

## Change the Climate on Climate Change

By Rue Furch

No, the sky isn't falling. But it is heating up, and with every fraction of degree of temperature rise our planet is undergoing profound changes that will have serious consequences for all life on earth. Only the bought- and- paid-for scientists of the oil and coal lobbies find cause for debate. The rest of us look in apprehension, sorrow and fear as polar ice caps melt, glaciers recede and the Third World – always the first to suffer – faces the specter of food shortages.

History is instructive. We know that entire civilizations have been destroyed by people's inability to adapt to environmental crises. Now we are facing something that seems overwhelming. We in the Fifth District have only a small voice in global affairs, but we can take steps to protect our own portion of the biosphere, and we can be models for positive change. But first, we must face up to the problem on an emergency basis, and local government must use all of its resources to act on our behalf.

We are fortunate that the Fifth District has birthed such organizations as the Climate Change Coalition and Solar Sebastopol, which are leading the way in both education and demonstration projects. But county government needs to do more. As your supervisor, I will work to set enforceable goals to reduce emissions and develop programs that will assist individuals, businesses and public agencies to meet these targets.

### Here are my priorities:

- Establish programs for all government buildings, vehicles and public facilities that will lead to at least 60 percent greenhouse reductions by 2030 and 90 percent reductions by 2060. I am purposely setting higher goals to help make up for what I believe will be lesser reductions in the private sector where there is less control.
- Impose immediately a moratorium on converting forestland to other uses. Sonoma County's forest and woodlands are invaluable to sequester carbon and retain water. The county, through its Water Agency, needs to become involved in reforestation and expand watershed preservation efforts.
- Revise building codes and ordinances to ensure that green building, energy efficiency and renewable energy are the norm for new construction and are viable retrofit alternatives. At the same time, we need to lower permit costs for owners planning to install renewable energy.



- Amend the county general plan to encourage village-centered growth and protect and conserve water sources. As a Planning Commissioner, I fought to get climate change at least mentioned in the General Plan. But our General Plan needs to be a sustainable General Plan, not just a guideline for new development. New development must not add to our carbon footprint.
- Support SMART rail and work to create a supporting transportation web of transit, bicycles and alternative vehicles.

Prepare for the effects of climate change. Even if we do all we can do, it's inevitable that there will be some deleterious effects from climate change. We must be prepared for water shortages, increased wildfires and the introduction of insect-borne disease caused by warmer weather. We can begin by bolstering our emergency preparedness plans, creating new community education programs and providing opportunities for volunteer service.

Putting the county on an emergency footing to address global warming does not mean we have to live in a gloom and doom atmosphere. America never had higher morale than in the dark days of World War II, when everyone on the home front supported the war effort. The challenge of climate change will also bring opportunities, and county government must not let them pass. Sonoma County has the human resources, the educational facilities, and the high tech experience to make Sonoma County a new center for green technology. If done wisely, and with the involvement of its residents, Roseland could be the place where this happens.

If we do things right – if we develop ingrained habits of sustainability, face this problem head-on as a community, base our decisions on good science and inclusive values, and invest in green technology, we can come out of this strengthened and prosperous. The Fifth District has the environmental values we need in this new world, and I will work for you to turn those values into a vibrant, sustainable future.

## Time for Open and Honest Debate on the Issues



A letter in last month's Gazette expressed concern with my call for a "freeze" on County salaries and benefits. An honorable, hard working member of our community doing great work at the County, one of our public servants, said that he was "amazed that the County's money problems are based on the salaries and benefits of County employees. As a County employee I haven't seen any 10% raises in salaries and benefits." County workers are not the problem. I do not want to reduce but, I do want to reform.

I stated, in the column in question, that while the median household income in Sonoma County has declined by 2% since 2000, there has been an increase of 70% in salaries and benefits for County employees (this from the County Administration themselves). Presently, the average base salary/benefit of County staff is \$112,000 per year for all 4,037 full time employees with perhaps 700 earning over \$150,000 per year. I met with a department head for four hours yesterday (Mar 5) and she confirmed that and showed how this data is determined. I will post additional information on our website. Of course, I do not fault our public servants for their good work but, going into a recession we need fiscal responsibility.

I want to represent ALL who live in the Fifth District. I have been working with our County employees for 28 years and I feel we are blessed with a very capable, courteous, educated and hard working group that bust their butts working for a rough bunch while making all of our lives better in the process. But, I also believe, in the light of present economic realities with increasing costs and declining revenues, we need to reassess and reallocate our resources. The chickens are coming home to roost and we must not be afraid to debate the issues in an honest and forthright manner.

We are poised to start cannibalizing our less senior workers at the County. There aren't enough increasing property taxes, or cuts in mental health services, or reductions in monies to non-profits to continue increasing the salaries for managers and union alike. The next step to fund continuing increases in salaries and benefits for more senior hires is to

lay off younger workers; those whom we will soon need to replace retiring workers. It's kind of like eating your seed corn. Sure the old paradigm holds true; "last one hired, first one fired" but, not while everyone else is getting a raise. To me, laid off workers are a cut in a program or service. I will not support continuing increases in salaries and benefits through the loss of less senior employees.

Sun Tzu wrote 2500 years ago in his treatise The Art Of War, "The acme of all skill is to avoid the battle and win an ally". I want to be a conciliator. I want to find that third way between those opposed and those in favor. For almost thirty years I have been part of leading the way in West County toward a sustainable environment with a viable economy and effective government services. I am not a Lite beer commercial catering to the "lowest common denominator" consumer lest I offend someone. I will tell you what I think and embrace others seeking realistic solutions. Political leaders need to present themselves clearly to the voters. Why do we elect our political leaders if not to solve problems? To solve problems we need to begin an open and honest dialogue without fear or recriminations.

Please join us! Don't let special interests from outside the district or those with "deep pockets" buy this election. Get involved! Study the positions on the issues being presented by the candidates and ask them for specifics. Don't accept bland generalities. Check out our website at: <<http://www.tomlynch4supervisor.com/>>www.TomLynch4Supervisor.com. Support progressive social change.

(p.s. to John Hubiak and anyone: I would be honored to meet you and earn your support. Please call me at 827-3415)

**These people are willing to take responsibility for tasks that most of us would shy away from - get to know them - THEY are the people who will be working to manage our county for years to come.**