

# Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and VISITORS CENTER



*BRINGING BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER!*

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707-578-7975  
[office@markwest.org](mailto:office@markwest.org)

**The Lark**

February 2017  
Volume XXXI Issue 2

## SUPERVISOR JAMES GORE'S STATE OF THE COUNTY UPDATE

Supervisor James Gore led an informal, information-packed conversation at the quarterly luncheon for the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce. This article sums up the main points organized by topic.

**Mark West Citizens Advisory Council:** Mr. Gore started out by talking about the three main goals for the Mark West Citizens Advisory Council:

1. Focusing on when and where to spend the Franchise Fees surtax on California American Water
2. Giving the community a voice on projects proposed for this area, such as the Carlton Senior Living project and the Golf Course
3. Reviewing, with him, community needs in the areas of infrastructure, transportation & public works, and community well-being.

After a discussion of these three points and taking suggestions from the audience for further consideration by the Council, Supervisor Gore went on to discuss the following topics that are of concern throughout the County.

**Sanctuary:** "Sanctuary" is a designation voluntarily adopted by certain cities, counties, and states saying that they are not going to fully and openly coordinate with Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) for deportation of people who are undocumented. Cities often declare as "sanctuary" but it is harder for counties to do so because counties receive far more federal funding for health & human services, homelessness, housing, and so forth than cities do. That funding is at risk when sanctuary is declared. This has been a major consideration, but it seems Sonoma County has adopted measures short of sanctuary but that nonetheless satisfy the spirit of the movement.

**SMART Train:** Many residents and businesses are in favor of quiet zones. A quiet zone is a stretch of track where the train is forbidden from blowing its horn except under certain circumstances. Within a quiet zone, grade crossings (where a road crosses the track) require expensive retrofits to install more stringent safety warning devices and crossing warning arms to keep cars and pedestrians away from the tracks.

**Roads:** Sonoma County has consistently put the second largest amount of money of any county in the state into roads for the last three or four years. Many roads that haven't been touched in thirty or forty years are being repaired. For the next two summers, Highway 101 will be paved from Windsor to Geyserville. After that they'll focus on Geyserville to Cloverdale. There is discussion

*Continued on page 4*



*County Supervisor James Gore made a very informative and engaging presentation at the first Business Luncheon of 2017.*

February Social hosted by  
Golden State Wealth  
Management. and  
California American Water,  
See p3

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** next **AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL**

Hosted by  
**Fulton Crossing**  
1200 River Road, Santa Rosa

Thursday March 9, 2017  
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM



Steve Plamann  
Aaction Rents  
President

*Our Mission:*

*The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce is organized to advance the economic well-being and uniqueness of the Mark West Area so that its citizens and all areas of its business community shall prosper.*

**CHAMBER MEETINGS**

**Board of Directors**

Second Tuesday  
Of Each Month  
11:30 am - 1:00 pm at  
Best Western Plus Wine  
Country Inn & Suites  
870 Hopper Av. S.R.

**Ambassadors Mtg.**

Second Thursday  
Of Each Month  
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
At the Chamber offices

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:**

Rain, rain, go away. Wow, I never thought I'd say that, but flooding has become a weekly occurrence in our area. These rains are giving us a challenging environment to do business in. If you sell umbrellas, rain boots, or raincoats you must be very happy. Many other businesses don't do as well in bad weather. There will always be old and new challenges in the business world. Mother Nature is only one factor. Local businesses supporting each other and encouraging people to shop local are two good methods of getting through tough times and fending off the big chain discounters.

Jill Sluder, Project Manager for HGOR Planners says "retailers must continually change their looks, services and merchandise offerings in order to engage Millennials (a person reaching young adulthood in the early 21st century)." While planners and designers can't change a retailer's services or offerings, we can play a pivotal role in appearance. If retailers want to continue having shoppers come through the door, major changes need to occur which appeal to millennials who are craving new, exciting experiences and spaces. Through the use of innovative design elements and creative outdoor spaces, retailers can continue to attract the new and future generation of shoppers.

The Urban Land Institute, or ULI, is a nonprofit research and education organization with offices in Washington, D.C., Hong Kong, London, and Frankfurt. They report that "Generation Y" (comprising primarily the children of the baby boomers and typically perceived as increasingly familiar with digital and electronic technology), is yearning for an experience that incorporates technology and features that encourage you to share what you're doing in the store on social media".

Both of these groups are attracted to a place that captures the feeling of a safe, small, downtown boutique retail market that is comfortable to walk to and has connection to regional bike trails or easy access by vehicle and light rail, like Smart Train. They enjoy mixed types of retail that incorporate urban agriculture into the process and local restaurants.

The Mark West Area has many of the elements described above, including a small town look, a separate area near rural areas, and is accessible through many forms of transportation. The Mark West Area Chamber is here to help our precious part of the world remain unique and desirable. Together we can continue to attract interesting new businesses and more shoppers.

We had a great Social in February at Golden State Wealth Management, LLC, in Santa Rosa. It was co-hosted by California American Water and the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce. My thanks to Mark, from Golden State, and Margaret, from Cal-Am Water, for all their efforts towards making it a memorable evening.

Next month the After Hours Social will be hosted by Fulton Crossing at 1200 River Road, Santa Rosa. Many local artists will have their work on display. This will be a great opportunity to see how the old Fulton Processing plant has been transformed into an artist community.

*Continued on page 2*



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

I also want to thank Chamber member and 4th District County Supervisor James Gore for his very informative presentation at the Luncheon on February 1st. The Luncheon was hosted by the Mark West Area Chamber and Best Western Plus Wine Country Inn & Suite.

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce appreciates your membership and involvement. The more involved you become the more member benefits will come your way. We are currently looking to add a few more Ambassadors. This volunteer position is a great opportunity to better interact with other Chamber members and learn about how the Chamber works. Ambassadors help out at monthly Socials and other yearly special events. They also help with membership growth and encourage member participation. We understand your time is valuable, so you only need to help out when you can.

See you at the next Social.

Steve Plamann, President

## MORE ABOUT THE FEBRUARY SOCIAL

As Steve wrote in his President's Message, the February Social was hosted by Mark Molina of Golden State Wealth Management, LLC, by California American Water, and by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce.

Golden State Wealth Management helps clients with asset preservation, business succession planning, risk management, retirement planning, and even long-term care planning. This Social was held at Mark's Fountaingrove office, and he also has an office in Petaluma.

California American Water is a private water utility serving 615,000 people throughout California. The local branch provides drinking water to thousands of households and businesses in the Larkfield/Wikiup area, including the town of Fulton. Margaret DiGenova is the local Operations Superintendent.

### Winners for the Evening

The Pot of Gold winner was not present. Next month, the prize will be a remarkable \$300! It seldom gets this high, so be sure to attend. You can only win the Pot of Gold if you are present.

The 50/50 raffle was won by Steve Plamann of Aaction Rents. In commendable humanitarian style, he donated the money to the Petaluma Shakespeare Company. See below for details.

Margaret DiGenova donated two door prizes: one was chocolate and a calendar, won by Steve Plamann, and the other was artisan bread and a calendar won by Katherine Philips of Key Properties.

*Steve Plamann of Aaction Rents won a handful of cash in the 50/50 drawing, and he turned right around and handed it to Mark Molina as a donation to the Petaluma Shakespeare Company. Mark is a founding member of this troupe which performs Shakespeare free of charge so that everyone regardless of age, ethnicity, financial status or level of education can enjoy and learn from it. Their goal is to encourage broad participation in the arts and make the arts an active part of community life in Petaluma.*



*Our hosts: Margaret DiGenova of California American Water (left) and Mark Molina of Golden State Wealth Management (right).*



*As always, it was a friendly crowd. Both Mark and Margaret spoke briefly about their businesses and how they benefit the community.*



*Left to right: Larry Gilbert of Gilbert and Gall - LegalShield Independent Associates; Sally Crain, Broker @ Century 21 Alliance; Earl Crain.*



## LUNCHEON WITH SUPERVISOR GORE, CONTNUED FROM PAGE 1

about a vehicle miles-traveled tax to help pay for road improvements.

**Homelessness:** Supervisor Gore feels that the Housing First model is both the economical and the right thing to do. In this county the Community Development Commission handles that. The county has created a homeless seniors living area. The first goal for triaging is to go after homeless seniors, youth, vets, and families.

**Affordable Housing:** Sonoma County is in the top 10% of counties in terms of how much disposable income goes to housing. It's upwards of 50% for many people. There is more than one cause for high housing prices, among them, community separators, three decades of taxes being built into the development code, environmental mitigation costs, and development fees.

The Supervisors are looking at many ways of reducing the cost of housing for the most vulnerable. Mr. Gore discussed how workforce housing for agricultural labor could easily put a thousand units on agricultural lands. Also, the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) is working on housing for teachers so they can actually afford to live in the cities where they teach.

The county just recently passed an ordinance on accessory units. The ordinance not only allows accessory dwellings on some properties, but also allows homeowners to divide their homes into two units. They are not to be for vacation rentals. The old hospital on Chanate is being proposed for an 800-unit housing development, as is one on West College.

**Water:** Despite the recent rain, drought and a high population are both in California's future so we must have permanent conservation. This includes allowing water to get back into the water table by slowing its runoff and allowing it to sink in. Many such initiatives are working.

**Marijuana Legalization & Cultivation:** As with every county in California, Sonoma County is working out how to implement the results of Proposition 64 and the potential for widespread legal cultivation. The County now has an ordinance that does not allow it in rural residential neighborhoods. A special election on March 7 will determine whether Measure A passes and imposes special taxes on marijuana growers.

**Pensions:** Supervisor Gore said that negotiating pensions is ongoing work and will take a long time to fix.

Supervisor Gore said there will be a town hall meeting for the Mark West Area soon, to discuss how some of these issues impact the local area. No date is set but watch for announcements through the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and other resources.

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce thanks Supervisor Gore for making this presentation, and promoting the transparency of government in Sonoma County.

*Contributed by Aggie Maggio, Realtor @ Coldwell Banker and Peter Loughlin, Loughlin Marketing*



**Sonoma  
CONNECTION**

**John Essman**

P O Box 1381  
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**(707) 433-8774**

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## UPCOMING BUSINESS SOCIALS

Thursday, March 9, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Fulton Crossing**  
1200 River Road, Santa Rosa

Thursday, April 13, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
**Hilton Garden Inn Sonoma County Airport**  
417 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa

Thursday, May 11, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Vineyard Commons**  
3585 Round Barn Blvd., Santa Rosa

Thursday, June 8, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Mark West Lodge**  
2520 Mark West Springs Rd., Santa Rosa

Thursday, July 13, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Cloverleaf Ranch**  
3892 Old Redwood Hwy., Santa Rosa

Thursday, August 10, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
OPEN DATE  
Contact the Chamber to schedule for this date!

Thursday, September 14, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
OPEN DATE  
Contact the Chamber to schedule for this date!

Thursday, October 12, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Mark West Union School District**  
305 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa

Wednesday, December 6, 2017  
**Holiday Tree Lighting - Community Event**  
Hosted by Molsberry's Market  
522 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Thursday, December 14, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Larkfield Exchange Bank and Molsberry's Market**  
500 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

## THE RETURN OF SONOMA COUNTY RESTAURANT WEEK

The 8th annual Sonoma County Restaurant Week will continue the tradition of celebrating the finest Sonoma County food! From March 6 through March 12, 2017, participating restaurants will present fantastic food at fantastic prices.

**Two Meals - Three Great Prices**

The two-course prix-fixe lunch option will be offered again by participating restaurants, priced at \$10 or \$15. And, as always, all restaurants will offer a three-course prix-fixe dinner menu for \$19, \$29 or \$39.

There are no tickets or passes required. Food lovers can simply dine out at as many participating restaurants as they would like during Sonoma County Restaurant Week, explore new dining opportunities, or enjoy old favorites. Reservations are strongly recommended!

Visit <http://www.sonomacounty.com/restaurant-week> for full details.



Interested in joining our Ambassador Club?  
Contact the Chamber at  
[office@markwest.org](mailto:office@markwest.org)  
707-578-7975



To host a Ribbon Cutting, contact...  
Aggie Maggio  
[aggiemaggio@icloud.com](mailto:aggiemaggio@icloud.com)  
707-486-1303



Keep abreast of important information pertinent to local business issues: <http://edb.sonoma-county.org/>

### “WHAT’S THE SHORT STORY ABOUT LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS?”

It seems you can’t read anything about improving your website or boosting your search engine rankings without reading about keywords.

**So just what is a keyword and what do they do?** Keywords are the important words and phrases you write into your website to tell the world and the search engines what your business is all about. Keywords must be tailored to appeal to the target audience.

When someone types their search terms into a search engine to look for something, the search engine looks at a number of factors to decide which websites to place in the list of results. One of those factors is how well the keywords in the website match up with the search terms.

So let’s say you run a real estate business. You decide to pepper your website with a bunch of single words and short phrases that make you sound like a real estate business: real estate, property, investment, single-family, 3-and-2, lots, acreage, and other real-estatey words.

That’s a good start, but think about this: every other real estate office in the country has done the same thing and used those same “short-tail” keywords. How are you going to compete?

Short-tail keywords are called that because they are short. They are also non-specific and over-used. The worst thing is that when a web shopper uses a short-tail keyword, they are usually only browsing, or getting the lay of the land. Once they are serious, they will use far more detailed “long-tail” keywords to narrow down their choices and zero in on exactly what they want.

For a real estate business, some long-tail keywords might be...

- \* single-family homes for sale in Santa Rosa California
- \* investment property in Sonoma County California
- \* Wine Country agricultural land 10 acres and up
- \* Listing agent business property northbay

Studies have proven that the majority of searches are done using short-tail keywords, but that these searches yield a very low percentage of sales. Searches done with long-tail keywords are far fewer in number, but they yield a high percentage of sales. By working those long-tail keywords into your website copy, your web page titles, your URLs, and your descriptions, and by purchasing Google Adwords campaigns based on those long-tail keywords, you’ll be targeting your message to just your target audience. And that’s a very good thing.

If you are paying for an online campaign like Google Adwords, long-tails are cheaper because there is less competition for them.

Note that the location is written into each of the long-tail examples above. This is vital if you are promoting a location-sensitive business. Google and the other search engines are plenty smart enough to deliver pertinent local results, but you need to make your location clear.

Search engines are also really good with synonyms, so you don’t need to include every term in the dictionary for “real estate” or list every town in Sonoma County. They know where Guerneville is.

You may be tempted to cram as many keywords as you can imagine into your website copy. Don’t. The search engines are programmed to recognize “keyword stuffing” and will penalize you for it by ranking your site lower. Your best bet is to write like a human for other humans, and to use your keywords a couple times on each page in a logical, easy-to-read fashion.

Do your research. You need to use the keywords that your customers use to find you. There are many good tools online for doing keyword research, including Google Search Console, Google Adwords, and several for-pay options. These will tap into your website traffic, and reveal exactly what terms your customers really used to find your site. Learn from that, work those keywords into your website and your Google Adwords campaigns, and you’ll be well on your way to improving traffic from the search engines.

*Contributed by Peter Loughlin, Loughlin Marketing, [peter@loughlinmarketing.com](mailto:peter@loughlinmarketing.com)*

**MARK WEST AREA COMMUNITY INFORMATION**

AREA POPULATION - within a 3 mile radius - 20,000  
 ELEVATION - 160 feet above sea level  
 BOUNDARIES - Area approximately bounded by:  
 Shiloh Road - North Piner Road - South  
 West Olivet Road - West Lodge on Mark West Springs Rd - East

*The Lark Newsletter is published monthly under the direction of:*  
 The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center  
 4787 Old Redwood Hiwy, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

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Editor: Peter Loughlin, Loughlin Marketing  
 707-704-6498 peter@loughlinmarketing.com  
 Photography Credits: John Essman, Sonoma CONNECTION  
 707-433-8774 john@sonomaconnection.com

Deadline for publication is the 3rd Wednesday of the month.  
 Please email your materials to info@markwest.org

*Promote your business with  
 your flyer in the Chamber newsletter.  
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**CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP DUES**

*Effective May 1, 2006*

Standard Dues		Non-Profit Dues
\$125.00	Business (1-5 Personnel)	\$110.00
\$175.00	Business (6-10 Personnel)	\$155.00
\$245.00	Business (11+ Personnel)	\$215.00
\$625.00	Corporate Sponsor	
\$ 95.00	Individual (no business affiliation)	

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**OFFICERS**

*President*  
 Steve Plamann Aaction Rents  
 707-838-4373 stevep@aactionrents.com

*Past President*  
 Doug Williams  
 707-696-8244 dougw1955@aol.com

*Corporate Secretary*  
 Marnie Cameron Mark West Union School Dist.  
 707-524-2970 mcameron@mwusd.org

*Corporate Treasurer*  
 Sally Crain Broker at Century 21 Alliance  
 707-636-1629 sallycrain@hotmail.com

*VP Business Services*  
 Todd Anderson Best Western Plus  
 Wine Country Inn & Suites  
 707-545-9000 hixtodd@sbcglobal.net

*VP Community Services*  
 Margaret DiGenova California American Water  
 707-542-8329 Margaret.DiGenova@amwater.com

*VP Membership*  
 Position Open

*VP Public Relations*  
 Position Open

*VP Building Services (Temporary)*  
 Steve Plamann Aaction Rents  
 707-838-4373 stevep@aactionrents.com

**DIRECTORS**

Laura Buhner Exchange Bank, Larkfield Branch.  
 707-523-4392 laura.buhner@exchangebank.com

Tony Gheraldi Sonoma County Airport Express, Inc.  
 707-837-8700 tony@airportexpressinc.com

Peter Lescure Lescure Engineers, Inc.  
 707-575-3427 plescure@lescure-engineers.com

Erin McCauley Hilton Garden Inn  
 Sonoma County Airport  
 707-545-0444 Erin.McCauley@Hilton.com

Brian Molsberry Molsberry Markets, Inc.  
 707-546-5041 brianm@molsberrymarket.com

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## AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL

Thursday  
March 9, 2017  
5:30 - 7:30 pm

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