

Sebastopol City Council Meeting-June 5, 2012

Synopsis and Commentary

—John Necker Sebastopol Citizen

All Council Members were present as were several visitors from the Ukraine as part of the Open World Program to observe our local politics in action. They were assisted by an interpretor but one can only wonder how close she could come to capturing some of the more unique issues of our fair city.

Public comments, for example, had the usual speaker decrying Lyme disease, EMF hazards and some vague issues with Palm Dive hospital. A new speaker showed up to warn us of heavy metals being sprayed in the skies by the government to control global warming (she was probably referring to the U.S. Government but maybe not). The added twist here was the low level spraying which she pointed out made the clouds gray.

Buffie Harris and Marghe Mills Thyssen were appointed to the Public Arts Committee by a 5:0 vote.

The General Plan expires on December 31, 2014 and the City doesn't have the \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 to update the old one which was last done in 1994-95. With the help of staff, the Council, on a 5:0 vote agreed to a combination making a simple amendment to the Growth Management Program that would continue the 25 units/year allowance and engaging the SSU Environment Planning and Studies Department to start the basis of a future plan update. SSU has done this with other cities including Cotati which eventually accepted the their plan with very few changes. The direct cost to the City for this would be \$15,000. This passed by a 5:0 vote.

Council Member Gurney introduced some ideas to make the project approval process collegial. Council Member Shaffer introduced some ideas about upgrading the art at City Hall. Both will be investigated at the sub committee level for now.

Vice Mayor Kyes introduced a 1/2% sales tax increase that would generate about \$1,000,000

per year which the City sorely needs. This was a big improvement on his last idea about revenue generating which was to borrow \$3,000,000. While it was clear that no one on Council wanted to raise taxes it was also clear that they saw this as the least painful way of doing it. It passed on a 4:1 vote with Council Member Shaffer dissenting. It will probably be on the November ballot for approval with the water and sewer rate increase.