

# The CAO Weekly Report

The week of June 16, 2014



## *Monterey County Administrative Office*

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In this edition:

- County secures grant monies for public safety
- County volunteer help worth millions
- Update on Capital One process



## Office of Emergency Services Brings Money for Safety Training and Equipment to the County

Each year, Monterey County's Office of Emergency Services applies for and receives hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant monies from the national Homeland Security Program to fund a wide variety of public safety, anti-terrorism and preparedness projects throughout the county.

But once received, how do these funds get distributed to the agencies which need them?

That is the job of the Grant Approval Authority (GAA). This group was created 12 years ago to distribute those funds among local agencies. The Authority has five representatives, a police chief, municipal fire chief, county fire chief, sheriff and public health officer.

Each year, local public safety agencies submit grant requests to the GAA to fund projects with those federal dollars. This year, the GAA received more than \$500,000 in funds, but



Members of the Grant Approval Authority (l-r) Sheriff Scott Miller, North County Fire Chief Chris Orman, Marina Police Chief Edmundo Rodriguez, Salinas Fire Chief Edmond A. Rodriguez, and Monterey County Health Department Director Ray Bullick.

had request for nearly twice that amount, so it faced a difficult task choosing projects. Applications are reviewed and ranked based on need, grant criteria and what is in the best interests of protecting the community.

Last month, those applying for grant monies had the opportunity to make a presentation to the panel about their project and why it should be funded. After listening to all presentations, 10 proposals were funded.

Here are the local projects and programs which received federal funds this year to serve and safeguard the Monterey County community:

1. **Urban Search and Rescue - Upgrade/Sustainment Equipment** - \$32,600. Four gas monitors for confined space rescues, a seismic/acoustic listening device to communicate with trapped victims.
2. **Salinas Police Department S.W.A.T. Tactical Bullet Proof Vests** - \$40,520. Replace 17 outdated bullet-proof vests to new models with expanded protection.
3. **Salinas Police Department S.W.A.T. – The AVATAR Security Robot** - \$27,955. Upgrade the department’s remote, rolling robot to include video and audio communications with a victim or injured officer.
4. **Sheriff Search and Rescue Equipment** - \$13,732. Replace core equipment such as ropes, pulleys, carabineers and fire rescue tools.
5. **Sheriff Bomb Squad Sustainment Equipment** - \$25,000. Equipment such as a bomb robot battery and shock tubes for the squad that handles all calls in Monterey and San Benito Counties.
6. **Interoperability Committee -Mobile Communications Task Force Equipment** - \$38,400. Communications equipment for deployment during a disaster such as satellite radios, cellular extenders and radio routers.
7. **Hazardous Material Team - Rapid Deployment Detector Kit** - \$82,890. Device to wirelessly monitor toxic chemical levels away from a hazardous leak location. For the Monterey County Operational Hazardous Material Team.
8. **Salinas Fire-Mobile Command Unit Sustainment Cost** - \$15,350. Maintain this mobile communications unit for all public safety agencies.

9. **Monterey Peninsula Special Response Team** – \$44,000. Replace outdated ballistic helmets: \$17,000; for voice, data and satellite equipment.
10. **Monterey County Training and Exercise Committee** - \$144,395. This committee determines and funds what training is needed for the many county response teams.



## County Employees Volunteer for VITA

County employees are in the business of public service, but many continue those efforts outside the job, by volunteering.

This spring, about a dozen county staff members volunteered for VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), a program offered through the United Way. VITA offers free tax preparation for those with limited income. Those helping in this effort are some fiscally savvy county employees, who contributed to completing more than 2,000 tax returns worth more than \$2.5 million!

Employees who volunteer for VITA say they are pleased to use their knowledge to help those in need. Here is what they say about the program:

“I volunteer to help out the community as much as I can and this was my third year with VITA. I volunteered Saturday mornings at the Office of Employment Training.

It’s very gratifying that I can do something to help someone. The clients are very grateful that this program is available to help them. We work with clients who are receiving unemployment and are unable to find a job or families earning \$40,000 a year and have four or more family members to support.”



Victoria Davis, Veronica Renteria and Teresa Ruvalcaba all volunteered with VITA this year.

-Teresa Ruvalcaba, Accountant Auditor II  
Auditor-Controller’s Office

“I started volunteering six years ago at the inception of the program, it was the perfect opportunity for me to give to the community as well as to enrich my skills. At my particular site, the average taxpayer requires either a basic return or a Schedule A. The more challenging returns are the ones that keep me on my toes.

I have met many interesting people over the years, both taxpayers and volunteers. Some of the same taxpayers come back year after year and many express their appreciation of our work. Staying involved with the program has been a rewarding experience for me. It feels great to be able to take a taxpayer’s situation, apply the tax laws and provide the most beneficial outcome for them.”

-Veronica Renteria, Fiscal Officer  
Monterey County Area Agency on Aging

“This was my third year with VITA. I joined because I thought learning more about tax returns might help in my job, which is a Child Support Attorney. I found that the work was rewarding, so returned the following years. It makes me feel good to do something that is so difficult for others and so easy for me. Most of the clients are very grateful for our efforts, and it is pleasing to know that we are saving them money by saving them the cost of their tax preparation.

I shared my experience with my sister, who works at a bio-tech firm in Seattle. She joined VITA there, and just finished her second tax season. The joy of this experience is catching!”

-Victoria L. Davis, Child Support Attorney  
Monterey County Department of Child Support Services



## Update on Capital One Facility Due Diligence Process

Here is an update from the Resource Management Agency Director Benny Young on the status of the county’s interest in potentially purchasing the former Capital One building:

“No final decisions have been made or recommended at this point. A “due diligence” process is presently underway, which includes:

- An evaluation of the facility (e.g. structural, environmental, ADA, access, preliminary space planning, etc.)

- An appraisal (does the value support the possible investment?)
- A financial analysis (will it save the taxpayers and County money – both from a short and long term perspective?)

We do not have an ‘occupancy’ plan yet, but are currently evaluating options. If the purchase moves forward, it is highly likely that uses of the space would be ‘phased in’ over a few years. It is safe to say that customer-intensive operations (such as the Social Services functions at the Quadrangle) would not be top candidates for relocation; however, ‘early’ candidates for potential relocation would include:

- (Centralizing) Countywide Records/Storage;
- The RMA and perhaps a few other administrative functions – in order to potentially free up space in the Government Center for court related functions presently housed in modular/portable facilities; and
- Others housed in inadequate or costly leased facilities (such as Elections and WRA). We are not intending to ‘break’ existing leases, hence a phased plan.

By the time we ask the Board to make a decision, we should be able to be more definitive about the plan. That will be about 60 days or so from now--after we complete preliminary space planning, the building/environmental assessment, and related financial analyses.

Part of the on-going ‘due diligence’ process also includes listening to the community’s concerns relative to the possible acquisition. This month, we held a public forum at the Government Center and received valuable feedback, primarily from the business sector. One of the principal concerns we heard has to do with possible adverse effects on downtown Salinas. It is important to note that the County is not proposing to relocate the existing Government Center at 168 West Alisal Street, or the core administrative services provided at this location. The Government Center will still be fully occupied and the County fully supports the City’s worthwhile Downtown Vibrancy planning work and intends to continue to be a productive partner in those efforts.”

