

Weekly ReCAP for September 6, 2019

Next CPC meeting **3:30 to 5:00 pm, (Please note corrected time)** September 9, 2019, at the Volunteer Center, San Andreas. **This first part of the meeting is open to both members and people interested in becoming members. Final portion of this meeting will be a closed session, members only.** Directions below:

The address for the Volunteer Center is 255 Lewis Avenue, San Andreas, CA (P.O.Box 196, San Andreas, CA 95249)

We share the same address as the San Andreas Elementary School, but we are located on the lower terrace, just down from the school office.

In San Andreas at the blinking light in town, take Main Street (old Hwy 49) past the Metropolitan, across the little bridge and turn right on Lewis Avenue. After about one block, Lewis Ave turns into a one-way street and our driveway is at the bottom of the *steep* hill, at the end of the chain link fence.

BOS – September 10, 2019 –agenda unavailable

PC - September 12, 2019

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Project 2019-056 CANNABIS CULTIVATION ORDINANCE:
Calaveras County is proposing to adopt an ordinance regulating the commercial cultivation of cannabis. The proposed ordinance proposes to permit and regulate cultivation on parcels zoned A1, AP, GF, RA, U and in industrial zones. An addendum to the Environmental Impact Report certified in 2017, SCH# 2016042019, had been prepared. (Peter Maurer, Planning Director) This item was continued from 8-22-19.
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**Foothill Conservancy's Mokelumne River
Cleanup and BBQ scheduled for
Saturday, September 21, 2019.**

Foothill Conservancy invites everyone to join in the 2019 Mokelumne River Cleanup on Saturday, September 21, from 8:30 am until noon, then stay to enjoy a hot dog lunch (vegetarian options available). The event will focus on the Mokelumne Electra Run south of Jackson, the most popular section of the river. The annual, family-friendly event gives people an opportunity to protect the Mokelumne's water quality and clean up recreational sites while enjoying a beautiful morning along California's 15th state wild and scenic river.

"The Mokelumne River Cleanup volunteers remove trash and recyclables from the river. Every year they share the satisfaction of making our river enjoyable and safe for all, from the wildlife that live there to the people who enjoy the river for fishing, swimming, picnicking and paddling." said Carolyn Schooley, cleanup coordinator. "We welcome participation by groups as well as individuals."

The Mokelumne River Cleanup is part of the annual Great Sierra River Cleanup, which is sponsored by the state Sierra Nevada Conservancy and held the same day as the California Coastal Cleanup. The Foothill Conservancy has been conducting annual river cleanups since 1991.

All participants must register in advance by going online to www.foothillconservancy.org (see event calendar) or by calling Carolyn at 209-223-3508. Volunteers under 18 are welcome, but must have adult supervision, and their liability releases must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Liability releases can be found on the Foothill Conservancy website.

Volunteers should wear sturdy boots and long pants, and bring work gloves, a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and a filled water bottle. Coffee, water and hot dog BBQ will be provided. No pets or alcoholic beverages, please.

The East Bay Municipal Utility District will hold cleanups the same day, at the Middle Bar area of the Mokelumne and around Camanche Reservoir. Information on the EBMUD event is online at www.ebmud.com/recreation/volunteer. Information about other Great Sierra River Cleanup locations is on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy website, www.sierranevada.ca.gov.

Foothill Conservancy of Jackson is the leading conservation organization involved in protecting and restoring the upper Mokelumne River, and led the successful effort to secure California Wild and Scenic River designation for 37 miles of the river in 2018. The Conservancy continues to pursue its river conservation, smart water planning and watershed restoration efforts in our area.

For more information, contact Carolyn at 209-223-3508 or Carolyn@foothillconservancy.org.

SAVE THE DATE! Annual CAP Fundraiser October 19, 2019

Mark your calendars now and plan on joining us for our annual CAP/CPC Fundraiser. This year it is being held at the Metropolitan in San Andreas on Saturday October 19, 2019 at 6pm. Tickets will be \$30.

Silent Auction and Raffle items are needed for the fundraiser. Muriel has graciously volunteered to collect donated items. Please bring items to CPC meeting or contact Muriel to arrange delivery to her home. Thank you for your help!

RCRC – The Barbed Wire – August 30, 2019

[Hemp Insurance Update](#)

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that certain industrial hemp growers are now eligible for crop insurance under the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) program for crop year 2020. “The WFRP policy will provide a safety net for them. We expect to be able to offer additional hemp coverage options as USDA continues implementing the 2018 Farm Bill,” said Martin Barbre, Administrator of the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA).

The policy change immediately applies to growers covered by USDA approved hemp plans, or those who participated in a state or university pilot program authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill. Growers who did not participate in these programs and did not produce hemp until it was authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill must wait for further regulations from USDA.

The 2018 Farm Bill amended the Controlled Substance Act to change how industrial hemp is regulated by the federal government. The legislation paved the way for farmers to cultivate industrial hemp and the USDA’s announcement on Tuesday provides financial certainty for hemp-growers.

[Senator Warren Outlines Rural Broadband Plan](#)

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts) published an [op-ed](#) with the Washington Post to share details of her plan to deliver broadband to rural America. Senator Warren would establish a new Office of Broadband Access that would oversee an \$85 billion federal grant program.

Cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, tribes, counties, and other local governments would be eligible to apply while service providers would be ineligible for grant funding. The 2020 candidate urged her readers to support a “public option for broadband” to increase competition in a market that is dominated by a small number of service providers nationwide.

2020 candidates continue to bring rural broadband policy into the national spotlight for the benefit of rural communities. A dramatic increase in public investment is required to close the digital divide, and Senator Warren proposes a legitimate plan to bring internet access to rural areas. Campaign promises from 2020 candidates offer rural counties optimism that a new administration will prioritize the digital divide and invest in rural broadband.

[Bill of the Week: Assembly Bill 178 \(Dahle\) – Energy: Building Standards](#)

RCRC has lent its support to Assembly Bill 178, authored by Senator Brian Dahle (R-Bieber). AB 178 exempts post-fire residential rebuilding from recently-adopted California Energy Commission (CEC) solar energy installation mandates.

The CEC will require all new residential buildings built after January 1, 2020 to be equipped with solar photovoltaic systems. Since post-fire rebuilding is considered “new construction,” they must adhere to the building standards at the time of rebuilding.

Many of these fires occurred in some of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of California, where economic resources to mitigate the impacts of such disasters and aid residents with recovery are extremely limited. This new CEC mandate will add significant cost to the price of rebuilding for those who have already lost everything and may not have the resources necessary to rebuild. AB 178 would alleviate some of the pressure on these homeowners who are trying to rebuild.

RCRC’s support letter can be accessed [here](#). AB 178 is currently awaiting the Governor’s consideration. For more information, John Kennedy, Legislative Advocate, can be reached at (916) 447-4806 or jkennedy@rcrcnet.org.

‘We need help now!’ Hundreds urge regulator, lawmakers to act on fire insurance struggles

By Alex MacLean / The Union Democrat / August 30, 2019

Tensions were palpable Thursday night in the muggy, cramped Sonora Opera Hall as hundreds of Tuolumne County residents worried about losing their homes over fire insurance gathered to hear what California's elected Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara was doing to help them.

Many who were interviewed at the event said they were dissatisfied by the lack of immediate solutions they heard from Lara, a Democrat, and their Republican representatives in the state Legislature, Assemblyman Frank Bigelow and State Sen. Andreas Borgeas.

"We're all really tired of them saying, 'We understand,'" said Catherine Driver, of Sonora. "You've been working on this for how many years? People are losing their homes."

Many of the approximately 500 to 600 people who were in attendance and spilling out the hall's front doors have received non-renewals from their homeowners insurance companies due to fire risk, some even after they've invested in measures to protect themselves and their property.

Others who have been fortunate enough to keep their coverage have seen their annual premiums increase at a rate they fear will soon become unaffordable.

It's a crisis that's been brewing in Tuolumne County since the 2013 Rim Fire that burned through more than 400 square miles of the Central Sierra Nevada, but it seems to have only gotten worse in the wake of destructive fires elsewhere in the state over the past two years.

Driver said she saw many people on Thursday leaving the hall before the event ended at about 8 p.m., and heard more than a few muttering things like "this is a bunch of bulls---" as they walked out.

The event got off to a rocky start with the organizers being unable to turn on the overhead fans in the hall, which helped set the heated atmosphere for the rest of the evening.

Many people were standing along the side of the hall and huddled near the front doors. Some found spots to sit on the floors and about a dozen others were watching from the hall's balcony before being ushered down by law enforcement.

Sonora Mayor Jim Garaventa was told to hurry up by hecklers during his opening speech, in which he noted how many residents and communities have taken measures to protect themselves from fire only to find themselves being dropped by their insurance companies.

"We've done our part, and we're asking the insurance companies to do their part," he said in conclusion.

County Supervisor Sherri Brennan then quickly introduced Lara, who took the stage just before 6:10 p.m. and launched into a presentation that he's given at town halls in Nevada and Placer counties over the past week.

Photos of Lara's previous two town halls related to fire insurance depicted similar large crowds.

Lara started by rattling off statistics that described the scope of the problem, such as how complaints about non-renewals to the state Department of Insurance have increased 600 percent since 2010.

Companies filed 100 rate increases with the department in the wake of fires in 2017 and 2018 that killed nearly 150 people and caused \$25 billion in property losses, Lara said, adding that 10 of the 20 most destructive fires in the state's recorded history have occurred in the past three years.

"At the end of the day, fire doesn't discriminate if you're a Republican or Democrat," he said. "This is a statewide issue that we have to fix collaboratively."

Lara also said the issue isn't confined to Northern California and pointed to recent fires in places like San Bernardino, Ventura, and Santa Barbara, which drew cheers from the crowd.

One of the problems, according to Lara, is the state has weak laws that prevent him from forcing companies to write policies in fire-prone areas.

Some of the legislative solutions that Lara said he supports include increasing the required 45-day notice of nonrenewal by an additional 180 days and making changes to the California FAIR (Fair Access to Insurance Requirements) Plan, which he described as "not fair."

Other legislation was aimed at increasing transparency in insurance rates and reasons for non-renewals.

Borgeas and Bigelow took the stage after Lara to say they are working with him and other state lawmakers on the issue.

"It's a tough nut to crack," Bigelow said, adding that his fire insurance was cancelled.

Tempers flared early in the question-and-answer session moderated by Lara's deputy insurance commissioner, Tony Cignarale.

Many of the questions were submitted in writing ahead of time or on blue cards handed out at the event.

Christopher Weaver, of Twain Harte, got fed up when Cignarale answered one question by referring to a flier produced by the department with the "top 10 tips" for finding insurance.

"Look man, people are going to lose their homes," he said. "How are you going to force an insurance company based on profit making to help us and do the right thing?"

Weaver said he bought his first house three years ago and is now at risk of losing it because he can't get insurance.

"We don't have time," he pleaded. "We need help now!"

Later, a group of people on one side of the room began shouting questions at Cignarale that caused Lara to intervene and asked whether the crowd wanted to shift to verbal questions opposed to written.

Some of the people in the group were shouting things like “What are you going to do?”, “We want legislation,” and “Public option,” the latter of which was an idea recently endorsed by the California Democratic Party.

Lara confirmed that he is looking at the “public option,” which would be a nonprofit insurance fund operated by the state.

One woman pointed to Borgeas and Bigelow standing with a group of other officials and local dignitaries and asked what they are doing to support legislation that would help the situation.

Borgeas said he supports Assembly Bill 1816, authored by Assemblyman Tim Daly, D-Anaheim, that would provide tax credits for insurers to write policies in fire-prone mountain areas.

Bigelow said he’s working with other lawmakers on tying together a number of different bills that would address various aspects of the situation into single “impactful, meaningful piece of legislation,” which prompted several people shout, “When?”

“Based off that question, it tells me you don’t know how the system works,” Bigelow said in response, to which someone in the crowd retorted “don’t talk down to us.”

Bigelow explained how bills are introduced in January and go through the amendment process during the legislative session, which ends in two weeks. He said if the bills don’t get passed in that time, they will be acted upon when the next session begins in January.

One woman suggested legislation that would prevent politicians from accepting campaign donations from insurance companies. A recent investigation by the San Diego Union-Tribune found that Lara received donations tied to an insurance company executive.

Bigelow acknowledged he has received campaign donations, but that they “didn’t come with a string attached,” which drew scoffs and laughter from some in attendance.

Kathie Turgeon, of Sonora, said her 81-year-old father doesn’t have until January for legislation to be passed after receiving a non-renewal notice from Travelers Insurance on Aug. 18.

Turgeon fears her father will lose his home in Columbia because he has a reverse mortgage. The company told her they didn’t have additional insurance available for him and would soon begin default proceedings.

“I think they tiptoed around a lot of the questions,” she said of the politicians at the event. “I appreciate them being here, but they need to do something ASAP.”

Several county supervisors took the stage for brief speeches at the end of the event.

County Supervisor Anaiah Kirk drew a mix of cheers and boos when he talked about the state's plan to expand health care to undocumented immigrants and encouraged people to vote for "people who put your needs first and not the needs of people who don't pay any taxes."

Some who attended said they believed the event was poorly organized.

Rose Jaspar, of Sonora, said she didn't understand why the event wasn't held in one of the larger, air conditioned buildings at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds less than a mile away.

"Did they not expect this many people to show up?" she asked.

Tuolumne County Putting Sales Tax And TOT Increases On Ballot

By [B.J. Hansen](#) Last updated Sep 3, 2019 12:42 pm

Sonora, CA — The Tuolumne County Supervisors voted today to move toward placing a measure on the March of 2020 primary ballot that would increase the sales tax from the current 7.25-percent to 8.25-percent and the Transient Occupancy Tax from the current 10-percent to 14-percent.

It would only impact the un-incorporated areas of Tuolumne County (outside the city limits of Sonora). It has been widely reported that Tuolumne County is taking steps to close a structural budget deficit. The sales tax would be on goods purchased and the TOT increase would impact hotel and RV visitors.

The county hired an outside firm to conduct a poll between August 12-19, using a web survey, landlines and cell phones. 403 likely voters were interviewed.

The results note that 74-percent of respondents see a need for additional county funding, 48-percent do not believe the county's finances are "generally well-managed," 60-percent offer initial support for a Transient Occupancy Tax Increase and 65-percent support a sales tax increase.

The proposal to move toward placing both items on the March of 2020 ballot was moved by Supervisor John Gray and seconded by Supervisor Sherri Brennan. The vote was 4-1, with Supervisor Anaiah Kirk the lone opposition.

Board Chair Karl Rodefer stated, “This is not something that any of us really want to have to do, but we have to.” He stated that expenses are outpacing revenues, and the state is often increasing mandated services that the county is required to fund.

During the comment period, Supervisor Kirk expressed concerns about the state having a \$21-billion surplus while counties like Tuolumne are struggling. He argued that the county should have a meeting with the Governor’s Office, similar to a recent sit down with Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara about fire insurance, to explain the burdens the state is placing on counties.

Angels Camp City Council pulls library funding

[by Dakota Morlan](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise / Sep 4, 2019

The City of Angels Camp will no longer be contributing financially to its county-run branch library due to a recent shift in budgetary objectives.

In a news release, the Angels Camp Friends of the Library expressed their “deep disappointment with the council for its failure to support the branch library.”

The non-profit organization, formed over 15 years ago to aid the library in its financial needs, claimed they were not given the opportunity to argue in the library’s favor before funding was withdrawn.

However, a response to the news release issued by City Administrator Melissa Eads stated that “no one from the library system was present” during the city’s “well publicized” 2019/2020 budget hearings.

“It’s unfortunate that we receive this news from the Friends of the Library via a press releases [sic],” Mayor Amanda Folendorf stated in the response. “The City would have been open to a meeting to discuss possible options. We are in a financial transitional period here at The City. The City Council working with Administration focused this year’s efforts to increase support to sustain essential services such as public safety and roads. It’s been challenging to find ways to sustain our city museum and parks as we have had to cut back in museum hours and staffing too.”

According to Eads, the city contributed \$500 to \$1,000 monthly to the library beginning in 2003, per the request of county administration.

Those funds provided at least one-half rental subsidy for the library, according to Friends of the Library.

“This community – taxpayers and visitors alike – deserve a public library that has the support of local elected officials,” stated the organization’s release.

Operated and managed by the Calaveras County Library System, the Angels Camp Branch Library provides free broadband, digital services and activities for children. The release stated that the library hopes to incorporate free video streaming and adult literacy classes in the near future, and possibly relocate to a facility that can better accommodate growth.

According to the release, patron visits have increased by 14% over the last three years, and attendance for weekly storytime for new mothers and preschoolers has increased by 24% over the last two years.

“Today, public libraries are the one place without a price tag where anyone can go to use a computer, pick up a book, attend a community meeting, access early childhood materials for the homeschooler, attend Story Time with crafts and play, and much, much more,” the release stated.

“We do support the AC Branch Library and believe it to be an asset for our residents and tourists. We recognize the effort and work of the volunteers supporting the AC Branch Library,” Eads stated in response. “But the management and funding of the library is with Calaveras County and how they manage the AC Branch is in their jurisdiction. The City finances are strained, and we are in some tough spots right now trying to hire police officers, firefighters and fix potholes. Our overall infrastructure has been neglected so our efforts are focused in these areas for the next few budget years. These decisions are never easy but hopefully we are on the right track to rebuilding our city’s financial infrastructure so that we can grow our City, and services like the museum, parks and branch library will succeed.”

San Andreas Fire Protection District to discuss proposed tax

By [Davis Harper davis@calaverasenterprise.com](mailto:davis@calaverasenterprise.com) / September 5, 2019

After narrowly balancing its preliminary budget for the fiscal year in June, the San Andreas Fire Protection District will be holding a meeting to discuss a special tax proposal to area residents to fund its operations. The meeting will be held on Sept. 10 from 10 a.m.-noon at the Calaveras Senior Center, 956 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas.

The district had to dip into its reserves to balance its approximately \$317,000 budget for 2019/2020, and a special tax could help mitigate the effects of a future deficit, according to Board Vice President Dana Nichols.

With the meeting, the district aims to inform the public on its financial situation and receive feedback from property owners and voters to see if they would be willing to fund such a measure.

“We’ve been living beyond our means,” Nichols said in an Aug. 27 phone interview. “We’ve bitten the bullet and we have been staffing our station even though our money is really tight.”

SAFPD during fire season typically relies on earnings from sending firefighters and engines to state-managed fires, but they haven’t gone out once this year, Nichols said.

“We already spend more on repairs than we budget each year, but have been able to do it because we earn extra money after we adopt the budget,” Nichols said. “But if a year ever comes when we don’t earn extra money, how can we pay for repairs?”

While it’s good news that there aren’t as many fires burning up and down the state, “It means we do not have that earning,” Nichols said. “That means we drain our reserves, and when (we) run out of money, the (district) isn’t able to pay a stipend for the firefighters to pay a 24-hour shift. That’s what we’re trying to avoid.”

Many of the district’s young volunteer firefighters bank on the chance to join a strike team for the experience and the bump in pay to \$30 an hour, Nichols said. That wouldn’t be possible without a sustainable funding source for regular maintenance on the district’s type 3 engine.

Additionally, only being able to stipend two firefighters at the station at once results in significant delays in response times to emergencies, especially since many of the district’s volunteer firefighters commute to San Andreas from Valley Springs or even as far as Stockton, Nichols said.

In Mokelumne Hill, response times are much longer because firefighters are on call from their homes, rather than being staffed at the Mokelumne Hill Fire Protection District Station.

In an Aug. 28 phone interview, Mike Dell’Orto, the fire chief for the volunteer-run district, said its average response time ranges from six to seven minutes.

“Everybody would like to have people available here constantly, but the difference between responding in one minute or seven minutes is pretty expensive, at least for the number of calls we have (about 260 calls per year),” Dell’Orto said. By contrast, “San Andreas is on the go all the time; they have a lot more calls.”

San Andreas is proposing an \$84.68 tax for unimproved parcels and \$169.36 tax for improved parcels. This would draw in an extra \$331,190 every year to be spent on hiring a third firefighter to be at the fire station and an assistant chief (salaried at \$57,500 including benefits), in addition to repairs on equipment and the dated firehouse.

The assistant chief would split on-call shifts with Fire Chief Don Young, who is currently the district’s only full-time employee.

The proposal would also increase firefighter stipends from \$75 for 24-hour shifts to \$125, engineer stipends from \$100 to \$150 and captain stipends from \$125 to \$175.

Employing a third firefighter would not only improve response times and help lighten the load for current staff, it would help meet a state mandate to have three firefighters on the scene of a fire, according to Nichols. That's a requirement for sending engines and staff to a strike team to fight state-managed fires as well, he said.

“That would yield enough to stabilize this district, and for the foreseeable future we could continue responding promptly to all emergencies,” Nichols said, adding that the district would still rely on grants and windfalls for equipment purchases. “If we earn money from a strike team, let's put it in a fund to buy a fire engine, but we can't depend on it ... we want to prevent what happened in Paradise.”

There are currently 2,174 registered voters in the district, Assistant Clerk-Recorder Robin Glanville confirmed with the Enterprise on Aug. 28.

In order for a special tax to be adopted, the measure would have to receive support from two-thirds of the district plus one vote.

Residents could save for the tax by “not going out to dinner five times or taking one less camping trip throughout the year” – a small price to pay for a full year of rapid response fire protection, Nichols said.

He added that if response times increase, insurance rates may increase with them, or providers could potentially start issuing non-renewals in the area.

With or without a higher quality of fire protection, area residents could end up paying more out of their pockets.

Community meeting to be held on housing homelessness

By [Noah Berner noah@calaverasenterprise.com](mailto:noah@calaverasenterprise.com) / September 5, 2019

On Sept. 9, the Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), in collaboration with multiple partners, is holding a community meeting to discuss current efforts to help county residents that lack stable housing. The meeting will be held 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m. at San Andreas Elementary School.

The Calaveras County Homeless Task Force has been working to identify local needs and determine strategies to help community members who lack stable housing move toward self-

sufficiency. The task force was created in May of 2018 from multiple agencies and community members to address the issue of stable housing.

According to the 2019 Point in Time count, which measures the number of people experiencing homelessness during a one-week period in January, there are currently about 186 individuals in Calaveras County experiencing homelessness. This equals about 0.4% of the county's population and is slightly above the state average.

Last year, Calaveras County successfully competed in the first of four rounds of state funding for the No Place Like Home (NPLH) Program, which was enacted in 2016 and provides \$2 billion in bonds across the state to aid in the development of permanent supportive housing for people with severe mental illness who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The NPLH bonds will be repaid over a period of several decades, with interest, with revenue from Proposition 63.

Proposition 63, also known as the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), was passed in 2004, and imposed an additional 1% income tax on personal incomes in excess of \$1 million in order to fund mental health programs across the state.

In 2018, California voters passed Proposition 2, which enabled MHSA funds to be used for homelessness prevention housing for those in need of mental health services.

The county's NPLH funding is being used to construct five housing units in San Andreas for Calaveras County residents that lack stable housing and are engaged in their recovery plans. A minimum of two of the units will be dedicated to families with children.

The developer and property manager of the new units will be the Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority (SRHA), a nonprofit, public corporation designated by the state to address the housing needs of communities in Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties. The SRHA also administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8).

The HHS Behavioral Health Division will provide around-the-clock supportive services for residents of the county's NPLH units. Among these services will be mental health crisis intervention, therapy (individual and group), medication treatment, substance use disorder treatment, supportive employment and ongoing tenant education.

Other county efforts to address homelessness include the scattered site emergency shelter pilot project, which aims to build several mobile tiny-house shelters in West Point and San Andreas, and provide intensive case management for residents temporarily placed in the units; and the Vision House in Murphys, which offers transitional living opportunities for individuals with severe mental illness that are engaged in their recovery plans and are on the path to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

The county is currently preparing for the next round of NPLH funding, which it plans to use for a 16-unit development in Valley Springs that will also serve veterans.

At the Sept. 9 meeting, the HHSA and various partners will answer questions about the NPLH Program and discuss other efforts to help those in the community who lack stable housing.

What is Labor Day and why do we celebrate it with a national holiday?

By BILLIE LYONS

For The Union Democrat / September 4, 2019

It's funny that after all these years of adulthood, Labor Day still leaves me with a sense of melancholy.

You see, I am from that era when school officially started the day after. Black Tuesday if you will. Gone would be the long hot days spent catching crawdads at the river. No more balmy nights eating popsicles and pixie sticks hoping to see a shooting star or even just watching the bats flit overhead doing what bats do best. Sleep overs spent watching Chiller Theater all night would be a rare event now.

And playing till the streetlights came on would be replaced with homework and bedtimes. Yes, for me Labor Day was the universe itse/ September 4, 2019lf pulling the plug on summer and all the happiness and freedom that came with it.

That weekend was always a rush of activity. Last minute school clothes needed to be found. The hunt for the perfect new lunch pail was a must because the dented and beat up Partridge Family one from last year was now holding trinkets and treasures under the bed. Moms would all show up at one point holding the scissors and if you were lucky your bangs wouldn't be too short or crooked by picture day. Most times you were not, and these images would haunt you for the rest of your life.

But I cannot say I ever really paid attention to what Labor Day was all about. And I wonder how many of our youth today really know? So here we go. A brief summary of the holiday itself and why it even IS a holiday.

The Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s put working America into a frenzy of hard and harsh labor. Long hours of backbreaking work for little pay, child labor, extremely poor safety and work conditions, and virtually no safety net or help if you were injured or God forbid, killed.

You were quickly replaced with yet another poor soul trying to put food on their table and coal in their stoves. Manufacturing had replaced the farms as the main source of income for many, and with that shady practices and lack of regulations was rampant. Things needed to change. Enter the first labor unions.

Labor unions fought to bring safety and adequate pay to the working class. They were loud and voiced they're complaints publicly. They held rallies and strikes to hit the big business owners where it hurt most. Their pockets. As these protests grew more frequent and public, they also turned more violent and vigilantes would leave a bloody legacy.

On September 5, 1882 the idea of a different world in the workplace would be tossed out into the public in a big way. On that day 10,000 workers would take an unpaid day off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, and the Labor Day Parade was born.

Slowly but surely the notion of giving employees a "workingmen's holiday" took hold, and it would take place on the first Monday of September. Still not legalized at this point, but a huge step in the right direction.

It would be twelve years later in 1894 after employees of the Pullman Palace Car Co. in Chicago would strike and bring the bustling railroad industry nationwide to its knees in protest of wage cuts and the firing of their union representatives. The federal government didn't take that lying down and troops were sent in to bring it all to an end. When it was over, more than a dozen workers lay dead.

Something needed to be done and done quickly to quiet the aftershocks that rippled across the nation, and on June 28, 1894 President Grover Cleveland signed Labor Day into law declaring it a legal holiday, and in the 1968 "Uniform Monday Holiday Act" Labor Day was given its permanent position of first Monday in September place of honor. Through time Labor Day has become a weekend of three-day clearance sales, last minute road trips, and free HBO binges. But it is truly so much more. It stands for a long and bloody fight for the rights of the people who worked so hard and for so little but did so much to turn America into the industrial giant it is today.

Billie Lyons is curator for the Tuolumne County Historical Society.
