


Hank Weston, Supervisor, District IV

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Hank Weston: Teamwork

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In February, I reported that the cost of the Bridgeport Bridge rehabilitation project had increased from \$1.3 million to \$3.9 million, due primarily to additional costs to strengthen the historic bridge foundation and to cover an increased contingency.

Working with South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), the Save our Bridge Committee and California State Parks, we have decided to request that the additional \$2.6 million be programmed in the 2016–2017 State budget cycle and that the monies be secured in a special fund for the construction to begin in 2018.

The governor released his budget bill proposal in January. The next step is that fiscal review subcommittees in both the State Senate and Assembly scrutinize the budget.

The subcommittees hold public hearings between March and late May. At these meetings interested citizens and organizations can provide information, comments and make their own recommendations on how tax dollars will be spent.

The Assembly subcommittee which reviews the State Parks budget, the Subcommittee on Natural Resources and Transportation, will hold their hearing on April 27. I am working to have the Bridgeport Bridge funding on their agenda for that meeting.

Therefore, at our Board of Supervisors meeting on April 12, I will be asking the Board to approve a letter with this request that I will bring with me to the hearing to testify.

Also on April 12, Supervisor Richard Anderson and I will ask the Board to approve a request for \$450,000 in the 2016–2017 State budget to install a solar electric project at the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park (SHP).

You will recall that in 2011, as a result of a severe State budget deficit, the State of California proposed to close a number of our State Parks, including Malakoff Diggins SHP.

In 2012, the County, State officials, the Park foundation and local non-profits began a collaborative effort to negotiate a solar energy project that will save the State money and have Malakoff Diggins taken off the closure list.

Now, though the Park is open and there is no longer a closure list, the effort to install a cost-effective, clean solar project has continued.

Currently, the State spends at least \$70,000 per year to run generators for lights and security systems at the Park that protect 100,000 historic artifacts.

The Pacific Gas & Electric Company stated its cost, not including right-of-way access, would be approximately \$2 million to bring conventional electricity to the Park.

Working with local contractors, we have developed a plan and, with the help of SYRCL, we have completed the necessary environmental review and documentation for the project.

The contractors have prepared a detailed estimate to construct the solar array and security fencing, which now stands at about \$450,000.

We think this is a very fair investment that will save State resources, expand tourism to a disadvantaged, under-served community, reduce our carbon footprint and serve as a model for ecological sustainability and economic efficiency.

At a time when the state is enjoying a budget surplus, the timing is appropriate to make these two budget requests.