



COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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State of the County

San Benito County Board of Supervisors

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Over the last few years, it seemed that our primary goals, like most counties, were coping and surviving. 2014 seems to hold promise that the economy is finally improving, property values are rising, retail sales are increasing, and the Great Recession, if it is not over, has at least turned a corner.

I look forward to serving as the chairman of the Board of Supervisors for this year. We have many challenges facing us, but with each challenge, we have the opportunity to overcome and become better. This Board has had to make some hard decisions and we will have more difficult ones ahead of us. But we can be proud that San Benito County is maintaining a level of service to the public within a balanced, if fragile, budget.

Today, I'd like to share some highlights from my lists of goals and priorities as board chairman for 2014.

While staffing and service levels were cut in almost all areas of County government, a priority must be given to restoring service to public safety. I am very proud that the County has worked with the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista to consolidate fire services. Stations One and Two have been doing a great job. The new Station Four in San Juan is almost

finished and the plans for Station Three at the airport are coming together. We can all look forward to our new courthouse opening soon, and I want to thank the Courts for assisting with the additional cost of security for the first 6 months. I am looking forward to working with the Courts to secure long-term funding. I am also committed to continuing to work towards law enforcement consolidation with both of our cities.

Another priority is the General Plan. I believe this Board has improved and streamlined the permit process. Businesses are once again moving into the area and existing companies are expanding, but the General Plan must be finished by the end of the year. I have directed staff to have our new consultant meet with the Planning Commission every month and also asked staff to bring us monthly updates. I am committed to seeing that the process is transparent, above board, and finished.

The budget is another high priority. I want to continue the process that we started last year to discuss our budget at our upcoming retreat and then have special sessions and meetings not only for next year's budget, but also a five - and ten-year budget with the emphasis on solving our structural deficient. We must also budget for the use of the additional space we will have in the existing courthouse building once the Courts relocate.

Another priority is the organization itself. Years of cutbacks and overworking remaining staff inevitably lead to less-than-ideal approach to the work and heavy workloads. The County Administrator proposes – and I support- investing in a contract with a reputable consultant who can conduct performance reviews and audit our services to determine appropriate staffing levels, identify efficiencies, and make recommendations to help us better serve the public. Staff development can fall behind during bad times. I ask that the County Administrator identify valuable, affordable training opportunities that will improve our services to the community, and equip staff with new skills and techniques

to further their careers and their service to the residents of San Benito County. I am asking the County Administrator to look at the possibilities of reorganization of departments or reorganization within departments to make the county more efficient.

Finally, I pledge today to do everything possible to make these Board meetings productive and respectful. While we have improved our efficiency at meetings over the last couple of years, I believe we can do better. Among the guidelines I hope my colleagues will join me in committing to:

- 1) We will hold effective public hearings in which as many members of the public as want to will get the opportunity to give concise, respectful input and in return will be treated with respect by an attentive Board of Supervisors.
- 2) We will minimize distractions, including technology. Technology is helping us to connect, but it is also interfering with open, direct discussions that I believe are crucial to good government. In short, texting, surfing the internet, or doing email during our meetings is rude and short-changes the public and the County. I ask my colleagues, staff, and the members of the public to refrain from texting or using your phones while we are in session.
- 3) Similarly, I would like to minimize empty seats on the dais. What was once a practice of taking momentary personal breaks has become nearly continuous relays in and out of the Chambers. Board meetings that used to run most of the day are now generally concluded before lunch. I promise to have a break in the middle of the meeting, so I hope that we will be capable of staying put during the rest of the time, out of respect for the public and staff who bring important issues to us.

4) Finally, all of us in these Chambers – staff, members of the public, and we Board members - share a common commitment to good government and service to the community. Whatever our disagreements or failings, we all deserve to be treated with courtesy. I will enforce common courtesy during our meetings. If a citizen, staff member, or Board member disagrees or has criticism to offer, I ask that it be offered in the courteous and respectful manner we would each want in return.

I want to conclude my remarks in a positive frame of mind. We have been blessed to be able to live in this great county. We are facing many challenges, but my prayer is that we always remember the people we serve and to allow this county to continue to grow and be great.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerry Muenzer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Supervisor Jerry Muenzer