Del Norte Triplicate

NEWS

Wilson prepares to set the table

January 30, 2024

Upon assuming the gavel for the chairperson of the 2024 board of supervisors, Dean Wilson shared his thoughts on the need to address the strategic plan for Del Norte. His statement is attached.

Chairman Wilson addressed his colleagues and the public in preparing the board to better serve county needs. Wilson referenced state funding and its $37.86 billion in deficit red ink as falling back on the counties.

“We must be proactive rather than reactive in an effort to drive economic development.” Wilson spoke of how “we (Del Norte County) must set the table,” for the immediate future.

At the December 29 board meeting, Assistant County Administrative Officer Randy Hooper addressed supervisors on the federal earmark update, after decades-long absence of earmark funding. Hooper shared the earmark program will be returning for fiscal year 2025.

Here’s what might be on Chairman Wilson’s table: Bar O access project, community wayfinding program, county parking facility EV upgrade project, county workforce housing development feasibility study, Florence Keller county water conservation and electrical efficiency upgrade project, Hamilton Park public space improvement project, Del Norte justice center, Recreation Gymnasium ADA improvement project, Red Mountain replacement site acquisition, South Beach coastal welcome center project and Veterans Memorial Hall Improvement project.

Last year, Del Norte County learned of optimistic earmark funding for jail rehabilitation, the Del Norte Sheriff’s Office dispatch system and a House Transportation Housing and Urban Development bill for Pyke

Field.

Upon Board approval, Hooper forwarded the list of priorities to the county's federal advocate, Thorn Run Partners, in Washington D.C. In December, Thorn Run evaluated the list and recommended the board consider two specific projects:

• The South Beach Welcome Center project should be consolidated with the Community Wayfinding project, as a single project.

• The Veterans Memorial Hall Improvement project.

Thorn Run's advocate Greg Burns is reasonably optimistic the $3.08 million jail appropriation should be anticipated, according to Hooper's board report.

On a federal level, Wilson's table may be set.

Hooper updated the board in developing these ideas into projects. The assistant administrative officer said county engineering and outsourced architectural firms may develop ideas into actual work projects. Hooper cited the South Beach Community Wayfinder project may include elements of land acquisition, parking, restrooms and informational kiosks. Veterans Memorial Hall may need to address ADA compliance and upgrades to the commercial kitchen.

These projects can be researched and developed now, for timely earmark application in February.

Statement from board Chairman Dean Wilson

I was shocked to have been selected to the position of Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and humbled at the unanimous support and vote. Upon reflection it could not have come at a better time as there are currently several projects the Board has been working on for the past year which will be coming to fruition this term.

First and foremost is the Strategic Plan for Del Norte County. Our county has a budget of over $200 million with over 400 employees but has no strategic plan. No organization or business will be successful or stay in existence for long without a plan. I ran on the hopes that such a plan could be sought and would be developed. We will see on at the next board meeting a proposal for seeking a professional facilitator to help in the process.

This plan will set the table for how our county government will deal with the difficulties we are facing, shortages in staff, hiring, rising costs and state mandates. With the help of the public our Board will establish priorities and develop a plan of how to best meet our goals and objectives. How can we best provide the needed services to our community.

I was tasked by the voters in District 5 to find a solution to the homeless encampments that have invaded their neighborhoods and the crime that has come with it. To that end we have sought funding to help develop a program that will dedicate an approved space for the homeless to shelter and stay, which in turn allows our

law enforcement to clear out camps from unauthorized locations. We are currently looking at model programs that have successfully worked to diminish the ill-effects of the homeless in our communities.

I have been working with staff on looking at the development of South Beach and improving public access. As a board, we have to focus on the economic drivers of our community: Tourism, Fishing, Agriculture and Recreation, and fight hard for the rights of our citizens to earn a living in their chosen endeavors.

This will be my focus in the coming year, and I hope the community will join in on this process.

Thank you,

Dean Wilson,

Chairman, Del Norte County Board of

Supervisors