



COUNTY OF MONTEREY CAO Weekly Report

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SPECIALREPORT



One of the Watershed murals created by young men in a special program at the County's Youth Center (above). A young artist at work on the mural (right).



County Notes

- > Volunteers are needed for VITA program, tax help for local families through United Way. Check training schedule [here](#).

New Artwork Celebrates Monterey County

Artists, county employees, elected officials and more all gathered to mark the 11th annual Celebrating Monterey County art exhibit at the County Government Center building this week.

Each year at this time, the public art exhibit on the walls of the county building changes to showcase new works by local artists, all of it celebrating the

beauty and diversity of Monterey County. This year, more than 20 artists were chosen through a juried process to be included in the exhibit. More than 60 pieces of artwork are in the latest show.



“This art exhibit has become such an integral part of the building that as the previous year’s artwork comes down, the walls look terribly barren,” says County Administrative Officer Lew Bauman. “I can’t wait to see the new works in their place.”

Artwork includes fine art and photography of Monterey County scenes, from its furthest reaches north, south, east and west. This public art exhibit began soon after the government center building was built as a collaborative project with the County and the Arts Council for Monterey County.



County employees enjoy the new works during the opening reception and an artist featured in the new exhibit poses with his work.

“The Arts Council has been partners with the County of Monterey since 1985, so when the County asked us to help add art to the building, we jumped at the chance,” explains Arts Council for Monterey County Executive Director Paulette Lynch. “We put out our call to artists, empaneled a jury and created an annual competition. Each year, we find the arts are the answer for creating a deeper appreciation of the incredible diversity of this amazing place we all call home.”

The Monterey Room meeting space on the second floor features a special collection of works featuring the Monterey Bay Watersheds. This artwork was done by young men in the Arts as Healing in Juvenile Justice Partnership program at the Probation Department’s Youth Center. For these young men who are at a critical point in their lives, the arts are making a positive impact.

“Over the past few years, I have encouraged our Youth Center student artists to paint the natural world, as they have so little contact with it,” explains teaching artist Linda Hevern. “As they learn new skills, communicate more effectively, manage anxiety, develop empathy, gain confidence in their ability to create and make a positive contribution to the community through their artwork, they gain a more positive attitude toward themselves and their future.”

Castroville Crossing/Path Project Underway

School is hard enough for students without having the route there be a danger. Thankfully, work is underway to build a safer path for Castroville school children.

Right now, students who attend Elkhorn Elementary School and North Monterey County High School (which are both located along Castroville Boulevard) and who ride bicycles or walk to school use a route along Salinas Street to Benson Road, walk over the active Union Pacific Railroad tracks along an often muddy farm field then cross over a busy section of Castroville Boulevard to the existing Bicycle/Pedestrian path along Castroville Boulevard before making to school.

A new path now being constructed will provide students with a much safer route. This new path will incorporate a pedestrian bridge crossing over Highway 156 and a flashing beacon crosswalk across Castroville Boulevard at Collins Street that will connect to the existing path.

The project, which began this week, also provides an important link to the various portions of the transportation infrastructure within the community for all bicyclists and pedestrians from the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas to Watsonville and to Santa Cruz County.

“Total cost of the project is budgeted for \$10 million. The project funding was provided by various federal, state, and local funds, including Federal Earmark Grade Funds, Transportation Development Act funds, State Transportation Enhancement funds, State Transportation Improvement Program funds, Active Transportation Program funds and County Road Funds,” says Doug Poochigian, Civil Engineer with RMA-Public Works.



This is the portion of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks school children are crossing to get to class. The new pedestrian/bike path will route children away from this dangerous crossing.

The design of the project was completed by TRC Engineers under contract with Monterey County Resource Management Agency - Public Works and Facilities. The project will be built by Viking Construction Company. Construction Management for the project will be Vali Cooper & Associates, Inc. with Monterey County staff oversight.

Elections Looks Back at 2016 Vote

Election 2016 is 'in the books.' The Monterey County Elections Department certified its elections results on December 2, 2016.

The report produced at certification is called the Statement of Votes Cast. This report contains the precinct by precinct results in addition to the qualifying write-in counts. These results have been sent to the Secretary of State and will be presented to the Board of Supervisors next week.

Election 2016 will be remembered by most of us for its electrifying national campaigns. But for election workers, it will be remembered for its benchmarks and how the department prepared to handle the increase in voters.

Registrar of Voters Claudio Valenzuela shares some insights now that the counting is complete.

Q. The 2016 election was expected to be bigger in terms of voter participation. What are the final numbers on voter turn- out?



Voters queued up at the Elections Department on November 8th.

A. The turn-out for this election was 73.80%.

On the surface, the turnout for this election appears lower than the other two most recent presidential elections. However, when you look to the 185,786 registered voters, the highest number of registrants in the history of Monterey County, and see that 137,102 total ballots were cast this election, also the highest number of ballots cast in Monterey County, you have a real understanding of the totality of the work that went into an election of this magnitude. If you factor in the three card ballot, also a first, it was quite a challenge for our tabulation team.

Q. More voters means more ballots. How did Elections prepare for this?

A. After our initial ballot order, before the 15-day close of registration, we continually monitored the number of registered voters very closely and adjusted the quantity a couple of times accordingly.

Several workflows were adjusted to accommodate the volume of work and maintain exceptional customer service. To alleviate wait time at the front counter, we added several teams to our drive-through vote by mail drop service. These teams started earlier in the season to coincide with the

close of registration. The idea being, anyone just looking to drop-off wouldn't need to enter the office and be directed to a drop-box; this frees up valuable resources to work directly with those voters who need more assistance in registering and voting.

We prepared to work around the clock as necessary to tabulate ballots. Two complete tabulation teams were trained and scheduled to work until all ballots were counted from the polls. In the ten days leading up to the election, ballot processing, signature verification, extraction, and tabulation occurred daily.

More voters and more campaigns posed interesting and different challenges for our personnel. In order to prepare for the 'people factor' related to this election, we teamed up with the LDN to develop and proctor a training specific to elections to help ready our team to excel at customer service in the face of demands and challenges that come with working in a contentious election season.

Q. One option you had this year was a midday ballot pick up. How did this come about and how did that help the process?

A. New legislation this year allowed elections officials across the state to collect ballots from precincts and begin processing them prior to the close of polls.



Drive through vote by mail service was typically busy, particularly on Election Day.



Assistant CAO Manny Gonzalez (left) and Christina McGinnis, Agricultural Commissioner's Office (right) make a midday ballot pick up in Pacific Grove.

In the post-election review for June's primary, the elections team decided the implementation of the midday pickup was not only feasible, but necessary as well.

The elections team worked to create procedures that included stringent chain-of-custody measures, was manageable for the poll workers, and cost-effective to implement.

In reaching out to the CAO's office, other county departments and the Management Council for volunteers, we were able to carry out these procedures and complete the tally of the longest ballot in the history of Monterey County in a reasonable timeframe.

Q. What would you say are benefits of this big election, lessons learned for the future?

A. The team challenges itself to take lessons away from each election, regardless of size.

After each election, we have a post-election review in which we celebrate our accomplishments and analyze what areas need improvement. A common theme to these reviews, and one that is especially apropos after this election, is the ability to implement new innovative technology to increase efficiencies and better serve the public.

There are exciting changes in the future of elections for California and Monterey County; we are taking the lessons learned from each election to grow with the needs of our constituents and be proactive in meeting developing legislation.