentes, MCAG
Mike Villalta, Councilman, Los Banos	Scott McBride, City of Atwater
Stacie Dabbs, Office of Congressman Cardoza	Mary Ward, Office of ASM Galgiani
Russ Felch, Business Owner	Ellie Wooten, Mayor, City of Merced
Carole McCoy, Board of Realtors	Gail McCullough, Board of Realtors
Mike Nelson, Supervisor, Merced County	Bill Spriggs, Councilman, City of Merced
Kathleen Crookham, Supervisor, Merced County	Dee Tatum, CEO, Merced County
Lesa Rasmussen, City of Atwater	Dick Whittington, MCAG
Margaret Silveira, City of Gustine	Jim Marshall, City of Merced
Heidi Petersen, UC Merced	Mike Hiller, County Bank

1. Following introductions, Chair Mike Nelson announced public comment period. Merced City Council Member Bill Spriggs welcomed One Voice to Merced.
2. Tim Egan from our Capitol Representation Group spoke about top issues in Sacramento, calling his talk "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly".
 - a. If the Term Limit Initiative does not pass, new leadership will be in place in February, which will affect the status of bills under consideration.
 - b. The state budget is already \$10 billion in the hole and may grow to \$13 billion. This means that legislators will look at all revenue sources to fill the gap, including Prop. 42 again and even city and county taxes.
 - c. He said he has not seen a legislature with so many members unwilling to work with each other. The party lines are dug and people aren't willing to budge.

- d. The good news is that, due to the state of the budget, the Governor is in favor of dropping the threshold for voter-mandated taxes to 55% rather than the 67% now required.
3. MCAG Public Information Officer Candice Steelman reviewed the project lists from the October 25th meeting. The lists were the result of conversations with county and city managers, as well as input from our last meeting. Breakout groups were formed for discussion. Results are as follows:

Water

- This is the biggest issue facing California. We need a comprehensive approach/policy: Time element is crucial. Can't put it off any longer.
- Better define the reuse policy. Currently there are conflicting state policies. Look at new technologies and new sources of recycled water. The technology is available, but we can't use the resulting product. (Example: Hilmar Cheese processes an immense amount of water and, when they do so, it's cleaner than when it was received. But they can't release it into the river; they must dispose of it on their own property.) The old policies have a theme of "can't do"; we need new policies that state what we can do, and that incorporate new ideas. In Merced County, 95% of available water goes to ag, 5% to urban development. Look at ways to help ag with reuse and runoff.
- We are fortunate to have good exchange practices among city of Merced, county, and MID.
- Flood control: Money allocated for this is going to Sacramento. Can we get any in Merced County?
- Water storage: We've been asking for this for 20 years. We need info on how much we have and how much we use annually. Population projections have again doubled. Is this included in water analyses?
- Conservation: Is legislation that has been passed being implemented? (San Joaquin River issue, smelt issue)

This group reached the conclusion that, rather than ask for various pieces of a water program, we should stress that the state needs a comprehensive plan and all subtopics are part of that plan.

Transportation

- Simple majority for transportation measure (51% vs. 67%)
- Streamline and improve transportation delivery process
- Strong supporting statements for policy and statute changes
- Work with anti-tax groups to support law revision
- Don't take Prop. 1A/42 money, especially not next year
- Provide locals with tools to address local infrastructure
- Evaluate "West Park" (Crow's Landing industrial development) and its impact on Merced County infrastructure.

Healthcare

- Get a designation as Health Professional Shortage Area. Figure out other designations for medically underserved (1) populations and (2) areas.
- Form a health enterprise zone
- Better define nursing assistant versus medical assistant. The former can perform more health care tasks.
- Reimbursement rates
- Nurse training/education program enhancements
- Health care coverage for farm labor

Economic Development

1. Continue prevailing wage discussion for the Valley
2. Remove the \$20M cap (SB417)
3. Infrastructure funding – need help. Can't be funded only by cities, especially small cities.
4. Exemption for PUC regulations for direct access. (May be limited to green technology, such as renewable energy.)
5. Funding for business incubators; limit the strings; incentives for businesses that are green
6. Technical assistance for smaller cities for education (Gustine)
7. Local and state tax exemptions for large investments
8. Realistic time frame for water quality compliance

Education

- Support a Central Valley wage for construction of public school projects, rather than require a wage based on San Francisco bay area standards.
 - Reiterate a request that the California Department of Health not adopt a new federal standard to reduce arsenic in drinking water.
 - Support "clean up" legislation regarding high school SI allocations. SI funds are targeted to students who are in danger of not graduating from high school.
4. Candice Steelman discussed the dates for the trips to Sacramento (Feb. 12-14) and Washington, D.C. (April 20-24). About 30-35 will be going to Sacramento and 26 to WDC.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m. Next meeting is Dec. 17, 9:00-10:30 a.m., Multicultural Arts Center, Merced, 645 W. Main St.