



Westport Municipal Advisory Council

P. O. Box 307, Westport, CA 95488
www.westportmac.org

April 20, 2010

Supervisor Kendall Smith
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1070
Ukiah, CA 95482

Dear Supervisor Smith and Members of the Board:

The Westport Municipal Advisory Council would like to register its strong opposition to the proposed closure of the Fort Bragg Offices of the County Planning and Building Services Department and the Environmental Health Division. We received public input at our March and April meetings, all of it unanimously against the proposed closure. Our constituency asks that you give serious consideration to the following factors before taking any action on this matter:

1. County staff at the Coastal Office are more familiar with coastal development issues and regulations because they live and work in our area. If services are provided solely by staff based in the interior region, we will lose the many advantages of that local knowledge.
2. The Fort Bragg Offices are convenient for local citizens who produce a significant portion of county revenues and deserve equal access to services. Centralizing operations in Ukiah places a large new burden of transportation on coastal citizens, causing frustration, impaired services, and more separation from the County government.
3. The Coastal Offices manage a high caseload typically amounting to about half of the permits issued by the cited Departments. That permit activity generates significant income for the County in part because property values on the coast are higher than those inland.
4. It is questionable that real financial savings will accrue from closure of the Coastal Offices of the two cited Departments given the large caseloads they manage. Significant new labor time, travel expenses, and transportation costs would be entailed for Ukiah staff.
5. Other possible unintended consequences include delayed economic recovery on the coast due to an added barrier to development, as well as a possible higher incidence of non-permitted development causing loss of county tax revenue and later code enforcement issues.

Please consider these concerns before taking any action on the referenced proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thad M. Van Bueren".

Thad M. Van Bueren, Chairperson
Westport MAC

Cc: Nash Gonzalez, Director of Planning and Building Services Department
Coastal Office of Planning and Building Services Department