

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

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DECEMBER 16, 2013

For additional information on any of the items in this report, please see Contact List at the end of this report.

MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER: 2013 proved to be another tough year for the City of Benicia. The Great Recession has proved to be like no other economic downturn any of us have experienced. While the economy has definitely improved over the last year, it is not what anyone would call stellar. If anything it feels that for every two steps forward, we take one step back. In my discussions with our employees and citizens, many of you tell me you feel this lack of direction in the economy, and therefore the City, is the new “normal”. I don’t know if that is true, it just may be that the next big economic driver, such as an advance in a specific technology, hasn’t taken hold yet. It may be a few years before it does. What I do know is that we cannot afford to sit and wait to be pulled out of our current economic doldrums.



Over the last year the City Council and staff have held public discussions on how we can position our City financially and structurally to function in the most efficient and effective way.

The objective is to not only ensure our long-term sustainability, but to build the foundation that maintains the quality of life in our wonderful community. To that end, we will be undertaking in 2014 a comprehensive evaluation of City services and community needs. This effort will require input and assistance

from everyone, including City employees, our volunteers, community groups, business owners and anyone who has a stake in the future of Benicia.

It is vitally important that this evaluation and discussion occurs now. The world around us is changing and it is important that we acknowledge these changes and the impacts they are having and will have on Benicia. We need to harness these changes in a way that will enhance our quality of life.

So 2014 will be a very busy year, but before we charge out of the gates into the New Year, it is important to pause and take a moment during the holidays to remember what truly is important - our family, friends, and helping those less fortunate than us and to be thankful for what we have. This December marked my third anniversary with the City of Benicia. It has been a very challenging three years. However, when anyone asks me what I enjoy most about working in Benicia, I always say it’s the people. I am very fortunate to work for a great City Council. I have an excellent staff that is made up of smart,

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hardworking and dedicated individuals. I get to work with numerous volunteers who are passionate about Benicia and want to do all they can to make it the best it can be. Most importantly I work for a citizenry that truly loves their community and appreciates the work City staff does. I have never worked in a community where I receive more thank you notes than complaints from citizens on the services they receive. It has been said that great places attract great people, and Benicia embodies that principle.

So thank you all for your commitment to Benicia and I wish you all very happy holidays.

- *Brad Kilger*



HOLIDAY SEASON FIRE SAFETY: Each year, fires occurring during the holiday season injure 2,600 individuals and cause over \$930 million in damage. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), there are simple life-saving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday. By following some of these outlined precautionary tips, you can greatly reduce the chance of becoming a holiday fire casualty. More information is available on [Holiday Safety Information](#) from USFA.

Preventing Christmas Tree Fires...

- Christmas Tree Fire Hazards - Video segments such as this one [Christmas Tree Fire](#), demonstrate how fast a live, cut Christmas tree can become fully engulfed in flames. Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.
- Selecting a Tree for the Holiday - Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needles should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut for too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard. Please keep the tree in a stand with water.
- Caring for Your Tree - Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.
- Disposing of Your Tree - Please never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. Tree recycling services are available through the [Benicia Boy Scouts](#), **December 28-January 12**.

Holiday Lights...

- Maintain Your Holiday Lights - Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.
- Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets - Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect string of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Please make sure to periodically check the wires- they should not be warm to the touch. Please Do Not Leave Indoor Holiday Lights ON While Unattended.

Fire Safety...

- Avoid Using Lit Candles - If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked over. Never leave the house with candles burning.
- Please Never Place Lit Candles on a Tree - Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame, candles, lighters or matches.
- Use Only Non-flammable Decorations - All decorations should be nonflammable or flame retardant and placed away from heat vents.
- Never Put Wrapping Paper in a Fireplace - It can throw off dangerous sparks and produce a chemical buildup in the home that could cause an explosion.
- Smoke Detectors - As in every season, have working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors installed in your home, test them routinely on a monthly basis and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help. Also, remember to practice your home escape plan.
- Holiday Cooking - Be sure not to leave cooking food unattended while preparing your holiday meal. In the event of a burn to skin, run cool tap water over the affected area to soothe. Then, cover the burn with a sterile dressing or clean cloth. This will greatly reduce the chances of infection. If the burn is severe and blistering occurs, seek medical attention or call 9-1-1 for more assistance. – *Fire Department*

HOLIDAY CLOSURE: Benicia City Offices and the Benicia Community Center will be closed **Wednesday, December 25 through Wednesday, January 1** for the holidays. However, the [Benicia Public Library](#) will be open on a limited schedule:

December 23, Noon-6:00 PM
December 24: Noon-5:00 PM
December 25: Closed
December 26-30: Noon-6:00 PM
December 31: Noon-5:00 PM
January 1: Closed

Requests for emergency water and sewer service may be made at the Benicia Police Department, 200 East L Street or 707.745.3411. – *City Manager's Office*



SPIRIT OF SOLANO AWARDS: The 18th annual Spirit of Solano Awards luncheon was



held on Thursday, December 5. Hosted by Westamerica Bank and Solano Economic Development Corporation, the event recognizes the honorees selected by the eight Chambers of Commerce in Solano County as businesses that best exemplify the Spirit of Solano through community involvement. The Benicia Chamber of Commerce selected Valero Benicia Refinery as this year's recipient for their generous contribution of time and money to many

worthwhile community organizations in Benicia, and throughout the Bay Area. Valero employees contribute approximately 15,000 hour of volunteer time to Bay Area non-profit organizations, supporting more than 60 diverse community projects. Additionally, employees donate hundreds of thousands of dollars to the United Way of the Bay Area, participate in blood drives, organize and staff tutoring programs at Benicia schools, and serve on numerous boards and committees, including the Benicia Chamber of Commerce.

Congratulations to Valero Benicia Refinery and its employees for this recognition of their outstanding contribution to our community. – *City Manager*

ANNUAL HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AND TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY: The City of Benicia celebrated our annual Tree Lighting on Friday, December 6. Despite the chilly weather and rain, the community once again came out to join in this amazing celebration along First Street and the Benicia Waterfront, a perfect setting for this magical night. Kris Kringle and the Mistletones performed rocking holiday songs and were joined on stage by Santa Claus along with Mayor Patterson, City Council Members, the Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Commission, and City Staff to lead the community in the countdown to the tree lighting. Mayor Elizabeth Patterson sang and danced with Santa and children. After the tree was lit, First Street merchants opened their doors, displaying their wares for the holidays.

Thanks are extended to everyone who makes the night so special for so many in the community and a special thanks to our citizens who always come out and support this event regardless of the weather! On behalf of the Parks & Community Services Department, we wish you and your families a safe and fun holiday season. – *Parks & Community Services*



PICTURES WITH SANTA: On Saturday, December 14,



Station 11 hosted the annual Photos with Santa event. Families that attended had the opportunity to have a quality photo taken by Benicia High students involved with the Yearbook Committee. In all, 371 kids had their picture taken with Santa. Way to go Santa! In addition, there were various crafts and other activities for the children.

This event highlighted the Fire Department's effort to

collect toys for the annual [Toys for Tots](#) toy drive. Donation barrels were filled at the event but the Department has **collected only about half** of what they collected last year. There is still time to donate. Please drop off a new unwrapped toy at Fire Station #11, 150 Military East.



The overall success of this event relies on the cooperative efforts of staff from various departments in the City. Staff from Parks & Community Services were on hand, providing refreshments to all. Thanks go Kim Imboden (Human Resources), Ann Dunleavy and staff (Parks and Community Services), the Benicia High School Yearbook Committee, and everyone from the Benicia Fire Department who participated in the event.

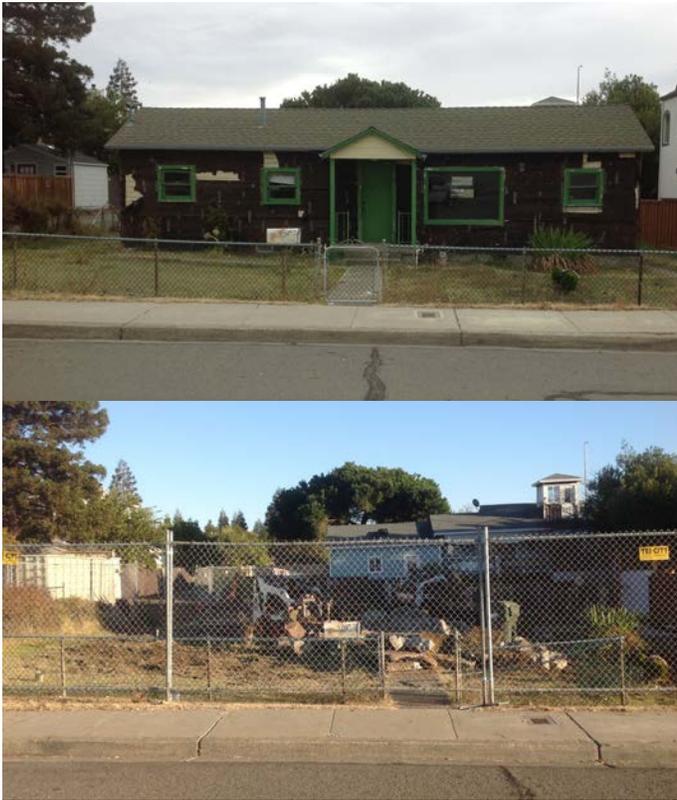


Special thanks also go to local businesses Paper Tiger Printing and Pacifica Pizza for their contributions. Lastly, special recognition goes to Engineer Tony Horner,

who did a fantastic job on orchestrating the entire event. – *Fire Department*

POLICE DEPARTMENT MONTHLY REPORT AVAILABLE: The Benicia Police Department monthly report for November is available. It contains a monthly wrap-up of Community Services, Professional Development, Statistics, and Interesting Case Summaries. [Click here](#) to read more. – *Police Department*





BENICIA FIREFIGHTERS RECEIVE GIFT FOR TRAINING: Safe, effective, and realistic firefighter training is essential in preparing firefighters to achieve their mission of preserving life and property. A well-known fire department saying is, “train as you fight and fight as you train.”

The Benicia Fire Department was presented with an invaluable gift this holiday season. Benicia residents Reg and

Maria Saulsbury allowed Benicia Firefighters the opportunity to use the structures on their property for critical hands-on firefighter training before the structures were demolished making way for new construction. This unique opportunity had special meaning for firefighters since the week long training began on December 4. On December 5, firefighters responded to a structure fire on Larkin Drive. All of the suppression skills practiced were seamlessly used to rescue trapped victims and control the early morning incident.

Again, the Benicia Fire Department would like to thank Reg and Maria Saulsbury for their generous donation. Their donation will help the Fire Department better serve the Benicia Community. – *Fire Department*

HOLIDAY CHEER: The Parks & Community Services Department has been very busy helping our good friend Santa Claus. The Parks & Community Services team decorated the City Council Chambers and the Benicia Community Center.

They have also been busy collecting letters for Santa Claus. Santa responds with a personalized note and a copy of the *North Pole News*. – *Parks & Community Services*



BENICIA PD HOSTS SWEARING-IN AND AWARDS CEREMONY: On December 12, the



Benicia Police Department welcomed three new employees. Police Officer Armando Sanchez and Public Safety Dispatchers Amanda Donohue and Danielle Nelson were sworn in by City Clerk Lisa Wolfe. The ceremony was attended by Mayor Patterson and Councilmember Strawbridge. Other special guests included City Manager Brad Kilger, retired Police Chief Jim Trimble, retired Deputy Police Chief Dennis Gard and numerous family and friends. Police Chaplain Jerry Pollard began the ceremony

with an inspiring message about the police department's Core Values (Integrity, Pride, Professionalism, Honor and Respect).

Several current police department employees received various awards and were recognized for their outstanding work and achievement(s) during this past year:

- Detective Aldo Serrano was presented with a Community Policing Medal for his work with instructing elderly residents of Benicia on how to protect themselves against Identity Fraud and other scams that prey on elderly victims.
- Detective Jenna Cameron was presented two (2) Life Saving Medals for her involvement in talking two different subjects out of committing suicide.
- Corporal Mark Menesini was presented a Life Saving Medal for his involvement in assisting with one of the cases mentioned above. His initial contact and compassion allowed the potential suicidal subject someone to connect with and establish a trust with so he would not take his own life.
- Community Services Officer/Evidence Technician Laura Williams was presented a Chiefs Medal for her role in solving a recent residential burglary. During this incident, she was able to identify a unique shoe print at the scene of a residential burglary. While preparing to leave the scene, she noticed a by-stander wearing the same type of shoe. She informed on scene detective of this and after they confronted the subject and interviewed him, he admitted to committing the burglary and the stolen property was recovered.
- Animal Control Officer Darlene Jelonek was presented a Chiefs Medal for her actions involving caring for a dog that was rescued from a residential fire in which tragically, one of the home owners died, and ensuring this dog received quality care through a local veterinarian.



Chief Bidou presided over the event and publically expressed his gratitude to the men and women of the police department for their hard work and dedication throughout this past year. – *Police Department*

ARMORY BEAUTIFICATION WEEKEND: Over the weekend of December 7 and 8, Fire



Department personnel participated in a couple of activities in support of the local National Guard Armory. On Saturday, members from Station 11 were on hand to assist with the beautification project that was underway at the entrance to the Armory. The crews arrived after the other volunteers had been working for a period of time. The coordinators of the event advised that their timing was perfect in order to continue the work effort.

On Sunday, the Department was contacted by Lt. Colonel McDermott for additional assistance. This time, however, the crews would not need to engage in physical labor similar to the previous day. The Armory was hosting a holiday party and was interested in our assistance with the arrival of Santa Claus at the event. The crew met up with Santa later that morning and delivered him to the event in style in our red sleigh (Engine 11). – *Fire Department*



NEW BENICIA BUSINESSES: The following are newly licensed businesses or businesses in new locations. Please stop by and make them feel welcome:

- **Laboratory Corporation of America** — 1367 East Second Street, owner: David P. King
- **Golden West Registration Services** — 495 B Military East, owner: Nicholas Kosta
- **Benicia CrossFit** — 685 Stone Road, owners: Craig and Jennifer Moore
- **Coup Brands IP, LLC** — 3909 Park Road, owner: Ryan Tu
- **Carbonline Wheels** — 3820 Industrial Way, owner: James Porreco
- **Dos Gatos Gallery** — 828 First Street, Suite B, owner: Marcalan Glassberg
- **Tapestry Court Quilts** — 252 First Street, owner: Geri Krueger and Michael Rhodd

- *Economic Development*



BENICIA FIRE DEPARTMENT PROVIDES ESCORT TO SCHOOL: On the morning of

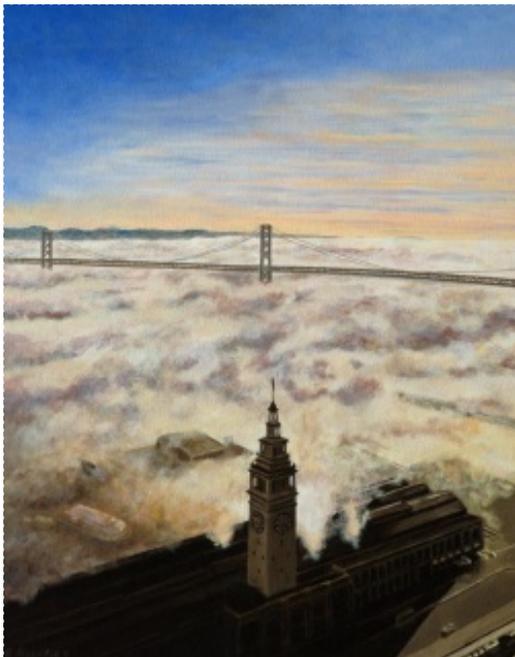


December 13, Benicia Firefighters Joshua Chadwick, Vince Parga, and Matthew Murphy provided Robert Semple Elementary School student Gabe Trimboli with a ride to school. The ride was a raffle prize won during a Relay for Life fundraiser and Gabe was a big hit at school upon arrival.

Several times per year, the Benicia Fire Department auctions off a ride to school to support various fundraisers. This particular prize is usually a very popular item, bid on by many parents and grandparents hoping to give their children a special moment they

won't forget. – *Fire Department*

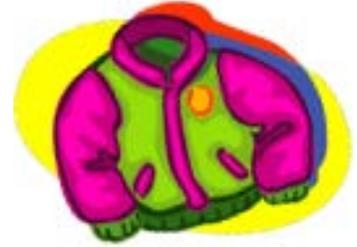
YOUTH COMMISSION UPDATE: The Benicia Youth Commission, led by Recreation Supervisor Ashley Howe, treated the community to cookies during the annual Open House and Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 6. Hundreds of people visited the Youth Commission booth next to the holiday tree on First Street and enjoyed the holiday cookies provided free of charge and the hot chocolate and coffee that were donated by Moschetti's. – *Parks & Community Services*



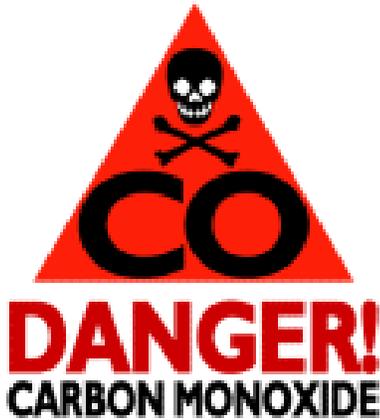
CALIFORNIA SHADES AT THE LIBRARY: The Bay Area Studio Artists (BASA) are celebrating their favorite state in a new show, California Shades, at the Marilyn Citron O'Rourke Art Gallery at the Benicia Public Library.

The exhibit features artworks that explore the play of sun and shade on California's dramatic color palette. The show captures the sun on a brilliant Big Sur ocean, the shaded trunks of a twisted California Oak, the San Francisco Bay cloaked in coastal fog and many more visions of our state. The exhibit runs through **January 2.** – *Library*

COAT DRIVE: Benicia Public Library is collecting clean and gently used coats from **Monday, December 9 through Friday, January 17**. Donations will be sent to local organizations to help those in need in our community. – *Library*



CARBON MONOXIDE AND SMOKE DETECTORS: During the past month, the Fire Department has experienced some local events that, once again, highlight the importance of having carbon monoxide and smoke detectors operational within your home.



On December 1, the Department responded to a call for a CO (Carbon Monoxide) detector activation. Upon arrival at the scene, the crew used detection equipment and confirmed the presence of CO in the residence. PG&E was requested to the scene, and they determined that a faulty wall heater was producing significant levels of CO in the residence. The heater was disconnected and the resident was advised to arrange for necessary repair or replacement. Had a CO detector not been present in this residence, the occupants would likely have

experienced complications associated with the exposure to CO.

Smoke detectors have also been in use for many years now. They are so common these days that they are often “out of sight, out of mind”. The Fire Department would like to remind everyone to regularly check the functionality of these devices and to change the batteries at least one time per year. The functionality of these alarms is very important in alerting occupants, especially those that are sleeping, to the presence of a fire in their residence. – *Fire Department*



NEW WAY TO LEARN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: [Mango Languages](#) has developed a



technique for learning foreign languages using films; these are available in Mandarin, Japanese, and English as a Second Language for Spanish speakers. For access, go to the Library’s website and click on the tab for “Literacy”; once you have entered the Mango database with your library card, in the tab for courses you will be able to select the option for Language Learning through Film. And if you happen to be an iPhone or

Android phone user, don’t forget that Mango has an App for their [Mango Mobile Library Edition](#) that makes language learning accessible wherever you are! Of course, if you find a more traditional learning approach is preferable, Mango offers courses in more than 60 languages. - *Library*

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

The City Manager's Report from City of Benicia City Manager Brad Kilger is published semi-monthly. For additional information on any of the items in this report, please contact one of the following departments:

**City Manager/Human Resources/Economic Development/I.T.: 707.746.4200**

**City Attorney: 707.746.4216**

**Community Development: 707.746.4280**

**Finance Department: 707.746.4225**

**Fire Department: 707.746.4275**

**Library: 707.746.4343**

**Parks & Community Services: 707.746.4285**

**Police Department: 707.746.4265**

**Public Works: 707.746.4240**