
Column: Commissioner Anticipates Bright Future for the Harbor

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Opinion

At the 2025 Del Norte Economic Summit, the Crescent City Harbor District delivered a presentation that highlighted the District's resilience, forward-thinking initiatives, and upcoming opportunities. Keeping with the summit's ongoing theme of opportunity and optimism, the Harbor District's presentation outlined a vision for economic prosperity, infrastructure improvement, and future development. Through a trio of speakers—Mike Rademaker, Mike Bahr, and Chris Williams—the District outlined a comprehensive plan to position the Harbor as a cornerstone of Del Norte County's economic future, fostering community pride and countering unwarranted pessimism.

Mike Rademaker Harbormaster/CEO, CCHD presenting for the Harbor District, opened the presentation with an inspiring message focused on economic opportunity. He highlighted recent achievements for the Harbor, including the successful reopening of the ice plant by OceanGold, which is a much needed resource for our local fishing fleet. The harbormaster also announced a forthcoming free concert on June 28th at Whaler Island, envisioned as a natural amphitheater akin to Colorado's iconic Red Rocks, with its natural stone face and ocean and lighthouse in the background. He also conveyed the re-establishment of the partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, which has improved safety in and around the Harbor District.

While not mentioned during the presentation, the District's collaboration with the Elks Lodge to restore the long-dormant Redwood RV Park represents another significant milestone. Rademaker's remarks, followed by his assertion that "good things are happening at the Harbor," set an optimistic tone, rallying attendees around a shared vision of progress and economic prosperity.

Following the harbormaster, Mike Bahr of Community Solutions provided a detailed overview of the financial strategies underpinning the harbor's revitalization. Bahr outlined the District's success in securing critical grants, which are pivotal to funding infrastructure improvements essential for the harbor's long-term viability. He also discussed ongoing grant applications and future funding opportunities, demonstrating a proactive approach to seeking out the funding that will enable the Harbor to address critical infrastructure projects. Bahr was candid about funding shortfalls, offering a transparent explanation of the challenges. His presentation clarified the complex funding landscape for large-scale projects, ensuring attendees understood both the opportunities and obstacles ahead. Bahr also put out a call to our local leaders to reach out to their contacts at the Redwood Region Rise organization by phone and email as a show of support of the ongoing, highly competitive, grant application efforts of the harbor.

Chris Williams of TCA Architects concluded the presentation with a forward-looking vision for the harbor's development, supported by a visual representation developed from weeks of community input and surveys, that brought the District's plans to life. Williams emphasized a phased approach to growth, designed to avoid the pitfalls of uncoordinated development. This structured strategy prioritizes "shovel-ready" projects, enabling swift implementation in areas ready for immediate development, while laying the groundwork for long-term development in other less-ready areas. Central to Williams' presentation was a commitment to preserving the Harbor's vital fishing industry, ensuring that economic expansion does not compromise the cultural and economic heritage of the harbor district. I encourage all community members to visit the harbors website, www.ccharbor.com, and participate in the survey. Your input is appreciated and welcomed to guide the ongoing vision.

Having the presentation address these three key areas provided a full picture of where the harbor will be going in the next few years. We are not out of the woods yet, but with Harbormaster Rademaker's efforts to reduce staffing, overhead, streamlining operations, and overall pinching pennies, nickels and dimes wherever possible, the harbor is poised for available dollars to break free of its financial woes stronger and better able to meet these challenges head on. As a community, we have the drive and interest, the financial groundwork is being laid, and the vision is being developed. We have incredible support from our partners in the City, County and community at large and public participation is at an all time high. The vision of what we can be is presenting itself, and the financial situation is slowly improving. The harbor is poised to succeed in big ways for Del Norte County and like Mike has said "Good things are happening in the Harbor."