



A Message From Supervisor Ken Yeager

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As I end my year as Board President, I want to take a moment to reflect on the goals I set for the year. In my State of the County address in January, I proposed 12 initiatives to promote a healthy economy, a healthy environment, and healthy bodies. As we wrap up 2010, progress has been made on each of these goals. Most have been accomplished while some will be achieved in the early part of 2011. Overall, each are part of building a better future for Santa Clara County.

As always, I encourage you to contact my office if you have any concerns or are interested in additional information. You can reach me at 299-5040 or via e-mail at Supervisor.Yeager@bos.sccgov.org.

HEALTHY ECONOMY

Goal #1 – Strengthen the County’s Local Preference Purchasing Policy

When contracting for goods and services, the County goes with the lowest, qualified bid. This can put local companies at a competitive disadvantage because of Santa Clara County’s high cost of living. A local preference ordinance helps even the playing field by weighing the bids of hometown companies differently.

While it is important for the County to spend its money as frugally as possible, a vibrant economic climate creates other benefits. Under a previous ordinance, local companies were already given 1% preference in their bids. In other words, a local company’s bid would be considered as if it were submitted at a price 1% lower than the actual bid. In April, the Board voted to accept my proposal to bring that preference to 5%.

The increase is allowing more local businesses to take advantage of the policy while having minimal effects on the County’s bottom line. By keeping more tax dollars in the local economy, the County can do more to strengthen our local businesses.

Goal #2 – Ensure Santa Clara County Gets Its Fair Share of Regional Funding

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is one of several regional bodies on which I represent Santa Clara County. The agency is responsible for long-term transit and transportation planning for the nine county Bay Area region. It is also responsible for distributing state and federal transportation dollars to cities and counties in the Bay Area. Unfortunately, Santa Clara County has not been receiving its fair share.

While much of the money MTC distributes is based on pre-set formulas, a significant portion is decided by those serving on the Commission. Based on population, Santa Clara County has one-quarter of the Bay Area’s population. However, we don’t receive that much from the pool of discretionary funding. In fact, we have been shortchanged by as much as \$87 million over the past five years.

A big part of the problem has to do with the makeup of the Commission. When MTC was created by the State Legislature in 1970, the distribution of seats was based partially on population. That allocation has not changed in 40 years—years where Santa Clara County has grown leaps and

bounds ahead of other counties both in terms of jobs and population. Upon the urging of local leaders and myself, MTC agreed in June to form a committee that will present a solution to the full Commission in January. I am optimistic that State legislation to remedy the disparity in representation on the Commission will be introduced in the coming year.

By improving representation on this important regional body, it should be easier to get much needed projects accomplished in our County. For instance, this year we made significant strides on a project to improve the interchange at I-280, I-880 and Stevens Creek Boulevard. Although I was eventually able to convince my fellow commissioners to approve \$32 million for the project, proportionate representation on MTC could have made that happen sooner.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Goal #3 – Create an Office of Sustainability

The health of our environment is just as important to the health of our residents as the medical and safety net services we provide. Therefore, it is important for the County to have strong environmental policies in place as well as to lead by example as it carries out its operations. As the County's work on environmental sustainability expands, we need better internal coordination and oversight that matches our emerging regional leadership on these issues. Currently, we have staff working on various projects across multiple departments.

To ensure that the County meets its many local, regional, state and federal mandates, I asked for the creation of an Office of Sustainability. Earlier this year, an interdepartmental team developed an organizational structure for the office. A Sustainability Manager and other staff were hired this year to bring together the ongoing work of our new Sustainability Executive Committee and various interdepartmental staff. The improved coordination will enhance and expand our environmental efforts and provide for long-term savings.

Goal #4 – Set a 100% Renewable Energy Goal for the County Government Center

In February, I asked staff to explore the possibility of making the County Government Center run entirely on renewable energy. Analysis is currently underway, and we are hopeful that we can make this happen soon. As a first step, we are now working to make operations as efficient as possible, reducing our existing carbon footprint. Soon we will be investigating ways we can use solar panels and other technologies to make the County Government Center as green as possible.

Goal #5 – Set a Zero-Waste Policy for County Events

In my State of the County Address, I also called for a reduction in the amount of garbage the County sends to our landfills. We have already augmented our onsite recycling program with a new composting program. Next, we want to make County sponsored events “zero waste” by using mostly recyclable and compostable materials.

While the policy is still being finalized, County Departments are already exploring best practices toward this goal. For example, there was a concerted effort at a summer Parks Department-sponsored event to apply “zero waste” practices. While still working out the kinks, staff was successfully able to divert 68% of that event's waste from the landfill.

Goal #6 – Ban Single-Use Bags at Retail Outlets

Last year, the Board of Supervisors agreed to adopt my proposal to limit single-use bags in Santa Clara County. After a year of education and outreach, the Board voted in April to move forward on an ordinance to ban single-use carryout bags distributed by retail businesses in the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.

According to the state Department of Recycling, each Californian uses approximately 600 single-use carryout bags each year. Single-use plastic bags make up a significant portion of the County's litter. They are not biodegradable, have a negative impact on water quality, and are harmful to aquatic life. Single-use paper bags require more energy and resources to manufacture and are more expensive to distribute.

Our proposal would ban paper and plastic bags distributed by retail businesses to customers at time of checkout. It would exclude restaurants, non-profit organizations and social organizations. A total of 52 retailers in the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County are expected to be affected by any new policy enacted. Those retailers account for an estimated 32,000 paper and plastic single-use carryout bags on an annual basis.

While the policy is still being vetted by staff, other jurisdictions are already looking to adopt similar measures. Just this week, the City of San Jose adopted a ban of their own. Santa Clara County hopes to do so early in 2011.

Goal #7 – Encourage Green Commuting While Improving Access to the Government Center

In June, the Board of Supervisors approved my proposal to make the County Government Center friendlier to employees who chose greener options for their commutes. In employee lots, 15 more carpool spaces were added. Twenty-three spaces were also set aside for employees who drive ultra-low emission vehicles, and we are currently exploring grant funding to install electric charging stations open to both employees and the public. Furthermore, bicycle parking is also becoming easier. There will soon be 16 additional bike lockers for employees, and the plaza entry of the building will go from one bike rack to five that can be used by both employees and members of the public.

While in the process of reconfiguring our parking operations, we also wanted to make the County Government Center more accessible to the public. Because short-term on-site parking for the public was woefully inadequate, 60 new 1-hour public parking spaces were created in the County Government Center's west wing parking lot. The current reconfiguration is part of a pilot project that may be expanded in the coming years.

In addition to expanding physical access to the County Government Center, we have also improved online access. In January, County staff implemented my proposal to broadcast Board of Supervisors meetings online. Residents can now see their elected officials in action from their computers and see archived video of past meetings. I have also urged staff to find ways to make it easier for residents to make payments for bills, taxes, and other payments online. Look for new options coming in the coming year.

HEALTHY BODIES

Goal #8 – Restore funds to Public Health and Drug and Alcohol Prevention Programs

One of the most important roles that county government serves is that of safety net, ensuring the health and welfare of its residents. We have long known that prevention helps save millions in healthcare dollars over the long-term. Therefore it was important to me during this year's budget process to prioritize prevention services.

For several years, our Public Health and Drug and Alcohol Departments have endured agonizing cutbacks due mainly to eroding funding from the State. Over the last five years, the Public Health Department has been cut by nearly \$21 million, with the loss of nearly 180 employees. The Department of Alcohol and Drug Services has been cut by nearly \$10 million with the loss of more than 25 employees.

In this summer's budget negotiations, I worked hard to find a way to restore some of that lost funding. I am happy to report that we were able to backfill \$8 million in State cuts to those programs (\$5 million for the Public Health Department and \$3 million for the Drug and Alcohol Department).

Goal #9 – Create an Effective Employee Wellness Program

In promoting the health of our residents, as with promoting the health of the environment, the County must first lead by example. For this reason, I have called for a renewed vigor in promoting employee wellness. Employee wellness initiatives increase productivity and can ultimately lower healthcare-related costs. As a first step, I championed bringing in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

In July, Santa Clara County became the first government agency locally to offer a CSA program to its employees. CSA delivers produce from local farms directly to consumers. It benefits the farmer by providing regular, reliable customers who receive convenient access to high-quality fruits and vegetables. The environment also benefits by keeping local agricultural land intact and reducing the need for transporting food over long distances. The successful program is voluntary, self-supporting, and requires no funding or subsidies from the County.

I wanted to go further, though, in finding ways to promote mental and physical health, improve job satisfaction, and retain the best workforce. In August, I introduced a proposal to reorganize our existing employee wellness program. The County is on track to spend \$188 million in medical benefits this fiscal year. Innovative strategies in employee wellness that reduce medical costs without compromising benefit levels and provide leverage in negotiations with health care insurers will ultimately save taxpayer money.

Some of the best practices I have asked staff to investigate include a number of initiatives that I believe are very exciting and will reap big rewards. Some of them include:

- An employee health profile that identifies our employees' underlying health issues and needs
- Classes and resources that promote physical and mental health
- Incentive programs for employees who use active commutes such as biking and walking
- Employee sports leagues and cycling/walking groups
- Private/public partnerships for promoting wellness

Goal #10 – Establish New Nutritional Standards for Food Offered by the County

In promoting health to both residents and employees, the County must promote an environment that makes sure the food and beverages offered, purchased, or served at county facilities and provided by county departments is of maximum nutritional value. This week, I introduced a proposal to do just that. Specifically, the new policy under development would set new nutritional criteria for food and beverages purchased for our custodial populations and improve access to healthy food choices to employees and visitors.

Santa Clara County serves tens of thousands of meals a week through our hospital, jails, ranches, and other programs. In addition, there are over 200 vending machines and 12 cafeterias and coffee kiosks located at more than 60 county facilities. Offering food options of maximum nutritional value is one of the most direct ways that the County can promote the prevention of chronic disease. Staff will bring a policy proposal to address this issue to the Board early next year.

Goal # 11 – Create a Council on Health

When talking about prevention, two of the biggest causes of long-term health problems and diseases are also the most preventable: smoking and obesity. To pursue strategies that address both the root causes of chronic disease and create incentives for residents to live healthier lives, I wanted to create a Council on Health made up of civic, business, education, labor, health and nonprofit leaders to focus on prevention and other health strategies. While exploring how to make such a council a reality, some incredible opportunities came our way through the federal government.

This year, the County secured two multi-year grants from the federal Communities Putting Prevention to Work program. The first grant provides \$7 million for anti-smoking efforts. The other is a \$3.6 million grant to focus on obesity prevention.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department is one of only 11 jurisdictions in the nation to be funded for both obesity prevention and tobacco control projects. The obesity grant will expand countywide obesity prevention efforts by focusing on physical activity and healthy eating. The tobacco grant centers on reducing smoking, helping prevent tobacco-related deaths, and reducing exposure to secondhand smoke.

Funding from the grants will allow the County to focus on policymaking at the countywide level, but it will also get the County working to promote health efforts to the cities within its borders. Each grant requires the creation of a local leadership team to oversee the grant and promote its activities, mirroring my idea for a Council on Health within each of these areas. I now serve on both of these leadership teams.

Goal # 12 – Pass Strong Anti-Tobacco Ordinances

Over the past two weeks, two disturbing studies about secondhand smoke were released. A report by the U.S. Surgeon General concluded that one whiff of cigarette smoke has the potential to damage DNA and lead to cancer. A study published in the medical journal Pediatrics showed evidence that apartment-dwelling children have 45 percent more cotinine, a marker of tobacco exposure, in their blood.

Youth also have too much access to tobacco products. According to a recent state survey, 17% percent of retailers in the county still illegally sell tobacco to youths under 18. Last month, the Board of Supervisors passed three ordinances I proposed to combat these trends. Santa Clara County is now one of the most aggressive in the country in combating secondhand smoke exposure and youth smoking.

The first ordinance focuses on reducing youth access to tobacco. It requires permits for tobacco retailers in unincorporated areas of the County and places limits on where these retailers can be located. The permit provides the County with a mechanism for enforcing rules against sales to minors. Furthermore, this ordinance limits establishing new tobacco retailers within 1,000 feet of a school or within 500 feet of another tobacco retailer. It also bars pharmacies from selling tobacco.

The other two ordinances deal with secondhand smoke. The first strengthens protections against secondhand smoke exposure in public and for people in the work place. It bans smoking in all county parks, at the county fairgrounds, in outdoor service areas such as ticket lines, at outside seating areas of restaurants or bars, and at hotels and motels. The second protects residents in multiunit housing in the unincorporated areas from choking on their neighbors smoke. It prohibits smoking in all living units and common areas of apartments, condominiums and townhouses.

Extra Credit: Pass an Ordinance Banning Incentives for Unhealthy Kids' Meals

Santa Clara County is facing an diabetes and obesity crisis. Nearly one in four children is either overweight or obese. In certain ethnic populations, it is one in three. For the first time ever, the latest generation of children may live shorter lives than their parents. Santa Clara County spends hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars each year treating obesity-related illnesses like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Our pediatric clinics increasingly focus on children who suffer from obesity-related illnesses such as diabetes.

Walk into one fast-food restaurant, and this is what you would learn about a kid's meal: A "tummy-yummy" double cheeseburger is 440 calories; small fries is 230 calories; and a 1% low fat milk or apple juice box are 100 calories each. The entire meal is a whopping 770 calories. The recommended daily dietary allowance for the average eight-year old is 1500 calories. This meal alone would equal over half of that allowance.

Now, consider that restaurant dangling the latest must-have toy in front of a child as a reward for their parents buying them this meal. That is why the Board of Supervisors in April enacted my proposal to create a first-in-the-nation law that requires meals linked with toy giveaways to meet basic nutritional standards.

While one meal won't affect a child's weight, the practice of rewarding children to eat unhealthy food encourages a lifetime of poor dietary choices. This ordinance levels the playing field for parents by taking away the incentive to choose fatty, sugary foods over healthier options.

The restaurant industry has proven notoriously resistant to making changes on its own. Take the idea of requiring restaurants to post nutritional information on menus and menu boards. When local efforts popped up, the industry fought tooth and nail against them. Now that it is a national standard, some restaurants are finally reducing the horrifying amount of calories in certain items so people will still buy them.

This ordinance has the potential to spark even more change. Already, San Francisco has passed their own version. Other jurisdictions are looking into the idea as well.

This is an informative newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on issues that I am working on, local updates, events in District 4, and County resources. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please send an e-mail to jim.weston@bos.sccgov.org with the subject: Remove me from your mailing list. To receive a text-only version of the newsletter, please send an e-mail to jim.weston@bos.sccgov.org with the subject: Text-only version of the newsletter. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please send an e-mail to jim.weston@bos.sccgov.org with the subject: Add me to your mailing list.