MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 14, 2008

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Lew C. Bauman
County Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: County Administrative Officer’s Weekly Report for January 14, 2008

This is the weekly report by the County Administrative Officer to the Board of Supervisors. This report provides information on issues affecting the County and the progress of County activities.

Building Services

Early Saturday morning, January 5, 2008, flooding occurred in the Carmel Lagoon over the sandbar, due to high surf from the storm. Water rose in the lagoon over two feet in just a couple of hours and was at flood stage by about 5:00 a.m. The high ocean surf prevented any action to manage the sandbar to mitigate the flooding. High tide occurred about 7:30 a.m. The lagoon breached itself by 9:00 a.m. and the water receded very quickly. The flooding affected approximately 30 homes to some degree. After the water receded, staff from the Health and the Building Services Departments completed inspection of the homes surrounding the lagoon. Nine homes were found to be uninhabitable because their electrical or gas systems were compromised by the high water. The uninhabitable homes were posted “UNSAFE to OCCUPY” (red tagged). A number of the homes that were posted were vacant. Staff informed the property owners who were present of the situation with their homes. Public Works staff requested Pacific Gas and Electric to disconnect the utilities.

To further assist with the recovery, staff has mailed correspondence to each of the owners of the nine properties with instructions on how to obtain permits and approvals to reconnect their utilities. The letter also designated key staff in the Salinas and Marina offices of Building Services and Health Departments for contact assistance and advises the property owners that repair permits are free to recovery victims in a declared emergency.
As of this status report, owners of three of the residences have received permits with final inspection approvals and have reconnected their utilities.

**Elections**

*Register to Vote.* The deadline to register to vote for the February 5, 2008 Presidential Primary Election is Tuesday, January 22, 2008. The message from the Monterey County Elections Department is DON’T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!! If you want to receive all official voter information pamphlets well ahead of the Election (there are three this election), you should register to vote early. If you or anyone you know did not yet receive election materials for the February 5, 2008 election and are concerned you may not be registered to vote, please contact the Elections Department at 796-1499 and they will be happy to check for your voting record. Anyone who needs to register to vote may come to the Office at 1370-B South Main Street in the Nob Hill Plaza until midnight on Tuesday, January 22, 2008 – but you can register TODAY!

*Sample Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlets.* The Department has mailed out over 140,000 of the local Sample Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlets to voters who were registered to vote as of December 27, 2007. As has been in past primary elections, this is a combined information pamphlet and contains sample ballot for ALL parties, as well as the non-partisan voter’s ballot. The State has two voter information pamphlets – the Official Voter Information Guide that contains information on Propositions 91 – 93, and the Supplemental Voter Information Guide that contains information on Propositions 94 – 97.

The local pamphlet (creative cover design by Claudio Valenzuela, Assistant Registrar of Voters!) contains a letter from the Registrar and many “filler pages” that are utilized to educate voters on the election. Voters will read about the Modified Primary system in California, what is an overvote or an undervote, how to correctly mark the ballot and how to use the touch-screen voting machine, an application for a vote by mail (absentee) ballot, and the location of their polling place. Some of the filler pages you see come through voter suggestions – such as listing the qualifications to be a registered voter, listing the upcoming scheduled election dates and important deadlines, and new laws that change voting terminology or that affect a change for voter processes.

*Vote by Mail (Absentee) Voting.* The Department commenced mailing of absentee ballots, now known as “vote by mail” ballots (changed by Assembly Bill 1248), on Monday, January 7, 2008. As of Friday morning, January 11th, the Department has issued 81,410 ballots and has already received nearly 3,300 voted returns. The redesigned envelope first used in the November 2007 election has already undergone improvements – it is slightly larger to better accommodate the voted ballot and the Department improved the language of the instructions to clarify steps for those who have not yet used the new design. The Department also included a voter instruction sheet to assist voters in how to correctly mark the ballot and how to request a new ballot, if necessary.

*Poll Worker Recruitment.* The Department would like to thank all of the County Employees who have signed up to participate in the February 5, 2008 Presidential Primary Election. As of Friday, January 11th, the Department has received 114 applications through the County Election
Official Program - only 10 away from the Department’s goal of 124! This number creates a tie record with the November 6, 2007 election, which was the highest level of participation the County Election Official Program had seen up to that time. The Elections Department is more than appreciative of the willingness of each employee to join, and of their supervisor to allow involvement in the program and provide voters assistance on Election Day. THANK YOU!

Emergency Communications

The recent major storm on January 4th and 5th, created a significant workload surge for the County 9-1-1 Center. The busiest day was Friday the 4th with a total incoming call volume of 2,761 calls received - almost double the number received on Friday the week before. Additionally, most of the peninsula agencies had extra staffing in the field, along with all hands in the Public Works departments responding to a hugely increased number of incidents.

The number of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) incidents entered was 2,069 - more than 72% higher than the prior Friday. With our normal complement of thirteen dispatchers and call takers scheduled during the afternoon and evening, we brought in three additional people in the afternoon to help with the workload. Although the vast majority of these calls were not true emergencies, and only 733 calls (27%) came in on our 9-1-1 lines, our call answer times were generally very good given the circumstances. The average answer times for all public incoming telephone lines (including non-emergency lines) was 11 to 14 seconds throughout Friday, although at the peak of the storm, during the afternoon commute, some times were certainly longer.

County and city fire agencies in the highest wind areas were especially busy with a 500+% increase in the number of fire agency incidents handled on Friday the 4th compared to the prior Friday. While the increase in workload on Saturday was not as dramatic - with a 56% increase in phone calls and a 64% overall increase in CAD incidents - fire agency calls were still up 70% more than the week before.

Dispatch staff worked as a well-oiled team, foregoing breaks to get the job done. The Department has received several compliments from our customer agencies on staff’s performance during this hectic time. From the County Communications viewpoint, the agencies most greatly impacted were also working at peak performance, with Monterey and Pacific Grove especially well prepared and coordinated in their response. On Saturday, the dispatch staff joined Public Works, Sheriff’s staff and everyone else in a collective sigh of relief when the threat of flooding and evacuation at Carmel River Lagoon was averted. Everyone is looking forward to a “normal” weekend this week.

Library

Monterey County Free Libraries recently received the 2006-2007 Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts for its participation in a “Regional Court and Library partnership between the libraries and court systems of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San
Benito and Monterey Counties”. Every two years the Judicial Council of California gives the Ralph N. Kleps Award for innovative programs that can be replicated in other courts.

In this partnership, the superior courts and public libraries in the four counties collaborated to serve the public better by providing library staff with training in the use of the courts’ self-help programs and other online legal resources. The focus of this program was legal self-services and was based on the recognition that the need for self-help was greater than the existing self-help available through the courts. This project was funded by a $25,000 grant from the Trial Court Improvement Fund.

Several Monterey County Free Libraries staff received training as part of this project, and Beata Obydzinski, System Reference Coordinator for the system, was one of only two librarians who made a presentation about the entire program to a selection committee consisting of Judges from various courts throughout the state.

This concludes the CAO report.