



I. AREA AGENCY ON AGING

San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT

Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION

Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

SENIORS COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thursday, September 17, 2026

10 a.m. – 12 Noon

Hybrid in-person - Zoom Meeting

Seniors Council Conference Room

175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81931049538>

Meeting ID: 819 3104 9538

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kclTMKXHq5>

AGENDA

- 10 a.m. 1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions
- 2. Additions & Deletions to the Agenda
- 3. Receive Announcements from Board Members
- 4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda
- 10:10 5. Approve minutes of the August 2026 Board Meeting
- 10:15 6. Committee Reports
 - A. Finance Committee
 - B. Executive Committee
 - C. Resource Development Committee
 - D. Nominating & Board Development
 - a. Election of Board Members
 - b. Upcoming - Board Enrichment Trainings

175 Westridge Drive, Watsonville, California 95076 www.seniorscouncil.org 300 West St; Hollister, CA 95023
PHONE: AAA – (831) 688-0400 • FG/SCP – (831) 475-0816 • SCOUT – 1-877-373-8297 • FAX: (831) 688-1225

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- E. Advocacy Committee
 - a. State & Local Funding
 - b. Candidate Forums
 - c. California Senior Legislature Report

- 11:10 9. Executive Director's Report
 - A. Staffing Update
 - B. Master Plan for Aging Local Playbooks
 - C. Hollister Update
 - D. Operations & Service Providers
- 11:40 10. Program Reports (written)
 - A. Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program
 - B. Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)
 - C. Volunteer Coordination Project
 - D. Project SCOUT
- 11:50 11. Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items
- 12 Noon 12. Adjourn

Next Meeting:
Thursday October 15, 2026
10 am to 12 Noon
Seniors Council Conference Room
175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA

Questions, Clarifications or Additional Information:

If you have a question or wish clarification or additional information about any agenda item or attached materials, please telephone Seniors Council Executive Director Clay Kempf at 688-0400 ext. 115 before the meeting. If you get voicemail, please leave a detailed message so that a response can be made.

Distribution of Materials:

If you have information to share with members of the Board, a table or other suitable space will be provided on which you may make it available. It is the wish of the Executive Committee that meetings not be disrupted by distribution of paperwork or other items.

Accessibility:

This organization attempts to make meeting content understandable in languages other than English. All Meeting rooms are accessible for people with disabilities. If you wish to discuss reasonable modifications or accommodations for language or disability, please contact the Seniors Council office at 688-0400 at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Seniors Council Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Seniors Council to enable older persons to function with independence and dignity in their homes and in the community to their fullest capacity.

I. Area Agency on Aging Mission

To provide leadership in addressing issues that relate to older Californians; to develop community-based systems of care that provide services which support independence within California's interdependent society, and which protect the quality of life of older persons and persons with functional impairment; and to promote citizen involvement in the planning and delivery of services.



SERVICE ♦ SUPPORT ♦ ADVOCACY

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SENIORS COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Held by Zoom in accordance with COVID-19 social distancing requirements)

August 20, 2026

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tami Aviles (President); Wayne Norton (Vice-President); (Treasurer); Lisa Berkowitz (Secretary); Pam Arnsberger; Antonio Rivas; Mickie Luna; Connie Padron; Mary Lou McKenney

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED:

STAFF PRESENT:

Clay Kempf (Executive Director); Patty Talbott (AAA Administrator); Zach Johnson (Administrative Services Officer); Maureen Hebert (Fiscal Specialist); Leanne Oliveira (ADRC); Cathy Colvard (Fiscal Officer); Cristina Banuelos (FGP/SCP)

OTHERS PRESENT:

Coco Raner-Walter, Jan Shirchild

1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions

Meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM. Introductions were made.

2. Additions & Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Receive Announcements from Board Members

None.

4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda

N/a

5. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION, Berkowitz/Norton, to approve minutes of July 2026 Board Meeting. **PASSED.**

6. Committee Reports

175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA 95076

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5-1

1. Finance Committee – Tami acknowledged Hilary’s last formal day with Seniors Council. Final P/L numbers pending audit adjustments (likely January). Last year ended -\$129,721; agency has \$651,404 in reserves at this moment.
Plan for next meeting to discuss 26-27 budget.
2. Executive Committee – Met on August 13, discussion of Board training and SBC Candidate Forums.
Wayne connecting with school districts for FGP expansion.
Group discussed 6.B-1, proposed amendment to personnel policies regarding health/vision/dental insurance opt-out augmentation for employees.
MOTION, Norton/Arnsberger, to approve the policy amendment. PASSED.
3. Resource Development Committee – Met Aug. 11. Discussion of Virtual Tea Party and reminder to Board members to submit contact info for donor list.
Clay reported on GivingTuesday activities and requested any leads for other funding opportunities.
Lisa suggested sending to Retired Teachers Association and other groups across service area. Antonio suggested contacting Mexican Consulate.
Resource Fairs and Tacos & Taxes upcoming through next year.
4. Nominating & Board Development –
 - a. Election of Board Members –
Coco Raner Walter introduced herself. Board president of Highlands Park Community Center since 2023. Priority: senior advocacy.
Jan Shirchild introduced herself. Previous Director of Project SCOUT and ongoing volunteer. Interested in joining Advocacy Committee. Experienced with other Boards. Votes will be held at September Board meeting.
 - b. Upcoming-Board Enrichment Trainings – Improve onboarding for new Board members, getting familiar with programs of the Seniors Council, Committees, how to read reports, and other topics. Optional and potentially open to Advisory Council.
December Joint Annual Meeting: focus topic needed. Wayne suggested other allied agencies (e.g., SCAN Foundation) and how we can collaborate. Mary Lou suggested medical care/gerontology providers and resources in the Counties. Discussion of challenges faced by residents and doctors, Medi-Cal funding.
5. Advocacy Committee – still seeking a Chair for this committee. Smaller but productive meetings focused on community messaging.
 - a. State & Local Funding – has shrunk in both absolute and relative terms, while population has increased. Supervisors De Serpa and Cummings have formed BOS Subcommittee to revise CORE funding prioritization framework, streamline application process. Encouraging developments overall but has not yet been presented to full BOS. Clay reported on County’s presentation regarding half-cent sales tax.
 - b. Community Messaging – talking points that can be shared by staff, Board, service providers. First round: successful collaborations and shrinking public funding. Can be used during City public comment periods and one-on-one conversations.
Wayne and Pam have both joined statewide committees.
 - c. CSL Report – Mickie reported on upcoming CSL gatherings. Suggested tapping Ana Caballero’s experience when she returns to Salinas. Clay will distribute info on upcoming meetings to the group.

7. Executive Director’s Report

5-2

- A. Budget Shortfalls – Clay reported on current status of Seniors Council AAA and Program funding. Significant challenges remain but steps are being taken towards closing budget gap. City of Hollister not providing funding \$9,500 for 25-26, which may jeopardize traditional 75-25 County split that benefits San Benito County. This is on top of rent now being charged to service providers in City facilities. Meeting with City Manager has not been possible so far.
- B. Dept of Aging SB 1249 & CDA's 2030 Plan –
- C. MPA Local Playbooks – Clay remarked on AAA's poised to avoid negative impacts of SB 1249 rather than positive implementation of MPA LPs. Seniors Commission will draft letter to BOS requesting more support for LP initiatives.
- D. Operations & Service Providers – CDA has announced Claire Ramsey will be interim Director.
- E. AAA Update – Patty shared spreadsheet of AAA Provider Contracts and Direct Services. Future version will include service units.

8. Program Reports (written) –

- A. *Project SCOUT*
- B. *Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program*
- C. *Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)*
- D. *Volunteer Coordination Project*
- E. *AAA Updates*

9. Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items

None.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 PM

Next Meeting: September 17, 2026, 10 a.m. – 12 Noon

Minutes prepared by: Zachary Johnson

Seniors Council Application
Board of Directors, FGP/SCP, or AAA Advisory Council

Name: Coco Rorer-Walter

Address: 8575 Hwy 9

City: Ben Lomond, CA Zip Code: 95005

Phone Number: 831-915-2495 E-Mail: coco@finedesignsbycoco.com

Occupation: retired

Relevant Skills: Team building, senior advocacy, knowledge of the SLV

Educational Background: AA in Fashion Design from FIDM

Previous Experience on a Board of Directors and/or Advisory Committee:

Why are you interested in serving on the Seniors Council Board or one of its Advisory Councils?

I want to gain a boards perspective of Senior services, programs & opportunities

What types of activities are you interested in working on?

Advocacy.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing seniors in our region?

The lack of resources & the willingness to support Seniors.

Coco Raner-Walter Community Service

1980-2018	Proprietor of Fine Designs by Coco
2003-2009	SLV Highschools Parents Organization
2003-2018	Your Future is Our Business Career Panel / Expo Coordinator
2011-Present	Member of Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee (SCCDCC)
2012-Present	Member of the SLV School Districts Bond Oversight Committee
2012-2018	Events Chair of the SCCDCC
2013-2019	President of the Board of the SLV School Districts Bond Oversight Committee
2013-2015	Member & Vice Chair of the Democratic Club of North Santa Cruz County (DCNSCC)
2014	Voted Santa Cruz County Democrat of the Year
2015-2019	Chairperson of the DCNSCC Addressing Housing Shortages in the County
2015-2019	Founding Member of Affordable Housing Now
2016	Campaign Coordinator Measure S Library Bond Measure
2017-Present	Board Member of Highlands Park Senior Center (HPS&CC)
2018-2023	Board Vice President HPS&CC
2019	Attended Leadership Santa Cruz County
2019-2023	Chairperson of the SCCDCC
2020 & 2022	SCCDCC Civic Summit -Hosted & Organized
2022	Recipient of the Crosson Democratic Ideals Award
2023-Present	President of the Board of HPS&CC

Seniors Council Application
Board of Directors, FGP/SCP, or AAA Advisory Council

Name: Jan Shirchild _____

Address: 134 Centennial Street _____

City: Santa Cruz _____ Zip Code: 95060 _____

Phone Number: (831) 359-9701 _____ E-Mail: jshirchild@gmail.com _____

Occupation: Retired _____

Relevant Skills: Ran Project SCOUT at the WSC, where I interacted with many low-income Latinx seniors as well as staffing the Seniors Council Board and AAA Advisory Council. After retiring, I spent three years assisting with taking care of my sister who had a non-Alzheimer's form of dementia until her death.

Educational Background: BA in Community Studies from UCSC

Previous Experience on a Board of Directors and/or Advisory Committee: Besides staffing the Seniors Council Board and AAA Advisory Council, I also served on the City of Santa Cruz Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.

Why are you interested in serving on the Seniors Council Board or one of its Advisory Council
Watching the rise of homelessness among seniors in Santa Cruz County as well the lack of doctors taking Medicare patients has boosted my interest in joining the Seniors Council Board.

What types of activities are you interested in working on ?

My main interest currently is advocacy but could be available for other short term projects.

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing seniors in our region?

Housing and health care

8.0-3



AREA AGENCY ON AGING CSL UPDATE

August 2026

- **CSL Elections**

CSL Elections have concluded. Over 30 new members were elected this year from 16 PSAs. We will be returning to specific AAAs again next year to fill vacancies. Thank you for making this year's CSL elections such a success.

- **2026 Legislative Priorities**

- **CSL Sponsored Bills**

The following is the status of CSL **sponsored bills** and a budget ask:

AB 1359: Jury Service Exemptions – Authored by ASM Ahrens

This bill would authorize a person 80 years of age or older to seek a permanent excuse from jury service without providing a supporting letter, memorandum, or note from a treating health care provider.

Status: As of 8/27/26 enrolled and presented to the Governor.

SB 971: Older Adult Education: Local Public Health Departments - Authored by Sen Choi

This measure authorizes local Public Health Departments to establish older adult education programs that include, among other things, communal meals and instruction in digital literacy and access to technology, fall prevention and physical activity.

Status: As of 8/27/26 ordered to engrossing and enrolling. Next stop the Governor's Desk.

- **CSL Supported Bills**

The following is the status of CSL supported bills:

AB 1587: Prescription Drugs for Life Threatening Conditions – Authored by ASM Ta

Existing law authorizes the refilling of a prescription for a dangerous drug without the authorization of the prescriber if the prescriber is unavailable to authorize the refill and, in the

pharmacist's professional judgment, failure to refill the prescription might interrupt the patient's ongoing care and have a significant adverse effect on the patient's well-being.

Existing law requires a pharmacist to notify the prescriber, as specified, of any prescription refilled without their authorization. This bill would only require a pharmacist to provide that notification if a prescriber is identified.

Status: As of 7/13/26 approved by the Governor.

8.E.c-1

AB 1770: Arbitration: Health Care Services Plans & Health Insurers – Authored by ASM Garcia

The bill would require the disclosure provided to subscribers, enrollees, or insureds to include a statement that the parties are able to appeal the result of an arbitration on the basis of legal or factual error made by the arbitrator and would require the disclosure to be provided to a subscriber, enrollee, or insured annually.

Status: As of 8/27/26 ordered to engrossing and enrolling.

AB 2596: Mobile home parks: federally approved housing programs – Authored by ASM Gipson

This bill would specify that, in the event that a mobile home park operator, owner, or management fails to, or elects not to, comply with federal law or other federal requirements imposed in connection with a federally approved housing program, the mobile home park operator, owner, or management shall ensure ongoing compliance with the Mobile home Residency Law, the prescribed provisions of the Unruh Civil Rights Act, and all other applicable state and local laws and ordinances.

Status: As of 8/20/26 enrolled and presented to the Governor.

SB 991: Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly – Authored by Sen Menjivar

Beginning July 1, 2027, the bill would require the California Department of Social Services to classify substantiated violations of residents' rights in residential care facilities for the elderly according to elder abuse categories defined in state law, such as neglect, isolation, or financial abuse.

Status: As of 8/28/26 ordered to engrossing and enrolling.

SB 1261: Aging and Disability Resource Connection program – Authored by Sen Laird

This bill would prohibit the California Department of Aging from revoking the designation of an ADRC program solely due to the revocation or voluntary termination of a designation, suspension, or temporary inability of either the area agency on aging or the independent living center partner to serve in its operator role...

Status: As of 8/30/26 enrolled and presented to the Governor.

- **Legislative Calendar**

August 31, 2026 - Last day for each house to pass bills.



Legislative Report

CSL Sponsored Bills/Top Priorities

May 19, 2026

BILL #	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	CSL AUTHOR	STATUS
AB 1359	Ahrens	Jury Service Exemptions This bill would authorize a person 80 years of age or older to seek a permanent excuse from jury service without providing a supporting letter, memorandum, or note from a treating health care provider. The bill would require the court to permanently excuse a person who seeks the above-described permanent excuse from jury service. The bill would authorize the Judicial Council to adopt or amend a rule of court and publish related judicial forms as necessary to implement these provisions.	ASM Member request -- 2 Year Bill	Click for current status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?billid=202520260AB1359
AB 1819	K. Sanchez	Automatic External Defibrillators This bill requires Senior Centers to have an AED. Additionally, Centers are required to provide training and maintenance.	Meyer AP-4	Click for current status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?billid=202520260AB1819
SB 971	Choi	Local health departments: older adult education programs. This bill would authorize local health departments to establish older adult education programs in collaboration with relevant local entities including, among other entities, school districts.	Lipson SP-2	Click for current status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?billid=202520260SB971
SB 1002	Niello	Out-of-state physicians and surgeons: telehealth: license exemption. This bill would also include within the definition of "eligible patient" a patient whose immediately life-threatening disease or condition is in	Clough Prior Year	Click for current status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?billid=202520260SB1002

8.E.C-3

8.E.C-4

BILL #	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	CSL AUTHOR	STATUS
		remission and the patient is continuing care with the previously established eligible out-of-state physician and surgeon, and would provide that those patients are not subject to the clinical trial requirement, as specified.		
SB 1096	Dahle	Personal income tax: senior tax credit. This bill would allow a credit against the taxes imposed by the Personal Income Tax Law for each taxable year beginning on or after January 1, 2026, and before January 1, 2031, to a qualified taxpayer in an amount equal to \$1,500 per dependent. The bill would define "qualified taxpayer" for these purposes to mean a taxpayer who is or would have been, or whose spouse is or would have been, as applicable, 65 years of age or older as of the last day of the taxable year and for whom no part of their adjusted gross income for the taxable year consists of earned income, as defined.	Cox AP-2	Click for current status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB1096
Budget Ask	Ahrens	Increase Medi-Cal Personal Needs Allowance. This request would increase the personal needs allowance from \$35 to \$50 per month and require that the amount be increased annually up to the amount of any cost-of-living adjustment implemented by the US Social Security Administration.	Lopez SP-5	

CSL Support Bills

BILL #	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	STATUS
AB 1587	Ta	Prescription Drugs for Life Threatening Conditions. Existing law authorizes the refilling of a prescription for a dangerous drug without the authorization of the prescriber if the prescriber is unavailable to authorize the refill and, in the pharmacist's professional judgment, failure to refill the prescription might interrupt the patient's ongoing care and have a significant adverse effect on the patient's well-being. Existing law requires a pharmacist to notify the prescriber, as specified, of any prescription refilled without their authorization. This bill would only require a pharmacist to provide that notification if a prescriber is identified.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB1587
AB 1672	Solache	Medi-Cal: Programs of all Inclusive Care for the Elderly: Rates. Under the bill, and consistent with the requirements under federal law, capitation rates would be negotiated between the department and each contracting PACE organization. The bill would require the department, as part of this negotiation before submission for federal approval, to notify the PACE organization of the proposed rates at least 60 days prior to submission and to respond in writing to any questions or feedback on the proposed rates submitted by the PACE organization by no later than 30 days prior to submission. The bill would authorize the department to define a reasonable date by which the PACE organization must submit those questions or feedback. The bill would require the department to provide the rationale for any assumptions or calculations concerning the proposed rates upon request and to make a good faith effort to reach agreement with the contracting PACE organization on capitation rates.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB1672
AB 1770	Garcia	Arbitration: Health Care Services Plans & Health Insurers. The bill would require the disclosure provided to subscribers, enrollees, or insureds to include a statement that the parties are able to appeal the result of an arbitration on the basis of legal or factual error made by the arbitrator and would require the disclosure to be provided to a subscriber, enrollee, or insured annually. This bill would also require, by no later than February 1, 2027, the Department of Managed Health Care to create a panel of qualified arbitrators, as defined, and would require any arbitration between a health care service plan and an enrollee or subscriber, or between a health care insurer and an insured, to be conducted by an arbitrator selected by the department. The bill would specify the process for selection of an arbitrator and would require a health	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB1770

8.E.C-5

8.E.c-6

BILL #	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	STATUS
AB 2037	Patterson	care service plan or health insurer to be responsible for the costs of the arbitrator appointed pursuant to these provisions. The bill would require that a court reporter be present for an arbitration proceeding and would make the health care service plan or health insurer responsible for the cost of the court reporter. The bill would require the arbitrator to complete a report within 30 days of the completion of arbitration, to include, among other things, the amount of an award, if any, and the reasons for any award rendered or denied. The bill would also require all documents relating to the arbitration to be preserved by the health care service plan or health insurer and would require a copy of the documents to be provided to the Director of the Department of Managed Health Care and to be maintained by the department for 5 years. The bill would require that all records of arbitration pursuant to these provisions be available to the public, except as specified. Because a violation of these provisions by a health care service plan would be a crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program. Wildfire Mitigation Aging & Disability Grant Program. This bill would establish the Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program to be administered by the California Department of Aging through specified area agencies on aging, including Area 4 and El Dorado County Area. The bill would award grants, based on specified criteria, to seniors and individuals with disabilities to mitigate against wildfires on properties they own that they would not otherwise be able to protect with existing resources. The bill would require the area agencies on aging to award grants on a competitive basis and would require applications to contain specified information, including proof of need. The bill would also authorize the grant funding to be used towards the costs associated with hiring contractors or other qualified service providers to perform wildfire mitigation activities. The bill would appropriate the sum of \$1,000,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Aging to implement these provisions. The bill would also require the area agencies on aging to retain specified information and report that information to the department upon the completion of the pilot program, including the number of applicants and the amount of money distributed. This bill would make these provisions inoperative on January 1, 2030, and would repeal these provisions on that date.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB2037
AB 2135	Kalra	Long-Term Health Care Facilities. This bill strengthens protections for residents of long-term care facilities by requiring facilities to provide and verify written notice of transfers or discharges at least 30 days in advance, including translated or accessible-format notices when needed. It increases penalties for noncompliance, false verification, and failure to follow	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB2135

BILL #	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	STATUS
		hearing decisions related to improper transfers or discharges, while also authorizing the state to block facilities from admitting new residents until compliance is achieved. The bill further updates notice requirements to local long-term care ombudsmen and expands certain criminal and civil penalties consistent with federal and state law.	
AB 2596	Gipson	Mobilehome parks: federally approved housing programs: compliance with state and local laws. This bill would specify that, if a mobilehome park operator or owner fails to comply with federal law or other federal requirements imposed in connection with a federally approved housing program, the mobilehome park operator or owner shall ensure ongoing compliance with applicable state laws, including, but not limited to, prescribed provisions of the Unruh Civil Rights Act, and local ordinances.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB2596
AB 2674	Schiavo	Financial Abuse & Deception Preventative Measures. This bill would require a depository institution, as defined, to take certain actions that would help protect its customers from financial abuse and deception, as defined, including by requiring a depository institution that suspects financial abuse or deception with respect to any transaction to employ certain preventive measures, as prescribed, except as specified. This bill would authorize a customer who has suffered harm from financial abuse or deception and did not receive a required preventive measure to, within 60 calendar days of the relevant suspect transaction, provide oral or written notice to the depository institution, as specified. The bill would require a financial institution to investigate the noticed transaction and relevant account history and would provide a liability shield to a financial institution that refunds the amount of the suspect transaction plus interest, as prescribed. This bill would authorize a customer to bring a civil action to enforce its provisions, as specified.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB2674
SB 991	Menjivar	Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly: Categorization of Citations. Beginning July 1, 2027, the bill would require the California Department of Social Services to classify substantiated violations of residents' rights in residential care facilities for the elderly according to elder abuse categories defined in state law, such as neglect, isolation, or financial abuse. The classified abuse category would also be required to appear on the department's public-facing database to increase transparency and public awareness.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB991
SB 1149	Durazo	Employees: Bereavement Leave This bill would include a designated person identified by the employee, as specified, in the definition of "family member" and	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB1149

8.E.C-8

BILL #	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	STATUS
		authorize an employer to limit an employee to one designated person per 12-month period for purposes of these provisions relating to bereavement leave.	
SB 1261	Laird	Aging & Disability Resource Center. This bill would prohibit the California Department of Aging from revoking the designation of an ADRC program solely due to the revocation of a designation, suspension, or temporary inability of either the area agency on aging or the independent living center partner to serve in its operator role, and would authorize the remaining partner to continue to operate the ADRC independently during a transition period as specified.	Click for Current Status: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=2025202605B1261



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AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION

Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Date: 9-11-26

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors, AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Executive Director's September Report

STAFFING UPDATE

Rosa Segura has been selected as our new Fiscal Specialist, filling Hilary Minugh's previous position. Rosa was selected from a group of excellent applicants and we're excited to have her on board. Her training begins the week of September 14th. Hilary continues to work with us part time to assist with training and help us through the transition.

Chris Greenwood's post-retirement replacement remains in limbo, as the mandated background check for AmeriCorps-funded positions continues without resolution, either pro or con, for her selected replacement. The process is taking several months to resolve. A big thank you goes to Program Coordinator Monica Alvarez, who is taking on extra tasks and volunteers until the vacancy is filled.

Seriously good news came from CDA with the announcement of additional funding for our HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program), with an increase of about \$50,000 this year and \$77,000 in the future to hire additional staff. We have received over 25 separate documents to explain this funding, ranging from its intended use to revised contracting language to new reporting requirements. We're hoping CDA staff will provide some verbal explanations and maybe even some question-and-answer sessions to help us decipher the two-dozen-plus documents and various e-mails received so far. Unfortunately, no increase in administrative funds were included as part of the allocation.

MASTER PLAN FOR AGING (MPA) LOCAL PLAYBOOKS

Last night Board President Tami Aviles and I made a presentation to the Community Action Board of San Benito County regarding California's Master Plan for Aging and our

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9-1

development of a local playbook to implement it. Besides providing background on the project, we used the opportunity to highlight our San Benito County Volunteer Project as just one of the local efforts we are making.

We continue to promote and share the content of our MPA Local Playbooks throughout our PSA. Next steps for the workgroups and for the overall evolution of the playbook is something Corey, Zach, Britt and I are working on, and we'll engage further in that discussion during our October MPA Quarterly workgroup meetings.

Corey's monthly newsletter also promotes the plan and highlights her work around volunteerism as of the our local playbook outcomes, and continues to receive positive reactions. Zach has started a similar newsletter for our Santa Cruz County efforts. If you haven't had a chance to read them, I would encourage everyone to take a few minutes and stay up-to-date on local efforts in our network.

The Aging and Long Term Care Commission of San Benito County continues to be the oversight committee for the San Benito County Playbook. In Santa Cruz County, a MPA Governance Committee fills this role, with augmentations throughout the community. The Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission has formed an ad hoc committee to develop strategies for additional engagement in moving the local playbook forward.

SERVICE PROVIDER UPDATE

Service delivery in Hollister at the Pauline Valdivia Memorial Center continues to evolve, with remodeling work still in progress and building entrance compromised and porta-potties still in use instead of the bathrooms in the building. After forwarding community e-mails last month regarding concerns about the center with the Hollister City Manager (Ana Cortez), I received a message that the City is placing staff back at the center to be closer to the situation, and that the bathroom remodeling will be completed soon.

Ana has also shared that the City will be creating a community program RFP in the near future, and she hopes this will be the vehicle to restore AAA funding. In terms of process, this will be a step backwards, as it puts the AAA into a competitive role vs. our own providers of service, among others, and removes us from the quasi-governmental role that the City previously recognized. Both Santa Cruz County and San Benito County recognize the uniqueness of the AAA in the delivery of social services; and until this year, so did the City of Hollister. No doubt there will need to be additional discussion of how this is ultimately resolved.

OTHER AGENCY OPERATIONS

SPEAKING OF LOCAL FUNDING, we're submitting a small grant for Scotts Valley tax preparation assistance via Project SCOUT. More significantly, the County of Santa Cruz is in the midst of an overhaul of their community program funding process, previously

known as CORE. A community-wide meeting was held two weeks ago to provide background on the County's ideas of change, including consideration of re-doing the current three-year funding cycle a year early. We're currently in Year Two. The item is tentatively scheduled for discussion at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, September 29th. Highlights of the proposed changes include a prioritization for maintaining and funding local safety net services; streamline the application process, and having a much more transparent allocation process. Older adults and people with disabilities are included in the priority populations targeted for funding.

We're still planning on highlighting our own direct service programs in coming months as part of a "Board Enrichment Series" that Advisory Council members can certainly join. These presentations will take place after some of our Board meetings and can be viewed remotely as well as in person. The idea is we'll hold about an hour-long session to provide more information on various topics, starting with presentations about our direct services. Our first such enrichment is tentatively set for Thursday, October 15, and featuring either the Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program or our San Benito Connect Volunteer Program.



AREA AGENCY ON AGING
San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Monthly Report to the Board of Directors – Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties
Submitted by Corey Shaffer, Community Coordinator Senior Services Planning and Volunteer
Engagement San Benito County, Seniors Council and Community Foundation for San Benito County
For the Month of July/August 2026

Volunteer Engagement & San Benito Connect

- Continued development of SBCVolunteers.org as a countywide hub connecting residents with local volunteer opportunities and nonprofit/community partners.
- July platform activity included 24 active partner agencies, 26 new registrations, more than 4,200 year-to-date opportunity views, and more than 750 agency views.
- Continued outreach to organizations to expand volunteer listings and increase use of the platform, including encouraging agencies to post opportunities and track volunteer participation.
- Continued planning for a future Resource & Volunteer Fair in partnership with Project SCOUT's *Tacos & Taxes*. The event concept was moved to Spring 2027 to allow additional time for partner coordination and development.

Master Plan for Aging & Community Partnerships

- Convened the July 30 Master Plan for Aging meeting, bringing together the five local workgroups: Housing for All Ages & Stages; Health Reimagined; Inclusion & Equity, Not Isolation; Caregiving That Works; and Affording Aging.
- Workgroup updates included Safe Streets for All and older-adult transportation input, Matter of Balance and YMCA wellness programming, Library Tech Help Tuesdays, caregiver education, the Financial Resource Guide, and Project SCOUT outreach.

Newsletter & Email Communications

- Published the July and August editions of the San Benito Seniors Connect newsletter, providing older adults, caregivers, community partners, and residents with information about local programs, resources, events, health and wellness, and volunteer opportunities. 🌟
- The July newsletter was sent to 399 recipients and generated a 53% open rate and 9% click rate.
- The August newsletter was sent to 408 recipients and generated a 62% open rate and 6% click rate, representing a 9-percentage-point increase in open rate over July.
- Overall Constant Contact email communications are averaging a 56% open rate, reported by the platform as approximately 21% above the industry average.
- Continued using email communications to promote senior services, community resources, volunteer opportunities, educational programs, partner information, and upcoming events.

Social Media & Digital Outreach

Continued managing and expanding the Seniors Council and San Benito Connect social media presence to increase community awareness and share senior resources, volunteer opportunities, community events, safety information, partner programs, and organizational updates.

- The Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties Facebook: Continued using the established Facebook page as a primary communication channel for programs, resources, newsletters, events, and community information. For the Jan. 1–Sept. 8 reporting period, the page

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10.C-1

recorded 23,652 views, 1,238 engagements, and 51 net follows. The page currently has 281 followers.

- San Benito Connect Volunteers Facebook: Launched January 23, 2026, to increase awareness of local volunteer opportunities and drive community members to [SBCVolunteers.org](https://www.sbcvolunteers.org). From January 1 through September 8, 2026, the page generated 4,790 views, 247 engagements, and 34 follows. The page currently has 33 followers.
- Seniors Council Instagram – @seniorscouncil831: Established November 19, 2024, and currently has 229 followers and 104 posts.
- San Benito Connect Instagram – @sbcvolunteers: Currently has 148 followers and 22 posts, supporting volunteer recruitment and awareness of local organizations, resources, and volunteer opportunities.

Together, these four social media channels provide an expanding digital network for reaching older adults, caregivers, volunteers, community partners, and residents throughout San Benito County.

Community Outreach, Representation & Visibility

- July 10 – San Benito County Aging & Long-Term Care Commission: Attended the Commission meeting, representing the Seniors Council and participating in discussions related to the needs, services, and resources impacting older adults in San Benito County.
- July 22 – Medicaid Work Requirements Webinar: Participated in the *Understanding New Medicaid Work Requirements Rules* webinar presented by Justice in Aging to learn more about upcoming requirements and their potential impact on older adults and community-based volunteer opportunities. Information from the webinar helped support preparation for subsequent discussions with Central California Alliance for Health regarding volunteer placements and San Benito Connect.
- August 6 – San Benito Business Council: Attended the Business Council luncheon featuring the Council of Governments Regional Transportation Pattern Study results, providing an opportunity to stay informed about regional transportation trends and issues relevant to mobility and accessibility for older adults.
- August 14 participated in the Aging & Long-Term Care Commission meeting in Hollister and continued coordination with local partners on older-adult services and resources.
- August 14 met with Central California Alliance for Health to discuss upcoming Medi-Cal work requirements and the potential role of [SBCVolunteers.org](https://www.sbcvolunteers.org) as a San Benito County volunteer hub. Discussion included volunteer-hour documentation, community referrals, volunteer placement, marketing support, and potential partnership and funding opportunities.
- August 17 – Hollister Rotary: Attended the Hollister Rotary meeting featuring a presentation from Assemblymember Robert Rivas' office. Represented the Seniors Council and the Community Foundation for San Benito County, while continuing relationships and visibility with local civic and community partners.
- August 25 – City of Hollister ADA Transition Plan Ad Hoc Committee: Attended with Executive Director Clay Kempf to participate in the City's ADA Transition Plan planning process. The meeting provided an opportunity for Seniors Council representation in discussions related to accessibility, safety, and mobility for older adults and people with disabilities.

Focus Areas Moving Forward

- Continue follow-up with Central California Alliance for Health regarding volunteer placement, documentation, marketing support, and potential grant opportunities.
- Increase partner agency participation and volunteer-hour reporting on [SBCVolunteers.org](https://www.sbcvolunteers.org).
- Continue planning for the Spring 2027 Resource & Volunteer Fair/Tacos & Taxes collaboration.
- Maintain consistent newsletter and social media outreach while using performance data to guide future communications.
- Continue involvement in ADA accessibility, Safe Streets for All, transportation, and other community planning efforts affecting older adults.
- Continue City, County, nonprofit, business, healthcare, and community outreach to strengthen senior services and identify opportunities for sustainable funding and partnerships.

10.c-2



AREA AGENCY ON AGING
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FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
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PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

FALLS PREVENTION PROGRAM
Emergency Response Systems, Assessments & Training

PROJECT SCOUT

Project SCOUT Services AUGUST 2026:

Free Tax Assistance:

1. *ALL: Project SCOUT Tax Facilitated Self Assistance ONLINE <http://tinyurl.com/SCOUTFSA>*
2. *Project SCOUT VITA Ad hoc, remote services.*
3. *Watsonville Senior Center by appointment.*
4. *San Juan Bautista Library by appointment.*

CalFresh Assistance:

1. *Assistance provided at our Watsonville Senior Center Office by appointment.*
2. *Assistance provided at the San Juan Bautista Library by appointment.*
3. *Assistance provided via phone by appointment.*

Project SCOUT Tax Totals AUGUST 2026:

Project SCOUT Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Tax Preparation Totals:

- Number of Tax Returns prepared and processed – 1920
- Primary or secondary 60 years old or older – 935
- Average income of those serviced – \$30,677.00
- Dollar Amount of Federal refunds including credits – \$1,756,790.00
- Dollar Amount of State refunds including credits – \$423,948.00

Dollar Amount of TOTAL refunds – **\$2,180,738.00**

Money back in the wallets of our clients, including average return cost of \$240.00 – **\$2,641,538.00!**

10.D-1

Project SCOUT AUGUST CALFRESH Services

Project SCOUT's Program Assistant's focus continues being CalFresh. All of our tax clients are assessed for qualification. Our CDA contract asks that we focus services on low-income seniors 60 and above and/or disabled residents of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties only. These are the results for the month of August:

- **Number of Senior/disabled clients assessed for services AUGUST – 91**
- Number of Senior/disabled clients assessed for services (Santa Cruz County)– 86
- Number of Senior/disabled clients assessed for services (Santa Benito County) – 5
- **Number of clients who completed Calfresh application AUGUST – 5**
- Number of clients who completed Calfresh application (Santa Cruz County) – 5
- Number of clients who completed Calfresh application (San Benito County) – 0

Project SCOUT AUGUST Services Highlights:

Project SCOUT's Director assisted a senior who has just gone through eye surgery and received letters from the IRS stating that she needed to file taxes from 2022 to 2025. Not only was she having trouble reading the letters, but also retrieving her income documents as she stated that she had not done taxes since 2019.

Project SCOUT's director guided her through the process of obtaining transcripts from the IRS and upon receiving transcripts and creating her returns we found the reason why the IRS needed her reports; someone has used her social security unbeknownst to her. Taxpayer "Ama" was guided in filing out paper returns with an identity theft affidavit and provided with tools needed to meet with an IRS agent at a local office. We truly hope that her situation is fully resolved and will continue communication until that is the case.

Project SCOUT AUGUST Highlights:

Project SCOUT's primary service focus in August has been CalFresh services, but we do take tax clients when both volunteers and staff are available.

Tax services have diminished drastically as the load of administrative work has taken away from our ability to conduct and direct free tax preparation services and events. Morale is also low. Project SCOUT would benefit from bringing in an assistant whose focus is to support the Program Director with tax services and volunteer engagement.

10.D-2



Permanent executive director appointed for Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County

Shawn Peterson will serve as the new executive director of the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County following the retirement of longtime director Karen Delaney.

Peterson has served as interim director of the organization since January, following Delaney's announcement that she would step down

from the role after more than four decades. Delaney officially retired July 31.

After conducting a nationwide search, the organization's board of directors opted to hire Peterson for the position permanently. He has been with the Volunteer Center's leadership team for a decade. He was initially promoted to director of operations and impact following a monthslong planning process in anticipation of Delaney's retirement.

In a statement announcing the decision, Delaney said she believes Peterson "is the perfect person to lead the center toward a bright future of transformative engagement. His talents and his heart put him at the top of any search and I could not be more excited about this decision."

The Volunteer Center was founded in 1967, and with Delaney at the helm, the organization transformed into one of the largest such centers in the country. It currently manages 19 programs and works with more than 300 nonprofit and agency partners annually.

From: [Clay Kempf](#)
To: [Wayne Norton](#); [Pam](#); [Corey Azevedo](#); [Corinne Jones](#); [Raymon Cancino](#); [John Beleutz](#); [Tami Aviles](#); [Antonio Rivas](#); [Britt Bassoni](#); [Zachary Johnson](#); [Kayla Traber](#); [L Berkowitz](#); [Clay Kempf](#); [Mary Lou Mckenney](#); [Pam Arnsberger](#)
Subject: Update on Federal Budget Continuing Resolution
Date: Friday, September 4, 2026 11:27:53 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Advocacy Committee members - FYI

Federal Government Funded Until Mid-December; Fall Forecast

Snapshot

(A 30-second read for busy people)

- On September 2, President Trump signed into law a temporary funding bill extending FY 2026 Labor/HHS funding through December 11.
- The CR extends FY 2026 funding for OAA and other aging programs at FY 2026 levels and temporarily blocks the controversial OMB federal grantmaking proposed rule.
- Congress will be in their districts nearly all of the next two months to focus on midterm election campaigning, giving DC a quiet fall until November.

On September 2, President Trump signed into law a temporary funding bill extending funding for the federal government beyond the start of the fiscal year on October 1 at FY 2026 levels. The continuing resolution (CR) funds the government through December 11 and includes extensions of authorizations of important health, veterans and transportation programs. The CR also temporarily blocks the controversial Office of Management and Budget (OMB) federal grantmaking rule that would reshape how the Trump Administration disperses federal grants.

11.2-1

It is *very rare* for Congress to pass a CR this early in the year, weeks before funding expires on September 30. The broad bipartisan support was a clear signal that both parties were eager to avoid a funding battle and make their way home to continue campaigning in the midterm elections. The CR level funds Older Americans Act (OAA) and other aging programs and while the bill does not increase funding, avoiding a government shutdown is a win especially following last fall's longest shutdown in government history.

Fall Forecast

House Republican leadership announced that the chamber will no longer be in session during the last two weeks of September as Representatives look to head back to their districts for the final stretch of campaigning. The Senate will return to DC on September 14 but will only be in session for two weeks.

FY 2027 Appropriations

Despite the early and swift action taken by Congress to fund the government for the next few months, the parties remain far apart on a final FY 2027 appropriations agreement. This means that Congress will need to either finish all their FY 2027 appropriations bills by mid-December or use another short-term CR to prevent a government shutdown and push off the negotiations until early 2027. If we were the betting type, we'd lean toward another CR, given the recent history of Congress pushing appropriations down the road as long as they can.

OAA Reauthorization

With only four months left in the 119th Congress—and very little of that in legislative session—there is a limited window to

get OAA reauthorization across the finish line. After the Senate's passage of S. 2120 in July, we're still pushing the House to take action before the end of the year.

An OAA reauthorization bill could be advanced in the lame-duck session following November elections or be included in a December appropriations package, like the approach taken in December 2024 in the 118th Congress. It will be a challenge to make this happen, but we remain committed to pulling out all the stops in our advocacy efforts.

USAgings continues to engage with House Education and Workforce Committee Members' offices, providing education on OAA and the importance of reauthorization for their constituents. OAA champion and Senate HELP Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) will not be returning to Congress next year following his primary election loss. This leaves the Aging Network with an uncertain congressional dynamic next year—yet another reason why we will need your advocacy later this fall to make a final push.

Advocacy Timeline

Congress' scant DC working days over the next two months will make things quiet for a bit, but we will need your advocacy later this fall. That small window of mid-November to mid-December to advocate for OAA funding and reauthorization will be critical, so we will send information in the coming weeks on how you can engage your Members of Congress, despite their competing election demands.

ELECTION 2026

2026 General Election Q&A: Hollister Mayor

Tim Burns, Tina Garza and Scott McPhail vying to lead City Council

by **Noe Magaña**

September 11, 2026



From left: Tim Burns, Christina Garza and Scott McPhail. Photos courtesy of the candidates.

11.3-1

Lea este artículo en español [aquí](#).

A three-person race for Hollister mayor includes former council member Tim Burns, former Hollister Recreation supervisor Tina Garza, and cannabis entrepreneur Scott McPhail, who has run for multiple local offices in the past few years.

The seat will be vacated by Mayor Roxanne Stephens, who did not seek reelection. In the June primary, Stephens lost to incumbent Supervisor Angela Curro to represent District 4 on the San Benito County Board of Supervisors.

The mayoral term is two years.

The Hollister mayoral race will be among those featured at BenitoLink's 2026 General Election Forum set for Sept. 17 at 6 p.m. at the Granada Theater.

Tim Burns

Burns, 73, is a code enforcement division chief for San Joaquin County. He has lived in the city for more than 25 years. Burns served on the City Council from 2020-2024, representing District 4.

BenitoLink: Residents are split on whether the city should continue to organize the biker rally, and when it should be held. If elected, would you support it? Why or why not?

Burns: I will support the rally as a private venture in the future years. I would rebrand the event as the Hollister Independence Motorcycle Rally 2.0. As a former city employee, I worked at the rally in 2002 and 2003. The experience was quite memorable, however, 20-plus years later the rally needs to be reinvented. It needs to be self-sustaining. Laguna Seca hosts Super Bike Week the week after the rally. Perhaps there is a way to "piggyback" the two events?

In the past two years, the city has sponsored and paid for the rally with taxpayer money, even though the city is in a financial crisis. City employees are currently at risk of being laid off. To continue to pay for the rally in future years with taxpayer dollars would be fiscally irresponsible.

The city's expenses for the past two rallies have not been released, however factoring in the hard cost plus non-compensated city staff time, it is easy to speculate that those expenses easily exceeded 1 million taxpayer

11.3-2

dollars.

A new venue or process must be considered, one where an entrance fee can be charged to help offset costs. A private professional event planner/coordinator should be involved. To have the city parks and recreation director and the airport director responsible for coordinating the event is a poor use of city staff. The city lacks the experience and expertise to plan and implement an event of this magnitude. It needs to be done correctly or not at all.

As the mayor I would look forward to working with those of you who are willing to commit to funding, planning and implementing the event to ensure its success for years to come. As the community we need to be either all in or done with the event.

Residential growth is a contentious issue in the community, and several housing projects are in the pipeline. How do you think the city should approach growth?

Cautiously. Residential growth is inevitable. California state law mandates and requires residential growth. To not comply with state law is not a viable option. As we have recently seen, the city and county missed state mandated deadlines to adopt their housing elements and as a result the Builders Remedy became the process until the state approved the housing elements once they were submitted.

The Builders Remedy allows developers to bypass local zoning rules and general plans if a city or county fails to adopt a state-compliant housing element. Developers can submit housing projects that ignore local density limits and zoning restrictions. Local agencies generally cannot deny the project unless it violates specific health, safety, or environmental laws.

Development is very complicated. Many factors can delay, impact and influence the build out and completion of projects. There are currently projects in progress in Hollister that were approved more than 20 years ago. To further complicate matters, there is a statewide mandated process that dictates the target number of homes that need to be built by what year. This process is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation or Assessment (RHNA). The City of Hollister's RHNA requires that 4,163 residences need to be built by 2031. The mandate requires that Hollister plan for the homes to be priced to meet varying income categories. The categories are:

- Very Low-Income (0-50% Area Median Income): 846 units
- Low-Income (51-80% Area Median Income): 678 units
- Moderate Income (81-120% Area Median Income): 826 units
- Above Moderate Income (>120% Area Median Income): 1,813 units

As we move forward, we need to focus on development where very low income and low-income projects are the priority. Not only is there a housing crisis, but there is also an affordable housing crisis.

As the mayor, I look forward to working with those of you who are committed to finding real solutions to our housing needs and the challenges created by the development process.

Among the biggest challenges the City Council faces is maintaining its aging infrastructure. What projects or issues do you think should be at the forefront?

The sewer smells that are associated with the Wastewater Treatment Plant located on the west side of the city need to be addressed and resolved immediately. This has been a consistent and reoccurring problem for several years. As a former City Council member I called for a formal investigation and report because of public health concerns. At the previous City Council's direction improvements were made and equipment was improved, replaced and or upgraded. When I left City Council, I thought this issue was on the way to being permanently resolved but to my disappointment the smells continue to be a problem.

The second challenge will be to create a work plan to address when underground pipes burst downtown and in the older residential areas. In addition to having a "fix it" mentality there needs to be a proactive plan developed to replace aging pipes before they break and flooding occurs. As road repairs and regular road maintenance projects occur on an annual basis, replacing underground pipes of a certain age need to be part of those projects.

Tina Garza

Garza, 56, is a retired city employee and currently works as a substitute teacher. She has lived in the city for 13 years and has not held an elected position.

BenitoLink: Residents are split on whether the city should continue to organize the biker rally, and when it should be held. If elected, would you support it? Why or why not?

Garza: I support the tradition and history of the Hollister Motorcycle Rally, but I do not believe the city should continue carrying the financial and operational burden of organizing the event in its current form. The rally brings visitors to Hollister, supports our hotels, restaurants, and local businesses, and gives us an opportunity to showcase our community. However, it also requires significant city resources, including staff time and public safety services. In its current form, I do not believe that is sustainable.

11.3-4

I would support exploring partnerships with private promoters, sponsors, and community organizations to preserve the rally while reducing the city's financial burden and liability. We should be able to celebrate Hollister's and America's history while making responsible decisions about taxpayer dollars.

Residential growth is a contentious issue in the community, and several housing projects are in the pipeline. How do you think the city should approach growth?

Growth is important to Hollister's economy, but growth must be responsible and supported by adequate infrastructure.

I have seen the benefits that development can bring. It can generate revenue to help us improve parks, enhance quality-of-life services, beautify our community, and provide resources for additional staffing. At the same time, our infrastructure and public services must keep pace with that development.

Before approving significant additional growth, we need to address the capacity and condition of our wastewater system, alleyways, and streets, as well as the impact growth places on police, fire, and other city services.

I also believe developers should contribute to the infrastructure and community amenities their projects require. As Hollister grows, we should pursue facilities our residents need, including a new community center, an indoor recreation space, and additional opportunities for youth, families, adults, and seniors.

Growth should not simply mean more houses. It should mean building a stronger, more complete community.

Among the biggest challenges the City Council faces is maintaining its aging infrastructure. What projects or issues do you think should be at the forefront?

The wastewater treatment system should be one of the city's top priorities. We cannot responsibly continue to grow without ensuring that our wastewater treatment system has the capacity, maintenance, and upgrades needed to serve our community.

I would like to see a strong preventive maintenance program with regular inspections, clear documentation, and accountability. Whether that work is performed by city staff or qualified contractors, the council should receive regular reports on the condition of critical equipment, completed work, and future needs so that problems can be addressed before they become costly emergencies.

Our roads and streets must also be a priority. Residents see and experience deteriorating roads every day, and continued development increases the pressure on that infrastructure.

Finally, I believe revitalizing downtown should be part of our long-term infrastructure and economic development strategy. I would like to see a vibrant downtown entertainment district that supports restaurants and local businesses and creates more opportunities for residents to gather, dine, and enjoy their own community.

My approach is simple: take care of the infrastructure we already have, plan responsibly for what we will need, and ensure that future growth improves the quality of life for the people who already call Hollister home.

Scott McPhail

Scott McPhail, who did not provide his age, is a cannabis entrepreneur and life-long Hollister resident. He has never held elected office but has run for various positions in recent years including for Hollister City Council and the San Benito County Board of Supervisors.

BenitoLink: Residents are split on whether the city should continue to organize the biker rally, and when it should be held. If elected, would you support it? Why or why not?

McPhail: I support keeping the biker rally in Hollister, but I think it's time for a change in how we produce it. We've relied on the same promoter model for decades, and I believe we should bring in a new, modern concert and event promoter with the experience and connections to make this a world-class event. I would like to explore using the airport and surrounding facilities for major concerts and activities, with reasonable admission fees. I have relationships with some of the biggest promoters in the world, and I believe we can bring a much bigger experience to Hollister while generating more revenue for our city and local businesses.

Residential growth is a contentious issue in the community, and several housing projects are in the pipeline. How do you think the city should approach growth?

I think Hollister needs a different approach to residential development. We have built a lot of traditional tract housing, and I think we should take a break from that and look at more innovative options. I would like to attract modern construction companies that can build higher quality homes, including houses with attached NextGen-style units designed for multigenerational living. Growth should be about building a better community, not just building more houses.

11.3-6

Among the biggest challenges the City Council faces is maintaining its aging infrastructure. What projects or issues do you think should be at the forefront?

We need to make sure our roads, water, sewer, drainage, and public services can keep up with growth. I also want to attract more commercial development, including big-box retailers like Home Depot, corporate restaurants, new shopping centers, technology companies, and other major businesses. These businesses can create jobs, expand our tax base, and give residents more choices without leaving town. Major developments should also contribute their fair share toward the infrastructure they require.

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