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Moraga hosts this month's Contra Costa Mayors Conference

By Vera Kochan



Housing Finance Authority Director Kate Hartley (standing, far right) holds the attention of Contra Costa Mayors Conference attendees. Photo Vera Kochan

Established in 1951, for the purpose of being an educational forum for the county's elected officials, the Contra Costa Mayors Conference this month was hosted by the town of Moraga on the grounds of the Hacienda de las Flores in Moraga. Held on a monthly basis, the conference location rotates between the 19 municipalities within the county.

With the idea of exchanging ideas and networking, all mayors, council members, Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, and local legislative delegations are welcome to attend. The meetings are run much in the same manner as a regular council meeting. Items discussed included a call for nominations to fill an alternate member position on the Association of Bay Area Governments Board; conference appointee reports, chair announcements, mayors announcements, as well as state and federal legislative updates.

This month's presentation during the July 6 conference meeting was given by Housing Finance Authority Director Kate Hartley on the topic titled "Bay Area Housing Finance Alternatives." According to their website, "Established by the state Legislature in 2019, the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority's mandate is to create regional solutions that meet the Bay Area's affordable housing needs. BAHFA is the first regional housing finance authority in California, and works together with MTC [Metropolitan Transportation Commission] and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)." Currently, all 101 municipalities within the nine Bay Area counties are responsible for addressing their own housing issues. BAHFA encourages a group effort when it comes to solving the housing crisis on a larger scale.

During Hartley's presentation, she noted that "at least 36,810 people in the region experienced homelessness in 2022 and as of 2019, 575,000 were at risk of homelessness." She stated that between 2015-2020, the Bay Area has fallen short of meeting its housing needs by only building 25% of the necessary homes. Regionally, 180,334 more affordable homes should be built to meet the 2023-2031 Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) mandates.

BAHFA is on track to raise \$10-\$20 billion through an upcoming 2024 ballot measure. It is projected that 80% of the funds raised will return to the county of origin. BAHFA's 20% regional funding will streamline and create innovative financing; make opportunities for regional coordination; and offer technical assistance. At this point, there are 22 total affordable housing projects in predevelopment within the county, along with 1,782 affordable homes in predevelopment.

In the Pilot Phase, BAHFA has created a Doorway Housing Portal which offers an online affordable housing platform that makes searching for affordable housing easier region-wide. They also offer an Affordable Housing Pipeline with a database that tracks the production and preservation of affordable homes. Through preservation, financing is available to help community-based organizations buy buildings, convert them to affordable housing and protect residents from displacement, while anti-displacement measures through coordination and best practices will support tenant protections. Homelessness prevention using coordinated support across jurisdictions will share best practices to keep people housed.

Hartley explained potential 2024 ballot measures. "An advocate-led statewide constitutional amendment to enable affordable housing general obligation bonds be approved by a majority of voters instead of the current two-thirds requirement. This would also allow bond proceeds to be used to protect tenants at affordable housing sites through rental assistance reserves, tenant services, and more." And, a "BAHFA General Obligation Bond to raise \$10-\$20 billion - which could provide between 35,000 and 80,000 new homes across the nine-county region." Significant funding to every community within Contra Costa County would take place in the event the measures pass. From the \$10 billion General Obligation Bond, the County would receive \$925 million. From the \$20 billion General Obligation Bond, the County would receive \$1.9 billion.

BAHFA's Regional Housing Measure timeline for fall-winter 2023 will include the business plan adoption (October); public information sessions; and early drafts of the expenditure plan. Between winter and summer of 2024, BAHFA will conduct a final poll; finalize the expenditure plan and summary; have the advisory board recommend the measure in March; governing boards will approve the resolution between

April-May; and in July have counties place the measure on the ballot. Fall 2024 will entail public information sharing.

Additional topics brought up during the public communication portion of the meeting included a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) spokesperson who discussed the upcoming rate increases that are expected to add \$26 million through 2025, that will go toward operating and capital budgets, funding train services, enhanced cleaning, additional police and new trains.

Proponents of a movement to exonerate the Port Chicago 50 encouraged the attendees to participate in the movement. On July 17, 1944, an explosion at the segregated Naval base at Port Chicago killed over 300 men. Of the survivors, 244 refused to go back to work until conditions were made safe. In the end, 50 were charged with mutiny and faced lengthy jail time and possible execution.

There was also a discussion of a toll hike legislation in the form of SB532 which would increase the cost to motorists traveling across any of the seven state-owned Bay Area bridges by \$1.50. The rate hike would continue through January 2029.

Following the meeting, attendees vacated the Hacienda's La Casita meeting room and walked over to the main building for a lavish buffet provided by Wedgewood Weddings where seating was arranged around the patio fountain.

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