

City of Placerville

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City Manager Update on current events in Placerville:

I would like to update our great community on current projects and events in Placerville. These are trying times we live in with pandemics, fires and other trials that continue to test us. We are fortunate to live in a beautiful community with great people who love our history, our recreation and the beauty of our surroundings. We have a lot going on in Placerville, following are some highlights.

COVID-19 Pandemic: We are all struggling with the restrictions on our lives and our community during this pandemic. We are fortunate to live in a community where we are still able to get out and enjoy the outdoors without running into big crowds that potentially can increase our susceptibility to the virus. Placerville has beautiful surroundings and activities that can be enjoyed safely. We encourage you to take a walk Downtown or on the El Dorado Trail, take a bike ride on the trail, enjoy a picnic with your family in the park, play disc golf at Lion's park with family members, take the family to other outdoor areas, trails and lakes. There are a lot of activities that can be enjoyed safely in Placerville. Please take advantage of them.

In addition, our county was recently upgraded to level orange status in the State's Covid-19 process. This allows for additional activities to take place and increases the amount of indoor dining that is allowed. Take advantage of this by enjoying dining downtown as well as visiting other retail shops downtown.

Downtown Placerville Spooktacular - Our Downtown Spooktacular is an event like no other. Everyone looks forward to this great event designed for the children of our community. Thank you to our wonderful downtown businesses who sponsor and participate in this event every year. Unfortunately we have had to make the unpopular decision to cancel the event this year due to State guidelines on Covid-19. This decision was not easy. We also considered alternative measures that could allow it to continue, but could not find a way to avoid the large crowd with any semblance of social distancing. We encourage you to look for your own alternatives. We have not prohibited normal Trick or Treating in Neighborhoods. We do however encourage social distancing and wearing of masks if large groups are together.

Mosquito Road and Spring Street Paving: Yes, it is finally happening. Get ready for construction this month on Spring Street and Mosquito Road. After some minor utility work, both streets will be paved. If you drive these roads very often, you will appreciate these improvements.

Downtown Historic District: The City has been exploring the option of establishing a Historic District in the Downtown area of Placerville. The Planning Commission reviewed this some time ago and recommended going forward. Since that time, staff has prepared documents but has not finalized them to bring the issue forward to the City Council. Workloads, deadline tasks, and other major projects have delayed moving forward. It's the City's intent to bring this forward for consideration in 2021. There are benefits to property owners in terms of potential competitive grants. However, there are also restrictions and guidelines that must be followed when modifying or restoring buildings within a Historic

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District. For these reasons, it is important to hold the necessary public hearings and get input from all affected businesses, building owners and residents.

Western Placerville Interchange Eastbound On-Ramp: This project is the next step toward creating a full interchange at Ray Lawyer Drive and Highway 50. The Eastbound On-Ramp will put us one step closer, leaving only the Westbound Off-Ramp to complete the interchange. Most of the funding for this project has come from State and Federal grants. We are already seeing the benefits of this project including access to the County Jail, County Government Center, enhanced trail improvements, transit facilities, and access to local retail. We look forward to completing this next phase.

Clay Street Bridge Project: There has been speculation and even claims that the City is going to remove the Druid Monument for this project. Let me assure you that removing the monument has never been discussed in the 9 years I have been here. Relocating the monument within the intersection or next to the intersection to better accommodate safe traffic flow and protection of the monument has been discussed and is still being reviewed. The monument has been hit more than once by vehicular traffic. Let's preserve it for us and our children. That is our goal. We are currently completing the Environmental Impact Report for the project and evaluating all options as part of the report. This includes options for the existing narrow crumbling bridge. We plan to release the proposed options soon. Stay tuned for that, you may be surprised.

Broadway Sidewalks/Paving: If you have tried to walk up Broadway, you have inevitably noticed the sidewalk breaks and level changes that make it difficult, especially on the North side of Broadway. The City has now secured funding to improve that and pave Broadway from Mosquito Road to Wiltse Road. Between this project and the Upper Broadway Bike Lanes Project, Broadway will be paved and have good bicycle and pedestrian access from Mosquito Road to Point View Drive. This too will be a wonderful project and an asset to our community. The project should go out to bid in the Spring of 2021, with construction starting in the Summer of 2021.

The Historic City Hall buildings on Main Street, known as the Ketchup and Mustard buildings, or Confidence and Jane, are historic treasures in our Downtown. The City has struggled for over 10 years over how to maintain and restore the historic beauty of these buildings. At one time, the City proposed to sell the buildings, but was unsuccessful. Currently, the Emigrant Jane building houses the office for Arts and Culture El Dorado. The Confidence building is currently vacant and not being used due to structural concerns. Both buildings have leaking roofs and other structural and maintenance issues. In November of 2019, the City Council solicited proposals for organizations to restore and use the buildings. Two proposals were received, however one was incomplete and therefore rejected by the Council. The City accepted the proposal from Arts and Culture El Dorado. Under this proposal, the City will retain ownership. Arts and Culture El Dorado will fund remodeling of the City-owned buildings, estimated at over \$4 million. In exchange, Arts and Culture El Dorado will be given a long term lease for the buildings.

Statements have been made that the buildings will be turned into apartments. Here's the whole story. The upstairs of the two buildings is proposed to be remodeled as Artist Live-Work Space. The spaces will

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be leased out to working artists who will pay a reduced rent in exchange for working in the Gallery Space. This rent will go to the City to help provide funding to maintain the buildings. The first floors of the building will provide Arts and Culture El Dorado offices, Gallery Space, and a Community Room for public use. The buildings will be restored to their original historic look as much as possible.

UBBL: The Upper Broadway Bike Lanes project is in full construction. The project will install sidewalks and/or bike-pedestrian combination paths from Schnell School Road to Point View Drive. This has been a long time coming. Most of us have experienced the pedestrians walking on the side of the road in this area on the narrow shoulder. This will be a great project to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists in our community. In April of this year during construction, a Native American Cultural Resource was discovered on the project. The City halted work in the vicinity immediately and notified Caltrans, our environmental consultant, and the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) to determine how to move forward. They provided direction to the City on how to proceed which included an extensive study of the site by qualified experts to determine its significance. The City is currently completing the required study and based on the results of that study will proceed with the work and appropriate protection of the resource. The discovered site is partially in the City's Street Right-of-Way and partially on private property. We are working diligently to protect the site, and to protect the rights of the private property owner where the majority of the cultural resource is located. The City supports the efforts of local aboriginal tribes to protect cultural resources. This is why all work in that area has been halted until we can determine the extent of the resource and how to best preserve the site. It has been stated that the City, through its contractor, removed soil containing important cultural resources from the site. No soil was removed from this site. The work done on the driveway was done before the cultural resource was discovered. Once the resource was discovered, all work on the driveway stopped and no soil was removed from the site. We will continue to monitor and protect this site in accordance with state and federal laws.

Consultation with Local Aboriginal Tribes Concerning City Projects: The Local Wopumnes Tribe has requested that the City recognize them and give them tribal rights to consult on City projects. However, State law defines a specific process to recognize local tribes for that consultation role. Formal tribal recognition is administered by the state through the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), and at this moment, the NAHC does not recognize the Wopumnes Tribe as a California Native American tribe. Therefore, formal recognition of a local tribe is not up to the City. The City is not opposed to allowing recognized tribes the right to tribal consultation on City construction projects. In fact, with each project we reach out to locally recognized tribes for consultation. I have offered to meet with the Wopumnes Tribe to discuss providing a letter to the NAHC recommending tribal recognition. At this point, the Wopumnes Tribe has declined to meet with me and two members of the City Council to find a positive path forward in working together while supporting the state and federal laws we are governed by and that dictate the process.

We are fortunate to live in this great community where we have an abundance of outdoor activities and beauty to enjoy. We also have great leaders and citizens in our community who are passionate about our history, our community and have a strong interest in seeing us succeed on every level.

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One of my main concerns is the recent amount of money the City has had to spend on legal costs. These range from lawsuits to other legal matters that could potentially become lawsuits. Many of these items can be resolved easier if we are open to coming together and discussing the issues and finding ways to move forward to benefit all those involved. We need to find a better way to open up this communication and communication within our community as a whole.

At this critical time, we are faced with unprecedented challenges including the Covid-19 Pandemic, Fires, and Racial tension, but we are a strong community with a long history of cohesiveness. We've been through tough times before, and if we stick together and continue to communicate openly, and value each other we will get through this successfully and come out stronger in the end.

M. Cleve Morris
City Manager