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Working for Seaside

Welcome to my July newsletter. Since the last newsletter, I have participated in many activities. 1. The official raising of the Monterey Bay FC Union's flag above city hall, 2. My Cal Cities Committee- Governance, Transparency and Labor Relations Policy Committee meeting in Pomona, California, 3. The Red, White, and Blues 4th of July festival, 4. Councilmember Dave Pacheco's town hall meeting, 5. A meeting with our incoming Economic Development Director, and 6. I attended the Board of Directors meeting for the JPIA (Joint Powers Insurance Agency).

Monterey Bay FC Union

As I mentioned in my May newsletter, I love soccer. I love the game so much that in 2014 and 2018, I volunteered for FIFA during the World Cup in Brazil and Russia, respectively. I've witnessed how a soccer team can build and unite a community. I mention this because when I first learned that Seaside would get a minor league soccer team, I was both shocked and delighted. I was hooked when I went to the first match of the Monterey Bay Union Football Club.

Last month, I approached the team and asked how we could bring the City of Seaside and the Union closer. The vice president of the team and I envisioned two new traditions. 1. When the Union wins, we turn on colored lights at City Hall (the team colors), and 2. We raise the Union Flag in front of City Hall on game day. The team was excited and offered to have an official flag-raising ceremony on the City Hall lawn. With the support of the mayor and the rest of our council, we held a wonderful flag-raising ceremony. The Monterey Bay Union FC made a short video of the event and played it on ESPN during their only nationally televised game this season.

The relationship between the city and the team has just started, and building the relationship is great for our city. We have a team to support, and by doing this, we are changing Seaside's image. It needs to be mentioned that we are the only city on the Monterey Peninsula with a professional sports team.

Congratulations! On July 11, Seaside's Maligne was one of just ten restaurants added to the Michelin Guide's California Bib Gourmand list.

The Image of Seaside

Compared to our more affluent neighbors (Carmel, Pacific Grove, Monterey, and the Carmel Valley), we have always had a scruffy image and were known (starting in the 1970s) for lots of gang violence. That has changed.

Seaside has genuinely become a wonderful place to live and work. The festivals, the beautiful parks, the programs sponsored by the Recreation Department, the soccer team, and our new farmer's market are changing how the residents and others view our city. With the development of Campus Town and the Grand Hyatt, we will have more visitors to our restaurants and downtown area.

I don't want to paint a completely rosy picture because we are imperfect. Still, we are making progress in improving the city. For example, at our last City Council meeting, we agreed to discuss the repair of Monterey Road. The lack of repair has been a problem for those living in the Seaside Highlands. Of course we are still dealing with illegal fireworks and eventually we will find a solution to that problem.

The other area of concern is the downtown with its abandoned buildings. That situation won't change until we generate more economic activity. To do this, we have to attract visitors. Imagine parents who bring the family for a weekend of golf, and they are staying at the Grand Hyatt. The spouse goes to the golf course, and the other is left with the kids for the day. Right now, here's nothing for those kids to do in downtown Seaside.

We could designate the area on Broadway from Hillsdale to Del Monte as a cultural district. I imagine an interactive museum for kids sponsored by Seaside and our sister city in Oaxaca,

Mexico. Also, I would like to see a Fort Ord museum that tells the story of the training of our soldiers. With help from CSUMB, we could build a stage and have live theater. After spending time with the kids at our attractions, it's time for the parent to relax and get soft drinks for the kids and some libation at our new wine bar.

These are only suggestions, and there is no way we can do this without community support. I really want to know what you think about establishing a cultural district.



Five Star Service

On July 1, 2023, Jaime Fontes celebrated his first anniversary as Seaside's City manager. He has served as East Palo Alto's City Manager, and over his 35-year professional career, Fontes has served as the city manager for Nogales, Arizona, and cities across California, including Greenfield and Santa Paula.

In a June 2022 press release, Seaside Mayor Ian Oglesby outlined his excitement about hiring the new city manager. "Mr. Fontes has a proven track record in local government and values active listening and respectful dialogue. He brings a breadth of experience on similar issues and opportunities that confront the city of Seaside. His combination of skills will help Seaside meet the challenges of creating affordable housing, local jobs, and sustainable economic development opportunities in Seaside."

Mr. Fontes is exceeding our expectations, and I am awarding him five stars. Thank you, sir.