

MY WORD

By Susana Munzell

There is no question that Humboldt County is splendid in its bounty, natural beauty and resources: majestic trees, clear rivers, the ocean and all they provide. Yes indeed, many of us can enjoy the serenity and beauty of our surroundings.

But not all. There are the children, the men and women living in poverty, jobless and desperate. There are the young and the families that move out to look for a life elsewhere. There are the elderly with insufficient services.

The irony of this situation is that nature has provided us with a natural resource that, if used responsibly, has the potential to reverse the trend of poverty and drug dependence into a new wave of prosperity. The Humboldt Bay Harbor.

What about it? Well, good citizens, it is the only deep water port along a 400 mile stretch of Pacific coast between San Francisco and Coos Bay, Oregon, and is currently at approximately 10% of its predicted potential. The untapped possibilities the port offers are many, and they could provide jobs...good jobs, to keep families together in the community, to provide income for needed services, improve the infrastructure, and create more possibilities for commerce, tourism and recreation. Humboldt County should be known for more than its marijuana crops; it should be known as the county that takes care of its own.

A group of concerned citizens met over a year ago to talk about job opportunities in the community and immediately recognized the potential of the Humboldt Bay Harbor. Since then the group, known as the *Humboldt Bay Harbor Working Group (HBHWG)*, has set about meeting its goals, talking to city and county leadership and spreading the good word. It joined the Prosperity 2012 effort and its project is included in the draft recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors.

Our vision is to revitalize the harbor to increase job opportunities for the people of Humboldt County, bring new revenues to the community, create a model green port and ensure that the environment is protected and, when possible, enhanced.

To realize this vision it is first essential to inform the public and generate political will so that the community as a whole can participate in creating initiatives and plans. The HBHWG has held community forums and will shortly host public lunch meetings with speakers. Letters of support are being solicited. A resolution supporting this work is being taken to the local agencies with land use authority over the harbor portion of Humboldt Bay affirming commitment to create jobs and sustainable growth utilizing the harbor.

So, what's in the resolution? Well, like all resolutions it begins with WHEREAS statements. These are important. They point out the loss of business due to lack of attention to the harbor's potential. They point out that the harbor could generate over 3,000 direct jobs and over \$90 million per year in additional payroll. They remind us

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that the California Coastal Act encourages agencies to modernize and construct maritime facilities and that the California Harbors and Navigation Code mandates the promotion of national and international commerce.

Finally, the resolution reads “Therefore be it Resolved”. This is where the adopting agency affirms its commitment to create jobs and sustainable economic growth by supporting maritime commerce including mariculture, shipping, cruise ships, research vessel homeporting, shipbuilding and repair, etc. It affirms commitment to improving transportation including rail service; protecting the environment, and to collaborating to develop marketing, financing, and action plans.

Our community can make this happen. All it takes is political will on the part of the leadership and the vision and hard work of a community that cares for all its people. We believe this is such a community and such are the leaders. We ask you to join us.

For additional information or to join the HBHWG, please contact Susana Munzell, Chairperson, at s.munzell@yahoo.com.