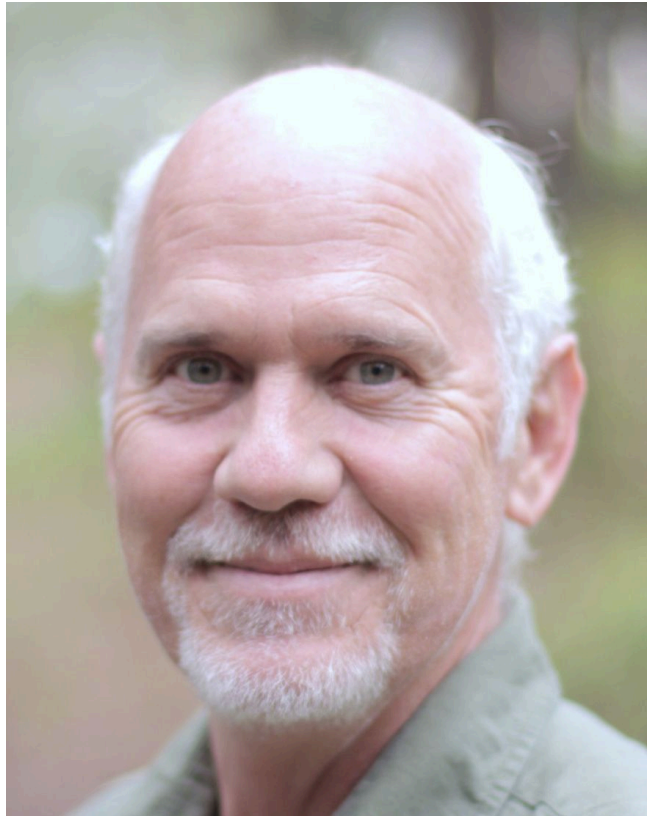


View from the Left: The Harbor District Takes the Lead

February 7, 2023



Sometimes hope feels like an unfamiliar emotion. Solutions to the world's problems seem out of reach. There have been more than 40 mass shootings in the United States in the first month of this year. Thousands of Americans die every year from gun violence, yet there appears to be no plan to stop these tragedies. Across the globe - wars, famine and disease are killing millions with no end in sight.

All these real problems stoke fear, but the antidote for fear is hope. We must cling to the hope that somehow we can make things better. Collectively we should nurture hope and work together for a brighter future.

On January 12th, I attended a meeting that gave me hope for our community. The City of Crescent City and the Chamber of Commerce organized this meeting to build partnerships for a forthcoming grant opportunity that could benefit many organizations in our county. This meeting was attended by more than 40 representatives of government agencies and non-profit groups that operate in our county.

The State of California has established a \$500 million Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF), that was created to “promote a sustainable and equitable recovery from the economic distress of COVID-19 by supporting new plans and strategies to diversify local economies and develop sustainable industries that create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians.”

This fund will support the “development of meaningfully inclusive regional planning processes that produce regional roadmaps for economic development efforts.” Crescent City is working on this regional planning effort to pull together partners from Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino counties to apply for grants from this pool of funds. I applaud this effort.

While Crescent City and others have been focusing on this larger collaborative project, the State has split off \$50 million to provide fast track funding for two-year pilot projects. This pilot project funding is on the radar of the Harbor District because they hired an experienced grant writer. The Harbor District is taking the lead to have their grant writer produce this grant application and has reached out to invite local partners to join them.

While the Harbor District could submit this grant application to fund only Harbor projects, they recognize that they will be more competitive if they recruit partners to propose projects for a joint application. At the January 12th meeting, attendees were invited to partner with the Harbor on this countywide grant application. The response has been phenomenal.

As of today, multiple local organizations have expressed interest in partnering on this grant application including the City of Crescent City, Del Norte County, Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority, Tolowa Dee-ni Nation, Del Norte Healthcare District, and Redwood Parks Conservancy. I am impressed with how quickly these groups have responded.

The final grant application is due on February 13th and funding will be available in September if the grant is approved. We are allowed to request up to \$10 million and at this time the total of the combined requests for all these agencies is over \$7 million. The primary objectives of these projects are community development, job creation and job training.

The focus of some of these partners is providing training for trade jobs that will be emerging from renewable energy projects, including the jobs that will be created as wind energy is developed off our coast.

The Harbor District is researching the potential for construction, operation and maintenance jobs that will come with wind energy.

At the January regular meeting of the Tri-Agency they engaged in a preliminary discussion of their potential involvement with this joint grant application. After paying off past debts Tri-Agency has about \$1,200 in the bank. This grant would give a boost to their finances and provide the resources for the Tri-Agency to contract for an economic development coordinator and grant writer to help build their economic development efforts.

One member of the Board expressed skepticism that we could get this grant. One member of the audience questioned the value of applying for a grant that will likely not be funded. I pointed out with 100% certainty

that they will not get this funding if they do not apply.

I have seen this too often in our community when people start to bail on an effort before we know the outcome. They start settling for plan B instead of fighting for plan A. I call this “planning for failure.”

It is important for our community to keep striving for success rather than planning for failure.

Even though there are still a few final approvals to secure, it is encouraging to see this initiative is bringing diverse organizations together. Each entity could have submitted a separate grant application, but the cooperation and inclusiveness demonstrated by this partnership makes us highly competitive for this funding.

This gives me hope and hope is something that we all need.

Kevin Hendrick is the Chair of the Del Norte County Democratic Central Committee - dndems@gmail.com