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AVENAL CITY COUNCIL ADVANCES GROWTH, SAFETY & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS



Avenal, CA – The Avenal City Council meeting on February 27, 2025, brought forward critical updates on planning and economic development, PG&E's infrastructure investments, and public safety measures, including the status of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. Here's a breakdown of the key discussions and what they mean for the community.

Planning and Economic Development: Building a Brighter Future

The city's planning department is making strides in shaping Avenal's future, with several projects in the pipeline:

- **7th Avenue General Plan Amendment and Rezone:** This major project is set to go before the Planning Commission next week, with a final decision expected at the March 27 [City Council meeting](#). The amendment aims to align land use with the city's long-term growth goals.
- **community Garden Proposal:** A new application for a community garden with a **Conditional Use Permit (CUP)** has been submitted. The project includes compost



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garden beds and educational programs, with a tentative review by the Planning Commission in April.

- **Housing Element Update:** The city is working with [Kings County](#) on the **Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element**, which includes an **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)** analysis. This effort will address housing needs, displacement, and [homelessness](#), ensuring Avenal meets state requirements while prioritizing community needs.

Kelsey George, the city's planning consultant, emphasized the importance of these projects: "These initiatives are about more than just development—they're about creating opportunities for our residents and ensuring Avenal remains a vibrant, inclusive community."

Economic Development and Grant Writing: Securing Funding for Growth

Emily Ingersoll, the city's grants manager, provided updates on [economic](#) development and grant opportunities:

- **Avenal Water Storage Tank Project:** The city continues to work with Congressman David Valadao's office to secure \$4 million in federal [funding for this critical infrastructure](#) project.
- **Attracting New [Businesses](#):** The city is preparing to attend the **ICSC Conference** in Las Vegas in May, where they will pitch Avenal to major retailers and restaurants like Popeyes, KFC, and Raising Cane's.

Ingersoll also highlighted several upcoming grant opportunities, including the **Burn State Crisis and Prevention Program** and the **Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative**, both due in April.



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PG&E Update: Stabilizing Rates and Investing in Infrastructure

Nathan Alonso, PG&E's local government affairs representative, shared updates on the utility's efforts to stabilize rates and modernize infrastructure:

- **Bill Stabilization:** After years of rising rates, PG&E expects bills to stabilize in the coming years, with potential reductions in 2025 as wildfire safety costs are phased out.
- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** PG&E has invested \$1.5 billion in capacity upgrades to meet growing electric demand, driven by state policies requiring new developments to be 100% electric.
- **Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant:** PG&E is advocating to extend the operating life of Diablo Canyon, which provides 11% of California's electricity. The plant's future remains uncertain as the state weighs its energy needs against environmental concerns.

Alonso also announced plans for a **town hall meeting** in Avenal to educate residents about PG&E's programs, including the **CARE program** for low-income customers and energy-saving tips.

Public Safety: School Resource Officer and Community Policing

The status of the **School Resource Officer (SRO)** program remains in limbo, as the city and the Richgrove Sunset High School District continue negotiations. Mayor Pro Tem Tony expressed optimism about reaching a resolution soon, emphasizing the importance of having an SRO on campus to ensure student safety.

In addition, the [Avenal Police Department](#) is expanding its community policing efforts, with events like **Coffee with the Cop** and the **Teddy Bear Drive** fostering stronger ties between officers and residents. Chief Velasco also highlighted the success of the department's **Explorer Program**, which is set to launch in partnership with Scouting America.



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Hot Topic: Balancing Growth and Public Safety

One of the most pressing issues discussed was the need to balance [Avenal's growth with public safety](#). As the [city attracts new businesses](#) and residents, ensuring adequate infrastructure, housing, and law enforcement resources will be critical.

"We're at a pivotal moment for Avenal," said Mayor Pro Tem Tony. "We have to grow responsibly, making sure our community remains safe, affordable, and welcoming for everyone."

How You Can Stay Informed and Engaged

What do you think about [Avenal's plans](#) for growth and public safety? Share your thoughts in the comments, like this post, and spread the word to keep the conversation going!

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