

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – September 18, 2012 – Synopsis and Commentary

--John Necker, a Sebastopol Citizen

All council members were present for this meeting.

The CORE Project <http://the-core-project.org/> made a presentation to the council regarding their application to the AIA's Sustainable Design Assessment Program <http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS075425> }. They are asking for the City to draft a letter of support and later will ask for a \$5000.00 check to launch this program. Basically it will bring in “objective experts” to meet with the city stake holders to identify what primary issues should be addressed. Then three to seven experts will return for a three day visit to work on the issues that were agreed to. The AIA will make a \$15,000.00 donation to support help support group which will represent \$200,000.00 to \$300,000.00 of pro bono work. This process is meant to be very open and the public is encouraged to participate. It is thought that the City of Sebastopol has a very good chance to be successful with this application. There will be no cost to Sebastopol until it has been granted and the City agrees. This has proven very useful in other cities.

Council Member Shaffer presented a request to look into a “Good Neighbor Policy” that would help neighbors resolve minor problems informally. It has been used in other cities and staff will report back with more information and it will be explored in more detail then. Most of the Council thought it a good enough idea to pursue at this level. Council Member Gurney expressed a list of concerns but in the end agreed to let staff look into it.

Council Member Slater introduced discussion to require new commercial buildings of over 4,000 square feet to have a working solar energy system. Slater and Vice Mayor Kyes will form a sub committee to study it preliminarily.

Kyes introduced an idea to have a volunteer group to remove invasive plants from the “Railroad Forest Area” (This is a large area along the Joe Rodota Trail). Overrun with blackberries, the plan is for volunteers to come in with some power tools and level the plants, cleanup the area and then maintain it.

This Herculean task will have to overcome insurance issues first and staff is looking into that. An interesting point is that it will require herbicide spraying. That point was not approached by any member of the Council except Slater who expressed concern but deferred to the “experts.”

Kyes then introduced his idea to extend Abbot Avenue to Morris Street. Staff will get back to him with more data. Perhaps by then he will have discovered a way to pay for the extension.

City Council Candidates Watch

Kathy Austin encouraged the Sustainable Design Assessment Program and pledged her support.

Robert Jacob and **Kathy Austin** both supported the proposed solar ordinance.

John Eder hoped for more but “...it has to start somewhere” and could be used if the CVS issue returns to the Council. He also objected to the Good Neighbor idea, expressed concern about “deputizing” citizens and feared it would “...turn into a cross between Mr. Rogers and the KGB.” He didn't elaborate on that. He did manage to launch inept barb in the direction of SebastopolCitizens.org that had something to do with leaf blowers and noise. He didn't elaborate on that either.

None of them commented spraying herbicides in the Laguna and there was only one complaint from the public. Other public comments were the usual.