

## Sebastopol City Council Meeting – August 21, 2012 – Synopsis and Commentary

--John Necker, Sebastopol Citizen

After a six and a half hour meeting, the City Council voted 3:2 (Gurney and Kyes in the minority) to approve the CVS project. Although there are still some details to be ironed out, the CVS project appears to be on its way.

As they did in the August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, Gurney and Kyes did all they could to scuttle the project.

Gurney lead the way, sometimes displaying irritation toward Planning Director Webster who would often try to answer her convoluted and hypothetical questions in a clear and rational manner. She often referred to the project as a “suburban strip mall.” She again and again tried to make changes in the language of the resolution that would require more study and effectively stop the project.

Late in the meeting Gurney produced photos of a Chase bank in Santa Cruz, criticizing it as a “corporate” design. She went on to say that the architect had “...pulled the wool over our eyes...” when he promised to do a building “...just for us. Apparently she didn't have the good manners to show these photos to Armstrong Development until the last minute. However, Armstrong pointed out, one by one, the glaringly embarrassing differences between the Sebastopol and Santa Cruz structures. This clearly had no impact on Council Member Gurney at all and it is now appears she will try to block the progress of the Chase bank to stop the project as a whole. Like Council Member Kyes, she seems to be oblivious to the legal ramifications of her comments and criticisms.

Kyes, at the very beginning of discussions, seemed surprised to hear from Mayor Wilson that several items he wanted to address were made moot by the 3:2 vote on August 7<sup>th</sup>. He continued to argue that they had not been resolved even after being advised by the City Manager/Attorney that, in fact, his points had been settled on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Finally he relented and went on to state that Armstrong should now just remove the only tree on the site since the development was going to kill it anyway. These remarks come several weeks after he thought

the tree to be a protected species which he clearly thought would stop the project. Mayor Wilson viewed this as a “mercy killing” and prevailed in his idea to leave the tree and hope for the best.

Kyes then went on to ask Armstrong to remove the light tubes and replace them with LED lighting. Armstrong agreed but noted that the light tubes were there because they were directed to do so by the City Council.

Slater, Shaffer and Wilson all seemed to accept the fact that Armstrong had followed the law and should be allowed to proceed. The changes the three sought seemed to be based more on establishing clarity and not on inhibiting the process.

**Council Member Shaffer** said in her comments before the vote, she would prefer something else at the site but Armstrong had worked with the City and followed the process and the law so there was no basis for denial.

The other candidates for the two upcoming City Council seats spoke during Public comments.

**John Eder** said he was “astonished” at the level of opposition he found to the project, ruminated on what results a referendum would have upon the project, saw the bank as an “enigma” and gave technical advice regarding beer storage at CVS.

**Kathy Austin** found “...people to be sick of the whole thing and wonder why it hasn't been approved.” She felt that a process shouldn't be changed in “midstream.”

**Robert Jacob** spoke to establishing a better and clearer process where we can work together, learn from this experience and move forward. He stressed it was time to reunite.

Well, reuniting was the last thing the twenty-four speakers had on their minds during Public Comment.

Some of the more interesting ones follow:

The city could have "...grabbed the two corrupt corporations by the scruff of the neck and just said 'No!'"

After ranting against the mayor a speaker declared he "loved the mayor." The mayor stated that he "loved him.." too.

One speaker managed to find a breach of the Ten Commandments in the project.

Another speaker cited "Alice In Wonderland" although "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" would have been more accurate in many ways.

Another speaker against the project apologized for his poor memory, blaming it on "...all the drugs I did in the Seventies."

"Why does CVS want to move? They just sell liquor and plastic junk from China."

Our "spiritual uniqueness" will be compromised by the project.

Those speaking for the project were much less entertaining.

Then, alas, the usual fellow attacked Staff with the same lack of accuracy and skill that are his trademarks.

At the end, there were about ten members of the public in attendance-some pro and some con.