



Board of Harbor Commissioners

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State of the Harbor District
December 15, 2020

It is my great pleasure to report on the San Mateo County Harbor District's accomplishments this year. Harbor District responsibilities and efforts in 2020 were focused, as always, on supporting San Mateo County's commercial fishing industry at Pillar Point Harbor, operating Oyster Point Marina and the ferry terminal in South San Francisco, funding infrastructure improvements at both our locations, championing clean water efforts, providing ongoing water rescue operations, and facilitating environmental protections along our portions of San Mateo County's coasts.

Though this year brought budget and operational challenges given COVID-19, we have been able to continue moving all the business of the District forward, and to keep our staff and tenants safe.

We were lucky enough to begin the year 2020 with our new General Manager Jim Pruett at the helm. Especially considering what came shortly after the year began, we have been extremely fortunate to have had a person of his experience and stature to guide the District and help us ensure that our productivity, responsiveness to the public, and safety were assured for San Mateo County residents and visitors to our beautiful coast.

Working during COVID caused the Harbor District to call upon every resource at our disposal. Like all municipalities and public agencies across the globe, our staff have largely been working from home during the pandemic, and that itself held the possibility of complicating productivity. However, throughout the year our work has been carried out seamlessly, which is a testament to each member of our staff, and especially our leadership team of John Moren, Julie van Hoff, Chris Tibbe, and Jim Merlo. I thank you all.

As we have employees at our marinas who meet daily with the public, our agency has the more unusual task of making sure their safety and wellness is also assured. The policies that Mr. Pruett presented to us, the Harbor Board, in that regard were important and effective, and I want to thank him, all of our harbor personnel, and John Moren for the challenges you navigated so well with regard to public safety. And to our rescue personnel, a special shout out as always to thank you for your dedication and bravery.

Policies that we instituted during COVID included leave policies, bonuses to essential workers, rent forbearance, instituting specialized restroom cleaning, and when shelter-in-place orders were instituted for the county, a call for operation restrictions. When the CZU Lightning Fires brought evacuees into our area, we called an emergency meeting to discuss allowing evacuees to park their self-contained RVs in our parking lot. We were gratified to ensure COVID-19 protocols could be followed while providing a safe place for victims displaced from their homes during this frightening time.

Staff has been instrumental as well in ensuring that our remote Harbor Board meetings have been open and transparent so that the public's business can be done effectively and efficiently.

Special thanks to Lizzie Zuroski and Melanie Hadden for helping us keep our meetings running smoothly. The silver lining to having virtual meetings has been increased participation from the public, so thanks to the public as well, for caring about your Harbor District and participating in our meetings.

Some key initiatives that have been completed or moved forward this year are renovations at the Harbor Masters' Office, the public fishing pier at Pillar Point Harbor, significant electrical upgrades at OPM, the Living Shoreline project at Pillar Point, dredging and nourishing Surfer's Beach, improving green spaces and adding bathrooms at Surfer's Beach, and water quality mitigation efforts through San Mateo Resource Conservation District. We have also kept other capital improvement projects, ADA compliance, lease negotiations, eel grass studies - and eventual dredging - progressing.

The District understands the challenges of supporting economic development while maintaining environmental sustainability along our precious, delicate coastlines. We are currently working to ensure adequate funding for infrastructure projects at both Pillar Point and Oyster Point Marinas, including dock replacements. Renovating Johnson Pier is a primary concern and focus at Pillar Point, and guarding against sea level rise, King Tides, and flooding are paramount for OPM. As a member of the District's Oyster Point Liaison Committee, I appreciate the collaborative partnership we have with the City of South San Francisco, and the fact that we share concerns about these issues.

Responsibility to San Mateo County taxpayers is a critical component of our work at the Harbor District, as nearly 65% of our operating revenue comes from property taxes. So, I am very proud to note that Harbor District finances continue to be healthy, and we were even able to - extraordinarily - approve a reserve policy this year. Because of the strong financial health of the District, we were able to reprioritize our budgets to make sure we had funds available for emergency use and subsequently adjust our budgets to focus on priorities.

In addition, we have once again this year earned the Certificate of Transparency from the California Special District Association.

The year ahead is exciting. Earlier this autumn the board negotiated and finalized a 3 year contract with General Manager Jim Pruett, and we look forward to continuing our good work together during 2021.

Though we have faced quite a few unpredictable situations this year, I have enjoyed my work and the relationships I've formed here immensely. Thank you for your support as we navigated unprecedented crises in 2020. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as President this past year.

Nancy Reyerling
President, San Mateo County Harbor District