

March 2017 President's Message

Maintaining the Pressure

As we move through the first quarter of 2017, politicians in our fair city turn their thoughts to our upcoming municipal elections. This year will be especially interesting as it brings the first district elections in districts 4, 5 and 6, as well as the Mayor's race. To top it off, only one of the four races will feature an incumbent, as two Council Members and the Mayor have reached their term limits.

Over the next few months, I'll be meeting with folks who might be interested in running for office, offering my thoughts on how they might fair in their races, and suggesting where they might find folks willing to help. If you're considering jumping in, feel free to give me a call or drop me an email ... I'd love to chat!

Beyond the search for qualified candidates, however, comes the need to continue to stress the issues that are important to you and your business. Each meeting I hold gives me another opportunity to carry our message that strong local businesses mean a strong community, a message I am proud to carry on your behalf.

Each potential candidate hears about the need to address homelessness issues, ensure a wide variety of market rate and program-based affordable housing, maintaining our municipal infrastructure, and of course, expediting the 101 widening project.

The Chamber continues to be one of the key voices calling for an end to delays and a quick resolution on funding the remainder of this vital project for our region. Carrying the message of "a lane and a train" forward is something I'm proud to do to ensure the economic strength of the South Coast.

And trust me, strong, vocal support for the project is needed now more than ever. 2017 will see a wide variety of people stepping up to run for office, including those who are convinced the 101 widening project isn't needed. These individuals will allow their own narrow interests to continue to impact the movement of goods, services and people to the Santa Barbara Region - an eventuality we simply cannot allow.

As you hear from candidates, or from our currently elected Council Members, I urge you to voice your support for this project to them as strongly as you have voiced it to me. Make sure they know how delays from LA and Ventura Counties affect your ability to get employees to work, goods to market, or visitors into your hotels and restaurants. Ensure they know about your strong support for this project, and that you will vote against those who want to delay or stop 101 widening.

Together, we can continue to keep this important project, one of the top three regional transportation projects in the State, on track and headed for an eventual completion. Together, we can keep Santa Barbara County moving.

And together, we can ensure a bright economic future for our wonderful community.



Ken Oplinger, ACE
President/CEO
The Chamber of the Santa Barbara Region