

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – March 3, 2015 – Synopsis and Commentary

All Council Members were present.

Public Comment (AKA Open Mike):

Our brief flirtation with sanity ended as the usual speakers lined up to bore us all with convoluted plots that we have all heard before. And the source of their fears – the Internet. Here's an exercise for you. Think of something really wacky and see how long it takes you to verify it on the Internet. If it takes more than a few minutes, your Internet connection has problems.

In the real world: The [Chamber of Commerce](#) showed us a good article in the [San Jose Mercury News](#) about Sebastopol. This information was received rather coolly by a thin-skinned City Council that does not suffer criticism well. And to make matters worse, the generation of all this good press had nothing at all to do with the Council's beloved **\$20,000 Cittaslow**.

[Lantern](#) pitched its case for a new library.

Consent Calendar Items:

Brace yourselves for [Park\(ing\) Day 2015](#). Although **Mayor Slayter sponsored this item**, it's something that former Mayor Jacob lit the fuse on several months ago. So, on September 18th, some parking spaces on highways 12 and 116 will be [“converted to park space for people.”](#) (Evidently, no dogs allowed.) **The CORE Project** is hoping to get an encroachment permit from the State of California to do this. It is also hoping it's a blanket permit so it can **do this as it pleases**. It also plans to create them **permanently**.

Maybe they will set up a mini beer garden in a parking space, where we can all sip beer and inhale carbon monoxide with virtually no separation between cars and people on a State highway. It might be a good idea to set up a little triage in a parking space close by. The Council passed this 5:0 without discussion.

Public Hearing:

There was a **two-hour-and-five-minute discussion** about the **Housing Element of the General Plan**. The State of California requires the element and has actually pre-approved it. It is only a framework anyway and codifies very little except that which the State requires. Staff liked it. The Planning Commission liked it. Even Mayor Slayter and Council Member Eder liked it. But **Council Member Jacob didn't like it** and, to a lesser extent, neither did Council Members Glass and Gurney.

Council Member Jacob wants to build **more than 120 low-income units in Sebastopol**. He wants 360. And even though it was explained to him many times and in many ways that the State was only requiring the City to provide an environment to build 120 units (not the actual units) he steadfastly insisted on writing something into the housing element that would bind future Councils to his desires.

So, on a 3:2 vote, with Mayor Slayter and Council Member Eder in the minority, it will be rehashed later. **If it's not back to the State by May 30th**, the City will have to do it again every four years instead of eight at an expense of about \$40,000 a pop.

Discussion and Action Items:

The Council received a presentation from the De Novo Planning Group, consultants for the General Plan update. We are about halfway through the process. [More information here.](#)

The expansion of the **Skate Park** was discussed. Many individuals with residences on Flynn Street expressed concern about the lighting and hours. Earlier you may have read here of support for lighting but now that the neighborhood is complaining, the issue isn't as clear.

What is clear is the City will install lighting on 15' poles, fencing and play structures. There will be some restrictions on nighttime use. The vote was 5:0.

After the vote and after addressing the residents, Council Member Eder said, "you have our commitment" that there won't be any lighting or noise issues.

The Council discussed filling the **vacancy on the Design Review Board** created by the recent resignation of Robert Beauchamp. His letter of resignation, **highly critical** of the City, the Council and the **Design Review Board** itself was rebutted, point by point, by **Council Member Gurney**.

The Council then voted to replace him with Alexis Persinger, a licensed architect, a ten-year resident of the City and a current holder of a business license here. Even though Mr. Persinger wasn't present at the previous interview process, the Council relied mostly on Mayor Slayter's recommendation of him and he was seated on 4:0:1. Council Member Eder rescued himself. [More information at the Sonoma West Times and News.](#)

A Parting Shot:

A note to Council Member Jacob: The State of California is placing no restrictions on how many low-income units Sebastopol chooses to build. All it needs is a developer that will build them here and is willing to face our Design Review Board and the City Council. Good luck with that!

Elapsed Time: **4:15**

John Necker