

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – August 5, 2014 – Synopsis and Commentary

All Council members were present.

Proclamations:

We were introduced to Victor Aguilar, a pleasant looking young man who is our newest police officer. Your chances of meeting him will increase if you drink and drive during the graveyard shift. Andrew Maxwell, whose academic achievements are impressive, will fill Officer Aguilar's reserve position. Maintenance worker Fidel Quintero and Engineering Director Sue Kelly were recognized for their years of service to the City—10 and 25 years respectively.

[Key Auto Body](#) was recognized for all the *free* work it has performed on City vehicles over the years.

And the Mayor proclaimed August [Gravenstein Apple](#) month.

Public Comment: (aka open mike)

A few of the usual suspects showed up for this and are in danger of being ignored here if they don't start getting some new material. Come on, update your act! The only good one was a lady linking EMF and cell phones to mind control. [Her thinking can be explained by this fine documentary](#). Whoa! There's an app for that?!

Other speakers who have somehow still avoided this plot, spoke of having a little faith in [GPAC](#), another gave us an update on what [LANTERN](#) was doing and **Cittaslow** proudly announced that it had put up signs around town to guide us all to Ives Park, Florence Street, and the Laguna. Some of us can already find those places—finding the reading glasses is the problem!

Consent Calendar:

Nine items sailed through without discussion, most of them routine. Included was the extension of the contract for our City Manager and the rejection of a claim from someone who didn't like his sewer bill.

Presentations:

Our above-mentioned City Engineering Director got us up to speed on the **State Water Conservation Emergency Regulations**. Sebastopol is in the fortunate position of having plenty of water and is doing a good job of not overusing it. The State, however, is going to require us to move to **Stage 2**, which should not be that difficult to deal with unless you are constantly refilling your swimming pool, stealing water from a fire hydrant, or washing your car while just letting the hose run. (Really? People still do that?) There may be some restrictions on irrigation. This will be clarified at the September 2nd Council meeting.

Discussion and Action Items:

In March of 2014, [The Sebastopol Village Building Convergence](#) (VBC) made a presentation to the City wherein they proposed to trick up our town, which they evidently find lacking. To correct this gross oversight, they have planned a 10-day festival (September 12-21) to make us look more respectable. Since March, City staff has met with them about safety, permits, insurance, fees, and other issues, but **VBC** “did not begin to provide specific information on project proposals or file a preliminary application” **until late July**. Well, your city just felt compelled to **expedite** the review of the project. In addition to putting even more pressure on over-worked city staff, it has effectively bypassed the **Design Review Board, the Planning Commission, the Public Arts Committee, and “a desirable review process.”**

Here's what the City Council did:

- Assured itself that all safety, logistical, and other impacts have been addressed .
- Waived an insurance requirement that essentially leaves the City liable for damages.
- Waived the event fee (4@\$75.00). Well, sort of. **Mayor Jacob** will pay these fees out of his own pocket.
- Set a precedent that other “first-time” groups can use to bypass closer scrutiny.

This is how fast a project can get approved if **favored by the City Council**. The last time something got approved this quickly was the removal of berries at the Railroad Brier Patch—a project done so poorly that the City was held to task by the **Water Quality Control Board and the Open Space District**. Prior to that was the renaming of Downtown Plaza in honor of Mario Savio with **virtually no public input**. Both of these were approved in minutes.

Meanwhile, other projects linger in legislative limbo. A project across from Fircrest Market on Hwy 116 was approved by every city agency but, because one person appealed its approval, it is, yet again, grinding its way through this process that took **VBC less than an hour**. That project on Hwy 116 has gone begging for over a year. No expediting for these second-rate citizens!

The VBC project **passed 5:0 in less than an hour**.

This is no way to run a city.

The Annual League of California Cities has asked its cities for a position on a resolution asking the Governor and Legislature to take action regarding “the devastating environmental impacts of illegal marijuana growth on both private and public lands.” **Major Jacob** was decidedly against supporting that resolution. Since the Mayor sells marijuana for a living, one could hardly expect him to support something that threatens his suppliers. But no, he claims all the resolution would do is further criminalize those who are “*forced*” to grow illegally due to badly written current laws. Forced?! Forced?! Well, the poor dears! No wonder they’re shootin’ mad.

It was quite entertaining to watch the council members try to be pro pot and environmental activists at the same time. So, on September 2nd, **Mayor Jacob** will produce a resolution that will allow them to do just that. That should be a work of art!

A Parting Shot!

Fortunately for me, no one is trying to prevent the [pouring of a good martini](#) on private and public land!

John Necker

Duration 3.5