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Friday Memo for 2/10/2017

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Articles:

- **Let's Take Another Look at Our Roads**
- **Community Collaboration Assists Homeless Individuals to Apply for SSI/SSDI Benefits**
- **Shauneen Deschaine Awarded the Investment Foundations Certificate**
- **Public Defender's Office is Moving**
- **Nevada County Child Support Department Ranked 2nd in State**
- **Road Safety Update**
- **Nevada County Treasury Report**

Let's Take Another Look at Our Roads

The Nevada County Public Works Department would like to share current actions the County is taking to improve our road maintenance and infrastructure despite fiscal challenges affecting jurisdictions across the State. They would also like to provide the community an update on the work being done to quickly address the recent damage from January storms.

On January 3, 2017, a storm system resulting from an atmospheric river swept across California, bringing high winds, precipitation and flooding throughout the State. Impacts of the extreme weather in Nevada County ranged from potholes, a section of Maybert Road washing out in the town of Washington, and over 25 inches of rain impacting culverts and roads. Nevada County Public Works crews worked diligently throughout the storm and continue to clean up the residual damage. Maybert Road was reopened in late January and all other reported storm issues in Nevada County are anticipated to be resolved in six to eight weeks. Road crews have greatly appreciated the e-mails and calls from the residents recognizing their responsiveness and hard work.

After the extreme weather event, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors declared a local emergency and Governor Brown issued two emergency proclamations to secure funding for the response and recovery of several California counties, including Nevada County. Nevada County staff has prepared an initial damage estimate of \$1.2 million for County roads and staff is working diligently to recover up to ninety-five percent of those costs from State disaster relief and FEMA funds.

Roads and infrastructure improvement remain a foremost priority of the County of Nevada. Revenues for 2016 and 2017 routine road maintenance consisted of \$3 million in gas tax funds and \$1.65 million in Measure F funds. These funds allow the County to continue to provide routine maintenance such as shoulder and drainage maintenance, roadside clearing and brushing, striping and general maintenance such as filling potholes.

Nevada County residents enjoy some of the best pavement conditions in the State (within the top 10 counties in California) and road maintenance projects continue to be completed using current funding sources. The Public Works Department has been extremely successful in applying and receiving competitive grants to help supplement funding for infrastructure projects. This year, grants will help fund bridge repairs/replacements, construction of sidewalk on Nevada City Highway and safety

improvements including thermoplastic striping, high friction surface treatments and installation of traffic signal emergency vehicle preemption equipment.

Unfortunately; annual revenues have decreased by about \$1 million over the past 8 years in Nevada County. Declining revenues are part of a statewide trend, driven by low fuel prices and the shift towards fuel efficient and alternative fuel vehicles. Public Works feels that it is prudent to budget based on the current reality and not pin our hopes on the State solving this problem. For this reason, pavement preservation is not budgeted for future years. There are several State proposals to address California's long term infrastructure needs ranging from \$4.3 billion to \$5.5 billion statewide. Additional funding will significantly help, and will allow us to evaluate restoration of road preservation in future budgets.

Staff continues to adjust project priorities to address our community's current needs and continue to aggressively apply for grants to supplement regular revenue sources. Public Works crews will continue to constantly monitor and maintain Nevada County's roads with the help of the public. The public is encouraged to report a road maintenance issue. Please call the Nevada County Public Works Department at (530) 265-1411 or submit a request for service online.

We agree that Nevada County's 560 miles of roads are critical to our quality of life and economy. We encourage the community to contact their State representative to support long term transportation funding reform to address the State's infrastructure needs. Please contact Assemblyman Brian Dahle at (916) 319-2001 or by email at: assemblymember.dahle@assembly.ca.gov and Senator Ted Gaines at (916) 651-4001 or by email at: senator.gaines@senate.ca.gov

(Back to the Top)

Community Collaboration Assists Homeless Individuals to Apply for SSI/SSDI Benefits

Homelessness has been at the forefront of local concerns for communities across California and Nevada County is no different. There are many reasons and issues that lead up to a person or family experiencing homelessness, some more easily solved than others. A significant reason people struggle to escape homelessness is the inability to work due to a physical or mental disability. The Supplement Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs are designed to provide financial support to disabled citizens, but applying for SSI/SSDI is a complex, bureaucratic process, which is even more difficult for someone experiencing homelessness.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) developed an advocacy program to assist homeless individuals to apply successfully for disability benefits. The program is called SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) and trains case managers to walk applicants through the application process including collecting and producing supportive documentation to strengthen the applicants' case. According to the SOAR WORKs website, about 28% of individuals who apply for SSI/SSDI benefits without help are approved on initial application, however for homeless applicants the rate drops to 10-15%. Using the SOAR process, the application approval rate increases to 67% and the timeframe from application to decision is much shorter.

In 2016, Nevada and Placer Counties received a technical assistance grant from the SOAR Technical Assistance Center to start a SOAR program for our communities. The counties developed a plan to train up to twenty community group and local government staff and volunteers to use the SOAR case management process and set a goal to submit 100 SOAR applications to SSA in the next two years. Shortly thereafter, the Nevada County Department of Social Services trained a social worker in the CalWORKs program to assist CalWORKs clients with their SSI/SSDI applications. To date nine applications have been submitted or are close to submission. Ten additional SOAR case managers have been identified from various groups and agencies in Nevada County and are completing the 20 hour online training as a cohort, with local technical assistance from Placer County HHS. The grant does not include funding to hire new staff for this service, so we are fortunate that so many organizations and agencies have agreed to train their existing case managers, social workers, and volunteers to learn the SOAR process to assist our homeless residents obtain reliable income and in turn, be able to regain permanent housing.

For more information, contact Mali Dyck, Social Service Program Manager at (530) 470-2631 or Suzanne McMaster, Behavioral Health Supervisor, at (530) 470-2711. Learn more about the [SOAR program at their website](#).

[\(Back to the Top\)](#)

Shauneen Deschaine Awarded the Investment Foundations Certificate

The Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector is pleased to announce that Shauneen Deschaine has been awarded the CFA Institute Investment Foundations Certificate. This Certificate is earned by completing one year of study in the area of public finance and investment and successfully passing the exam that is administered by the California Municipal Treasurer's Association. The primary objective of this certificate is to provide public agency officials and employees the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities to be good stewards of public funds and to further promote and enhance the critical fiduciary responsibility, oversight and management of public funds. Shauneen manages and oversees the deposits of over \$400M annually that run through the County Treasury and ensures that there are monies available at all times to cover all County and District expenditures. This job requires attention to detail and strong accounting and cash handling skills. Shauneen is to be commended for going the extra step to complete this course and receive this certification. It is the hard work and dedication of staff such as Shauneen that make the County of Nevada a great place to live and work. Thank you Shauneen for your dedication to the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector and the County of Nevada.

[\(Back to the Top\)](#)

Public Defender's Office is Moving

On February 13, 2017, the Public Defender's Office will be moving to a county owned space located above Friar Tucks in Nevada City. The office will not have telephone service beginning on Friday, February 10, 2017 at approximately 12:00 p.m. It will be restored sometime on Tuesday, February 14, 2017. If you need to reach someone at the Public Defender's office prior to Wednesday, February 15, 2017, please email them at PublicDefender@co.nevada.ca.us. Their phone number will remain the same, (530) 265-1400.

New address:
109 N. Pine Street
Nevada City, CA 95959

[\(Back to the Top\)](#)

Nevada County Child Support Department Ranked 2nd in State

The California Department of Child Support Services prepares a report to the California Legislature each year detailing the performance of the program and the [ranking of each local county child support agency](#). For Federal Fiscal Year 2016, the Sierra Nevada Regional Department of Child Support Services [ranked 2nd overall in performance](#).

Each county is ranked upon their performance in five performance measures created by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. The measures detail activities which help parents by providing them much needed child support. The five measures are:

Paternity Establishment (legally identifying the parents of children);

Establishing child support orders for parents (either by stipulation or court order);

Percentage collected on those child support orders;

Collection on past due child support; and

Cost effectiveness (measuring how much is spent to collect child support).

Sierra Nevada Regional Department of Child Support Services is proud to be among the top performing child support agencies in the state and was able to achieve this milestone by using a family-centered approach. "We found that letting parents have an increased say in how much their child support should be and how they want to pay it created a great working relationship with our department and the parents, and that resulted in better collections and greater collaboration. It's been a great partnership and the parents are more engaged with us because we let them determine how to do what they do best, take care of their children, and we are here to assist in the record keeping and legal matters" said Tex Ritter, Director of Child Support Services. "But the staff deserve the accolades for their tireless devotion to Nevada and Sierra counties most needy families with children. They help put food on the tables for our counties' parents" said Tex Ritter.

"I have worked in Child Support Services for almost 20 years, and as our performance numbers have moved up over the years, we could see what our small office was able to accomplish. Coming in number two is recognition that we have come together to reach our goals while never losing sight of the importance of the service we provide to California families" said Becky Swabeck, child support analyst for the county.

The top five performing child support agencies are:

1. San Luis Obispo
2. Sierra Nevada Regional
3. Sonoma
4. Central Sierra Regional
5. Plumas

Sierra Nevada Regional Department of Child Support Services offers many free services for single parents. Their offices are located at the Rood Center County Administration Building at 950 Maidu Ave. in Nevada City and the Brighton Greens Resource Center at 988 McCourtney Rd. in Grass Valley. Their phone number is (530) 265-7097. They see walk-ins or you can call for an appointment or [contact them on their website](#).

(Back to the Top)

Road Safety Update

The County of Nevada makes road safety a priority yet again! Over the next year, the Department of Public Works plans to complete numerous projects to improve safety in our community. This includes the repair/replacement of 5 bridges throughout western Nevada County, undergrounding utilities along portions of Combie Road, road safety signage replacements along 50 miles of county roads, emergency vehicle improvements at three traffic signals on State Route 49, construction of a section of sidewalk on Nevada City Highway to connect Nevada City and Grass Valley, high visibility traffic striping improvements, and high friction surface treatments.

Recent safety improvement projects completed by the county include bike lane and shoulder improvements along Newtown Road, widening and improving two high collision curves on Lime Kiln Road west of Wolf Road, high visibility traffic striping, the installation of a traffic signal and skid resistant pavement at the intersection of Brunswick Road and Loma Rica Drive and the installation of a two-way left turn lane and shoulder widening on Penn Valley Drive.

Many past projects have provided an immediate improvement to roadway safety. The county's first high visibility striping project – completed in 2011 – targeted high collision corridors and resulted in a 35% overall reduction in collisions. The Brunswick at Loma Rica intersection, which had the highest number of collisions at a county maintained intersection, has only had 1 collision since those improvements were completed in October 2015.

Also, our proactive maintenance activities have a direct benefit to roadway safety and include filling potholes, repairing shoulders, replacing signs, clearing drainage ditches and culverts, removing fallen trees and hazardous vegetation, snow plowing and assisting emergency responders and other agencies.

The Department of Public Works also works closely with our regional partners, including the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on regional projects associated with our highways and freeways throughout Nevada County. One such project has been the proposed widening of State Route 49 between La Barr Meadows Road and McKnight Way. Caltrans plans to host a public meeting later this summer to discuss the draft project environmental document and Nevada County staff will participate in the process.

The community has also discussed the need for additional safety improvements on State Route 49 south of Grass Valley. In recent years Caltrans has implemented a number of improvements along the corridor. These improvements – along with increased enforcement in the area - have reduced the number of fatalities along the corridor. However, a series of recent collisions has the community asking what else can be done to improve safety. Nevada County staff will continue to participate in ongoing discussions regarding this issue with our regional partners and the community, such as at the March 22nd Citizens for Highway Safety 49 Safety meeting at 7:00 PM at the Bear River High School multi-purpose room.

Safety is our priority. As a reminder, if you observe a safety problem on Nevada County roads, please call the Department of Public Works at 530-265-1411 or [submit a request online](#).

(Back to the Top)

Nevada County Treasury Report

The Treasurer & Tax Collector, Tina Vernon, has released the Treasury report for January 2017. The Treasurer's portfolio strategy remains focused on the purchase of diversified high quality assets, with maturities that are properly laddered to meet cash flow needs and positioned to minimize interest rate risk. While the Federal Government has raised rates, bond yields continue to fluctuate in response to global markets and the new political environment. Rates for the 5-year Treasury are at 1.88% up from 1.12% back in July 2016. As rates have increased over the last 6 months, the Treasury portfolio has been able to take full advantage of this rise in rates as we invest down the curve as securities mature and pick up the incremental yield. Interest earnings this fiscal year are strong at \$1.35M through January 31, 2017, the direct result of a well-diversified and laddered portfolio. The current market value of assets, including cash, held at January 31, 2017 is \$208,394,654.80 with a yield to maturity at cost of 1.30%. The report in its entirety can be [found here](#).

(Back to the Top)

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