In May of this year, Ms. Kristie Riester resigned her position and returned to Arizona for the position of Community Services Director for the City of Maricopa, a city of similar size located south of the City of Phoenix. Her new position will be to manage parks, recreation and library operations. Upon her departure, I took the opportunity to assign the Human Resources Director as the interim Parks and Recreation Director. At that time, I indicated to the Council that I would be delaying the recruitment process to evaluate not only how the department operated but also to determine if there were organizational changes warranted that may improve delivery of services to the community.

In the process of reviewing how the Parks and Recreation Department operated; I also revisited the idea of consolidation of departments. The concept of consolidating the Library and Parks and Recreation departments has been discussed in the past and is typical for cities of our size and larger. The consolidation of the three departments, which included Economic Development, was a likely outcome of the review by this office. The three departments overall mission is to provide a better quality of life for our residents. Since the loss of Redevelopment Agencies in California, our City’s Economic Development Department (formerly Redevelopment Agency) has been able to focus on some of the most visible projects in El Centro. These projects include the Cruickshank and 8th Street Streets Improvement Project, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Sports Complex, the Skate Park, the rehabilitation of restrooms and snack bar facilities at Swarthout and Stark Fields, renovations at the Carlos Aquilar Park, the proposed El Centro Aquatic Center; negotiation of the temporary Main Library lease and business programs such as the City’s Business/Industrial Incubator Facility. The consolidation of the departments will improve the coordination of the projects and services for our community.

The City Council fully supported the consolidation of the three departments at the Council meeting on August 5, 2014. At that meeting the Community Services Department was created by approval of City Ordinances No. 14-15, No. 14-16, and No. 14-17. Both the Parks and Recreation Division and the Library have advisory committees that provide guidance to the City Council on policy. Both advisory committees, the Community Services Commission, and the Library Trustees will continue operating as they do today, with the addition of the Community Services Director being part of each meeting.

Operating a City is challenging and in spite of limited resources, our great City staff in all our departments gets the job done, and they do it well. Also, having the right person in place for the new Community Services Department is key to future success with these new divisions. As the Imperial Valley Press stated in their “Opinion” article on August 7, 2014, “We can see (Marcela) Piedra not just overseeing the operations but truly championing them as a driver to help get the necessary funding to keep the services robust and thriving.” The staff, in each division has also been extremely supportive of this reorganization and I wish to thank each of you for your help during this transition.

For more information on City projects or events, please visit www.cityofelcentro.org or contact the Community Services Department at (760) 337-4543.

Ruben A. Duran, City Manager
In May, 2014 the City Manager had the opportunity to evaluate the operation and administration of the three City Departments being proposed under one consolidated City Department known as the Community Services Department. The proposed organizational change is intended to improve the delivery of services to the community. For several years, there has been ongoing discussion on how the Library and the Parks and Recreation programs could be improved from the perspective of the people using the services. In many cities, the formal coordination of these departments has been the solution to address declining financial resources, and also meet the new expectations from the community. Ruben Duran, City Manager stated, “I believe with the tremendous staff talent that we already have will lead to better coordination with the new department, and ultimately lead to a better quality of life for our residents and visitors.”

Consolidating the departments of the Economic Development Department, Parks and Recreation, and the Library into the Community Services Department will lead to more opportunities to work together on obtaining grant funding for community projects, thereby increasing and improving the resource base, and also enhancing the planning capacity of projects that will provide a better quality of life and boost economic development in the City of El Centro.

Joint coordination between City departments is always ongoing for projects such as the latest capital projects, known as the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sports Complex, Skate Park, the renovation of City parks, and the proposed El Centro Aquatic Center. The Community Development Department, the Engineering Department, and the Economic Development Division jointly work together on these and other projects to promote the best possible outcome, as well as provide oversight and accountability for each step of the process for each of the City’s capital projects.

Another example of the Economic Development Division and Parks and Recreation Division working on a community project was Project PEACE – Promote Environmental Auto-Calming Endeavors which was focused in the downtown revitalization area. The Parks and Recreation Division came together with the Economic Development Division and created a community-wide event known as “Peace and Pumpkins” which was a fall festival in the Downtown Town Square. This event incorporated a walking program known as WOW – Wellness Outside Walkers (a takeoff of the ECRMC Mall Walking Program) as well as many exhibitors that catered to providing information and resources for a more healthy lifestyle. With the new consolidation of all three divisions, the new Community Services Department intends on offering events and activities that meet the needs of the community for a healthy, active and productive quality of life.
Business Recognition Program
IMAGINE Awards

The City of El Centro established the Business Recognition Program - IMAGINE in 2007 for the purpose of giving formal recognition to outstanding El Centro businesses that encompass all seven of the attributes in the acronym IMAGINE. Those attributes include the following categories: innovator, motivator, architect of change, genius, industrious, noble, and entrepreneur.

Each year seven businesses are chosen to receive special recognition in one of the seven categories. The IMAGINE awards nomination process is open to the public from the beginning of November through the end of February. Nominations may also be made through the City of El Centro website www.cityofelcentro.org. Every year a new award selection committee (which is made up of 80% private sector business owners) makes the final selections from the public nominations.

Businesses contribute to the economic well-being of the city, and each year the award recipients demonstrate a strong commitment to the future of our community. On behalf of our IMAGINE sponsors each year, and the City of El Centro, it is a pleasure to honor these businesses for their contributions in making El Centro a vibrant community and special place to live, work, and play.

For more information on the IMAGINE Business Recognition Awards Program, please visit www.cityofelcentro.org/communityservices or call the Economic Development Division at (760) 337-4543.

Thank you to all our Sponsors
Architect of Change - Imperial Valley Auto Mall
David Merrill and Bill Thomas, Owners

Entrepreneur - Desert Security Services
Norm Brown, Owner

Genius - Valley Endoscopy Center
Dr. Hussein El-Newhi and Dr. Mohammed Suliman, Owners

Industrious - China Palace Steakhouse
Mario Ye, Owner

Noble - International Farm Services
Gustavo Beltran, Owner
Local Entrepreneurs
Making Valuable Products and Services

The City of El Centro has been managing and operating the Business/Industrial Incubator Facility since April of 2005. The incubator facility was funded with $1.29 million dollars of investment from the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The purpose of a business incubator is to assist businesses with the start and expansion of their business needs. Since 2005, the businesses from the City’s Business Incubator Facility have created 112 full-time jobs.

Six local businesses that are growing and expanding are Deluxe Vapes, Gila Innovations, Half Baked Powder Coating, HydroScientific West, RDF Certified HERS Raters, and Thompson Machine. They are all located in the City’s Business/Industrial Incubator Facility, located at 703 Industry Way in El Centro.

The far reaching potential of these businesses is due to the impressive innovative capabilities of the business owners. They all have created entrepreneurial businesses that meet the needs not only of the local community, but they compete nationally to become leading providers of goods and services. Locating their businesses at the City’s Business/Industrial Incubator Facility in east El Centro provides them efficient access to markets, and close proximity to major transportation corridors, such as Interstate 8.

Meet these outstanding businesses and contact them for more information as to how they may assist you in your commercial business needs, or your personal recreation activities such as off-road racing, boating, and other sports.

Deluxe Vapes
703 Industry Way, Suite 8, El Centro, CA 92243
Contact: Robert Rodriguez, 619-339-6375
Email: Rob.Rodriguez@DeluxeVapes.com
Website: www.DeluxeVapes.com

Products and services: Manufacture and distribution of electronic cigarettes and accessories.

Gila Innovations
703 Industry Way, Suite 7, El Centro, CA 92243
Contact: Mark Beleu, 928-373-9723
Email: Mark@GilaInnovations.com
Website: www.GilaInnovations.com

Products and services: Agriculture and Industrial Supplies, Hydraulic and Pneumatic Components, Material Handling and Conveyor Systems, Safety and Janitorial Supplies.
Half Baked Powder Coating
703 Industry Way, Suite 3, El Centro, CA 92243
Contact: Ryan Figueroa, 760-791-7858
Email: ryan@rkairnet
Website: www.facebook.com/halfbakedpowdercoating
Products and services: Metal and Sand Blast, Protective Coating, Finish Guaranteed.

RDF Certified HERS Raters
703 Industry Way, Suite 2, El Centro, CA 92243
Contact: Ryan Figueroa, 760-791-7858
Email: ryan@rkairnet
Products and services: Performs energy efficient testing on duct work for air conditioning/heating leakages.

HydroScientific West
703 Industry Way, Suite 6, El Centro, CA 92243
Contact: Ron Nauman, 858-486-8825
Email: mauman@hydroscientificwest.com
Website: www.hydroscientificwest.com
Products and services: HydroScientific West is a full service instrumentation and controls firm that designs, supplies, and installs flow and process instrumentation with an emphasis on the water/wastewater and irrigation industries. They are a licensed C10 contractor in support of instrumentation/control applications.

Thompson Machine
703 Industry Way, Suites 4 & 5, El Centro, CA 92243
Contact: Rich Thompson, 760-554-2070
Email: richhuntsdl2@gmail.com
Products and services: Precision CNC machined products, machined & welded assemblies, geothermal petrochemical parts such as pump and valve part and/or assemblies.

For more information on the City’s Business/Industrial Incubator Facility, please contact the City’s Community Services Department at (760) 337-4543.
Story Time at the El Centro Public Library

There is a special event every Wednesday at the El Centro Library just for young children, ages 2 to 5 years of age. “Story Time” is hosted by Roland Banks, the Library Director who continues to encourage young children to learn about the wonderful world of reading and learning. “Story Time” includes many aspects of learning during the one hour session. Children learn how to develop their listening skills, they learn about their ABC’s, colors, counting, music, puppets, arts, and crafts.

For more information on “Story Time” and all Library programs and services, please visit the El Centro Public Library located at 1140 N. Imperial Avenue. The Library staff is dedicated to providing information and assistance in a friendly and welcoming environment. For more information, please see the website: www.cityofelcentro.org/library or call (760) 337-4565.