



COUNTY CURRENTS

Santa Cruz County

www.santacruzcounty.us

Spring 2023

A publication of the County Administrative Office Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrator



Historic Winter Leaves Behind Devastation



The County's **2023 Housing Element** is underway. Learn more about the process of creating new housing including upcoming opportunities to participate at santacruzcounty.us/2023housingelement.



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COUNTY SECURES BROADBAND GRANT

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce a \$500,000 grant from the California Public Utilities Commission's Local Area Technical Assistance grant program. The grant will support the development of a comprehensive countywide broadband master plan, aimed at increasing access to high-speed internet for all residents and businesses.

The broadband master plan will outline a strategic framework for short-, medium-, and long-term broadband infrastructure deployment, with the goal of ensuring that every resident has access to reliable and fast internet services. The public is encouraged to participate in the planning process by taking a broadband speed survey, available at <https://speedsurveyapp.com/surveys/co-santa-cruz/>.

"This grant is a critical step towards bridging the digital divide in Santa Cruz County," County Board Chair Zach Friend said. "Broadband access is a necessity for our residents and busi-

nesses, and this funding will help us to ensure that everyone in our community has access to high-speed internet." The broadband master plan will include a comprehensive analysis of current broadband infrastructure, an assessment of the broadband needs of residents and businesses, and a roadmap for the deployment of new broadband infrastructure in the county. The plan will also include policy and regulatory recommendations necessary to support the deployment of broadband in Santa Cruz County.

The plan will allow the County to access State and federal broadband funding it would otherwise be ineligible to access. These funds can then be used to implement new local broadband infrastructure to create more connected communities and promote economic development. The County is committed to working with local stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and government agencies, to ensure that the broadband master plan reflects the needs and priorities of all sectors of the community.

FATEMI NAMED POET LAUREATE

The Santa Cruz Public Libraries (SCPL) in collaboration with the County of Santa Cruz Department of Parks, Open Spaces, and Cultural Services, Arts Council Santa Cruz County, and Poetry Santa Cruz are pleased to announce that Farnaz Fatemi has been named the 2023-2024 Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate.

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, at the recommendation of the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission, voted to establish an official County Poet Laureate honorary position. The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors officially appointed Farnaz Fatemi as the new Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate on Tuesday January 31, 2023.



Farnaz Fatemi

Selection of the Poet Laureate was made through a competitive application process in which the panel considered artistic achievement in poetry; community engagement experience and ability to communicate well across a diverse range of communities; demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and alignment of the proposed project with the Poet Laureate mission and role.

Farnaz Fatemi, an Iranian American poet and writer, is a founding member of The Hive Poetry Collective, a member of Writers of Color – Santa Cruz County, and a former Lecturer in Writing at UCSC. In summers she teaches new transfer students in UCSC's Transfer Edge program.



Proposed '23-'24 County Budget Released

The County of Santa Cruz has released its 2023-24 Proposed Budget and interactive website, giving resident unprecedented digital access to County spending and revenue forecasts, line-item details and insight into how the budget connects to ongoing strategic priorities.

The \$1.1 billion Proposed Budget includes a \$731.2 million General Fund and reflects slowing revenue growth while preserving support for community priorities despite significant uncertainties in local, state and national financial forecasts.

Despite challenges including financing the most recent storm disasters, the Proposed Budget supports several communi-

ty investments, including continued build-out of a new South County Government Center, development of a new Children's Crisis Stabilization Center, a Unified Permit Center, a new countywide emergency alert system, planning for the continuation of the Rail Trail, fully reopening the Simpkins Family Swim Center, design of a new Freedom Campus Health Care Center, completion of the Live Oak Library Annex and Aptos Library, a Master Plan on Aging, increases in inmate medical and behavioral health care, and completion of a new DNA laboratory to reduce case processing times.

Visit www.sccbudget.us to explore.

Animal Services Director Named

In February, the Board of Directors for the Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter (SCCAS) unanimously appointed Amber Rowland as the next general manager.

Rowland will oversee shelter, field, and outreach operations with an annual budget of approximately \$5 million and 30 employees. With 17 years in the field of animal services, Rowland brings a wealth of experience as a shelter leader, developing programs, facilities, operations and policies to reach and sustain the city of Austin's animal welfare goals. While serving as a program manager with Austin Animal Services, Rowland supervised staff and volunteers, planned and executed major operational changes and events, and served as the public face of the agency. Rowland also has experience as an animal control officer and humane educator for Salt Lake County Animal Services.



AMBER ROWLAND

"I am so excited to get started working with the people and animals of Santa Cruz County," Rowland said. "I am passionate about socially conscious sheltering practices and committed to working collaboratively with the Board, the staff and the community to maintain SCCAS' position as one of the most respected shelters in California."

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County



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A piece of Quail Hollow history

Quail Hollow Ranch County Park has a long and important history of providing food for the San Lorenzo Valley and beyond during the early years of development of the northern part of Santa Cruz County. The park's cultural history is an important story to preserve, along with any historic equipment that was once part of this thriving ranch.

On March 5, 2023, Ben Lomond resident Karl H. Schaaf and his two sons, Don and Vaughn, returned a long missing mid-to-late 1800s pioneer blacksmith forge bellows that is part of Quail Hollow's history. This large bellows, made of wood, metal, and leather has surprisingly survived mostly intact for more than 150 years. This item will now be proudly displayed in the historic park's ranch house. The Santa Cruz County Parks Department first became aware of the artifact when 87-year-old Mr. Karl H. Schaaf stopped by the park and mentioned to a park maintenance worker that he wished to return an antique blacksmith bellows that he'd had in his possession for more than 60

years. Park Docent Richard James, after talking further with Mr. Schaaf, realized that this was probably an item that had been in use at Quail Hollow ranch since perhaps the 1870s.

Quail Hollow Ranch was first homesteaded beginning in 1866 by Joseph and America Kenville, and generally one of the first important buildings on a ranch was a blacksmith shop with its ever important furnace, anvil, and air source (bellows) to manufacture and repair all things metal. Judging from printed patent dates and style of design, the returned bellows most probably dates from that early time period. Mr. Schaaf came into possession of this bellows sometime in the early 1960s during a visit to what was once the Ben Lomond open dump, located near the Quail Hollow Ranch property. The Parks Department is pleased that this important artifact has been returned to its original use area, and thankful that Mr. Schaaf took care in storing the bellows and worked with Park Docent James to arrange its return.



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A Winter's Fury and the Long Road Back



Left: A series of atmospheric rivers led to severe flooding in parts of the Watsonville area.

Below: Storm surge slams into homes at Pot Belly Beach.



Above: A resident scoops mud out of a home in Aptos.

Right: Under unrelenting storms, the Holiday Slide closed Highway 9 for nearly three months.



Above: Where streets once were, swift water rescue teams patrolled Felton Grove.

Right: Capitola Pier was damaged. Seacliff Pier was destroyed.





Left: Crews work to shore up part of the Pajaro River levee system. The Monterey County side would fail, flooding Pajaro.

Above: The Sheriff's Office checked on flooded areas, helping residents evacuate.



FEMA Director Deanne Criswell, left, speaks with Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience Director Dave Reid



Officials toured damaged areas to reckon with storm damages. Left-right: State Parks District Superintendent Chris Spohrer, Supervisor Zach Friend, Rep. Jimmy Panetta, Assemblymember Dawn Addis and state Sen. John Laird.



In January, federal officials, including FEMA, met with the County to discuss storm damage and recovery.



Storms left behind a new round of storm damage throughout the County. It will likely take several years to repair the local road network.

Meet Your Supervisor

[Manu Koenig](#)

District 1 includes Live Oak, Summit Road Soquel and parts of Capitola and Santa Cruz.



[Zach Friend](#)

District 2 includes Aptos, Corralitos, part of Capitola and the South County coast.



[Justin Cummings](#)

District 3 includes much of Santa Cruz and the North Coast.



[Felipe Hernandez](#)

District 4 includes most of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley.



[Bruce McPherson](#)

District 5 includes the San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley and parts of Santa Cruz.



Click on each supervisor to learn more about them and their responsibilities, including how to reach them during constituent office hours.

Quick Guide

Citizens rely on county government for many needed services. Use this handy guide to find who to call, or come find us on the web at: www.santacruzcounty.us.

Main Number
(831) 454-2000

Board of Supervisors
(831) 454-2200

Agricultural Commissioner
(831) 763-8080

Animal Services
(831) 454-7303

Assessor's Office
(831) 454-2002

Benefits
(888) 421-8080

County Clerk/Elections
(831) 454-2060

Economic Development
(831) 454-2728

Environmental Health
(831) 454-2022

Health Services Agency
(831) 454-4800

Parks and Recreation
(831) 454-7900

Planning Department
(831) 454-2580

Public Works
(831) 454-2160

Recycling Information
(831) 454-2333

Sheriff/Coroner
(831) 471-1121
(call 911 if emergency)

Superior Court
(831) 763-8060

Tax Collections
(831) 454-2510

County health officer to retire

Newel led county through COVID-19 public health crisis

Santa Cruz County Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel has announced her retirement after four years of exceptional service to the residents of Santa Cruz County. Newel's final day will be June 23, 2023.

Appointed County Health Officer in July 2019, Dr. Newel served as a remarkable leader during the largest public health crisis in Santa Cruz County history. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Newel's ability to communicate complex health information in a clear and relatable manner made her a trusted voice in the community, and she was a driving force for one of the most successful local public health responses of any health jurisdiction in California, and among the best in the nation.

"It has been a great privilege to serve my community during these challenging past few years. Many public health heroes supported me in my work, and I am indebted to each of them – thank you! In addition, I recognize the hard work and sacrifice of our community members, all of whom came together to protect the health of their family, friends, and neighbors," Newel said. "Together we saved many lives and protected the health of our most vulnerable. I look forward to retiring here among you. See you at the beach!"

Santa Cruz County has among the highest COVID-19 vaccination rates

(77.3 percent) in California, as well as one of the lowest death rates (100.7 per 100,000 cases, compared to 251.7 statewide). Among her honors, Dr. Newel was awarded the 2021 PEN/Berenson Courage Award (along with former Health Services Director Mimi Hall) for leadership during the pandemic.

Newel's last public event as Santa Cruz County Health Officer will be a virtual presentation of the "State of the County's Health," held on June 15, 2023, from 6 p.m. – 7 p.m. Newel will provide an update of the County's current health status followed by a moderated Q&A. To register, please visit: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_07DIHs3XTcauPRsXwsZWag#/registration.

Equity has been at the center of Dr. Newel's efforts throughout her four years as Santa Cruz County Health Officer, including reducing public health disparities. During her tenure, Newel spearheaded numerous initiatives aimed at promoting community health, preventing the spread of diseases, and improving access to healthcare services. She played a pivotal role in developing comprehensive strategies to combat major public health concerns such as the opioid crisis and infectious diseases, and engaged with experts, researchers, and stakeholders to gather insights and develop effective policies and interventions.