

The Oxnard Harbor District Port of Hueneme convened a successful meeting of partners to discuss the future of a port that is agile to business and military opportunities, while playing an even bigger role within the community it serves.

Board of Harbor Commissioners President Jess Herrera invited area business leaders and officers from Naval Base Ventura County to the Harbor Future Forum at CSUCI on Nov. 6. The day-long forum was followed by the second annual Commission President's Dinner the same night at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

The forum was designed to bring together the partners who will help shape the future role of the Port of Hueneme. The Port is a unique economic engine in Ventura County and businesses that support our harbor create up to 4,500 jobs contributing \$650 million to the local economy.

The co-sponsors with the Oxnard Harbor District for the event were Naval Base of Ventura County, CSUCI and the Oxnard Economic Development Corporation.

The highlight of the forum was a presentation by John Vickerman of Vickerman Associates, an expert in port use and planning.

Vickerman described a future for ports in which cargo is moved seamlessly. Rather than the "load-unload-load-unload" system of the past, Vickerman described a future in which less land is needed because cargo is integrated in an automated system that conveys it with little wasted effort.

Ships are getting larger, Vickerman said, carrying more cargo. The seamless, efficient movement of cargo is critical because there is little land around most ports for expansion and roads surrounding them are congested.

Anthony Taormina, Executive Director of the Port of Hueneme, said one of the goals of the forum was to ensure that our port does not become limited by lack of land or traffic congestion.

Vickerman said the 2011 opening of a wider, deeper Panama Canal will open up maritime trade in substantial ways. It is a necessary evolution, Vickerman said, because business demands faster, cheaper, more efficient logistics.

"The customer wants more and is always willing to pay less for it," Vickerman said.

Capt. Brad Connors, commander of Naval Base Ventura County, talked about the Navy's future reliance on private contractors to do work that was once jealously guarded by the military. Judging from the comments of several who attended, Connors' comments were welcome and helped set the tone. His remarks demonstrated the desire of the Navy to work cooperatively with the port in using the harbor. The Port of Hueneme would love a future that includes more joint use of the Harbor with the Navy, knowing, of course, that military needs and national security take precedence, said Taormina.

The future for the port is rooted in increased cooperation with the Navy regarding security, productivity and transportation issues to overcome freight and defense capacity constraints, Taormina said.

Ashish Vaidya, professor of economics at CSUCI, detailed the changing future of the Ventura County economy during his luncheon speech.

The day concluded with a dinner attended by more than 150 community leaders and elected officials, including 3rd District Supervisor Kathy Long whose district includes the port.