



Planning Director Tina Wehrmeister contributed a column to the *Pacifica Tribune* to connect with local residents and keep Pacificans informed on issues that are of current interest in the City of Pacifica. Below is the submission for the April 3, 2019 edition of the *Pacifica Tribune*, which focuses on the joys and opportunities of community engagement.

A Community Makes a City

I started my position as Pacifica's Planning Director four years ago and moved to Pacifica at the same time. After 20 years working as a planning professional, this is my first experience living in the city for which I work. For me, work includes reviewing and issuing permits for all types of development and making recommendations on a number of policy issues such as sea level rise adaptation and affordable housing. The Planning Department also does a considerable amount of community engagement. Our next large engagement event is on April 13th, and will focus on Housing. It's an understatement to say my job is diverse, interesting, and challenging.

As a new resident I came to appreciate the people of this community because everywhere I went there were smiles, kind words, and unselfish acts whether it be volunteering at the PRC or beach clean ups. Pacifica is an inspiring place to live because of the people, not to mention the natural beauty.

At work years ago I noticed that things seemed a little different. This is my perception and my colleagues may disagree, but it seemed that there was general discomfort with community engagement and it was avoided unless absolutely necessary-- not a desirable culture for a public service organization.

I am happy to say that things quickly started to change and are continuing to improve. City Manager Kevin Woodhouse has continued his predecessor's focus on community participation and transparency. For example, we are conducting a large effort to communicate the new approach to providing library services that includes keeping both Sanchez and Sharp Park branches open. We have seen favorable feedback and appreciation for listening to voter concerns about Sanchez.

Sometimes communicating effectively is difficult, we've all been there. The recent sea level rise adaptation meetings were difficult at times but also necessary and important. Despite the challenges, community engagement has become one of my favorite parts of the job. I enter with an open mind and leave feeling excited about the insight gained about how the community sees its future. Engagement has brought the attributes that I love about Pacifica into City Hall and the work we do – which, if you think about it, is where it belongs.

I hope to see more of you in the future participating in various opportunities to influence public policy decisions and the community of Pacifica. The City has established a webpage to find opportunities to get involved: www.cityofpacifica.org/pacificaconnects. There are on-line options, too – we know you're busy!

The next opportunity is coming up on Saturday, April 13th 9:30 am at the Pacifica Community Center. We are inviting the community to talk about the future of housing in Pacifica. This is a community-wide conversation – not a *Yes* or *No* debate. Everyone is welcome to share their thoughts and stories on the topic of housing. Free breakfast and child care services will be provided. RSVP at pacificaconnects.eventbrite.com.
