

# The CAO Weekly Report

The week of June 1, 2015



## *Monterey County Administrative Office*

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- Korean delegation visit focuses on taxes
- Workshop explores importance of Brown Act
- Natividad Medical Center puts volunteers in the spotlight



## Korean Delegation Visits Monterey County; Talks Taxes

Treasurer-Tax Collector Mary Zeeb and Assessor/Recorder-County Clerk Steve Vagnini had some international visitors last week.



A delegation from the Gyeonggi Provincial Government in the Republic of Korea made a stop at the County Government Center to visit with Zeeb and Vagnini as part of a trip to the United States by the group to study successful public services practices.

Geographically, Gyeonggi surrounds the capital city of Seoul. It is the largest of the 16 local governments that comprise the Republic of Korea, and its government is actively working to improve its tax administration system. Headed by Shin Jung Won, the Deputy Director of Tax Investigation, the delegation came to Monterey County after meeting with Santa Clara County's Economic Development Department and took a break to enjoy the sights in Carmel and Pebble Beach.

The group gathered in the Board of Supervisors' Chambers and Zeeb and Vagnini fielded questions regarding the property assessment process and collection of property tax.

“Through an interpreter, I talked and answered a lot of questions about the property tax system in California under Proposition 13,” explains Vagnini, who says the group was very surprised to learn how difficult it is for the government to raise money for needed services. “California with its Proposition 13 restrictions is unique throughout the country and the world.”

Zeeb answered questions about property tax collection, Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) and the various other aspects of her office. She provided members of the group with financial data about Monterey County.

The top comments and questions from the delegation were:

- In Korea, we have various systems for sharing financial resources of the central government with local governments in order to make up for financial shortages. What system do you have for covering financial shortages?
- How is the value of land and buildings estimated?
- What non-taxes are levied on land and buildings? How much does the government levy from citizens?
- How does the County pay for services when it needs money?



Mary Zeeb (left) and Steve Vagnini (right) field questions from the group.



The delegation wrapped up its visit with a group shot at the County Government Center.

After this listening and learning session, the group moved on to its next destination, certainly coming away with a wealth of general information on California’s unique tax structure and laws which they can use to compare with other regions as well as their own as they work to improve their own tax system.



## County Counsel Tutors Staff on Brown Act

The Ralph M. Brown Act is a state law, authored by Assembly member Ralph M. Brown more than 60 years ago and amended since, which sets open meeting requirements for local legislative bodies, such as Monterey County, in order to ensure, with limited exceptions, that governmental bodies conduct “the people’s business” openly and in public and that the public has the right to observe the deliberations and actions and participate.



For county staff members who support or prepare for public meetings and for those who sit on such committees, understanding these requirements is critical to not only to simply be in compliance to this important law, but to serve the law’s objective of open and transparent government.

Last month, County Counsel Charles McKee and Senior Deputy County Counsel Wendy Strimling offered a training workshop on the Brown Act, the objective being to provide practical guidance on compliance with the Brown Act for members of county boards, committees and commissions and for county staff assigned to those bodies. The training was also open to the public, and the workshop drew a good crowd. Approximately 125 people were in attendance.

The workshop walked staff and committee members through the purpose of the Brown Act, who is subject to it and key rules regarding the creation of agendas, distribution of agendas and materials, conducting the meeting, and conduct for committee members outside of meetings.

“The overarching theme of the workshop was to keep in mind the purpose of the Brown Act: that the actions of local public agencies be taken openly and their deliberations be conducted openly,” explains Senior Deputy County Counsel Wendy Strimling.

During and after the workshop, participants were able to ask questions about specific aspects of the Brown Act.

Of interest to committee members was information involved in conducting meetings such as public participation, teleconferencing, voting, and quorum. Also discussed were members’ conduct that is and is not allowed outside of meetings, including emphasizing the importance of avoiding inadvertent, so-called “serial meetings,” where discussion between committee members outside of a meeting could be the equivalent of a meeting without public participation.

Of interest to county staff was guidance on preparing, posting, and distributing meeting agendas and meeting materials as well as guidance on taking minutes.



## Natividad Medical Center Honors Volunteers

Any agency that is fortunate to have volunteer helpers will tell you, their help is priceless. Natividad Medical Center actually knows just how valuable its volunteers are and it is pretty close: \$1.3 million.



That is the value of volunteer hours donated to the hospital in 2014. Last year, the hospital's 400 volunteers donated 53,884 hours. Using equivalent wages based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics, those hours are valued at well over the million dollar mark.

It's no wonder then that hospital officials take time each year to thank hospital volunteers with a special recognition event organized by the NMC Volunteer Auxiliary.

Volunteers enjoy dinner and camaraderie (above). Dr. Alexander De Stante, NMC's Trauma Medical Director, shares information about the hospital's new Level II Trauma Center (right).



This year's recognition event was held recently at The Club at Crazy Horse Ranch.

Volunteers play an important role at NMC, filling a wide variety of roles serving the public and improving the stay of the patients.

You will find volunteers providing information and escorting visitors to various departments, providing patient comfort in many areas of the hospital, providing clerical support and manning the first floor gift shop. While you need to be at least 16 years old to volunteer at the hospital, there is no upper age limit. NMC's oldest volunteer is 92!



Hospital leaders turned out to thank volunteers for their service including Dr. Gary Gray, Interim Chief Executive Officer and Chief Medical

(L-r) Nathan Fuentes, Executive Director of the Volunteer Auxiliary; Jerry Sera, President of the Volunteer Auxiliary Board; Supervisor Simon Salinas and Steve Null, Auxiliary Board member and former stroke patient who volunteers at NMC as a way to give back to the hospital and community.

Officer; Dr. James Hlavacek, Chief of Medical Staff and member of the Board of Trustees and Andrea Rosenberg, Assistant Administrator. Chair of the Board of Supervisors Simon Salinas was also in attendance.

The hospital's volunteer program is coordinated by the Natividad Medical Center Volunteer Auxiliary, which is now in its 55<sup>th</sup> year.

