

Supervisors Chairman Pedroza touts housing, transportation agenda

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Supervisor Alfredo Pedroza grabbed the gavel and stated some of his Napa County priorities for 2016 — housing, transportation and collaborations with local cities.

The newly appointed chairman of the Board of Supervisors gave his “state of the county” speech at Tuesday’s meeting. Supervisor Keith Caldwell is vice chairman.

Pedroza talked about younger families being priced out of the Napa County housing market, saying he knows people who want to live and work here, but can’t.

“The issue of housing is something that is not going to go away,” Pedroza said.

Pedroza wants to use surplus county properties as sites for affordable housing.

In recent months, Napa County has considered putting several properties in the city of Napa on the market. For example, it will no longer need land on Old Sonoma Road once it relocates its Health and Human Services complex in late spring or summer.

Pedroza also mentioned transportation and traffic

management. In recent years, residents have complained about clogged roads.

“I think there’s a better way we can move our workforce from A to B,” Pedroza said.

He doesn’t envision the valley’s two major roads, Highway 29 and Silverado Trail, being expanded. But he sees other steps that can be taken, such as mirroring Google’s use of commuter shuttles to bring employees to work.

“They’ve made transportation hip, trendy and cool,” Pedroza said. “It’s reliable. It’s predictable.” That raises the possibility that local vintners and the hospitality industry could do something similar.

Housing and transportation are regional issues, Pedroza said. Addressing them will involve working with the cities. He and the mayors of Napa County cities plan to appear together to give their visions for 2016, Pedroza said. The time and place for this joint “state of Napa County” event have yet to be announced.

“Part of it is taking steps to show we are visibly collaborating together, which is what the public has asked for,” he said.

Pedroza’s goals reflect goals that came up at the March 10, 2015 growth summit held by the Board of Supervisors. Supervisors agreed then to work with cities on growth and transportation issues.

While Pedroza looked ahead, Supervisor Diane Dillon looked back at the year that just ended. She was the Board

of Supervisors chairwoman during 2015.

She ticked off a variety of county accomplishments – Child Support Services collected \$10 million in child support money, the Sheriff’s Office expanded its Problem-Orientated Policing crime prevention program, the Probation Department was one of two selected nationally for a pilot program to reduce recidivism.

About 1,000 evacuees from the Valley Fire in Lake County came to the Napa County Fairgrounds in Calistoga for shelter in what Dillon called a “mini-Katrina” situation. But the county could see 100,000 evacuees if a major earthquake strikes elsewhere in the Bay Area, she said.

For Dillon, the big story of 2015 was the big story from the previous year – the South Napa earthquake. The Assessor’s Office dealt with 1,300 earthquake property damage victims and processed \$39 million in temporary assessed value reductions.

“That’s a huge undertaking that just happened without any additional staff being hired,” she said.

The quake damaged more than 100,000 square feet of county office space and displaced a third of the county workforce. The county spent 2015 repairing offices and moving workers back from temporary quarters.

“It’s was just really a huge accomplishment,” Dillon said.