

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – March 5, 2013 – Synopsis and Commentary

All Council members were present.

Mayor Kyes announced that the City had received a letter from the CPUC regarding the recent City ordinance enacting a moratorium on Smart Meter installations. (It looks like more litigation for Peacetown, USA.) He moved discussion of it to a closed session at the end of meeting and public comment on it was moved there too.

That meant that all public comment on Smart Meters would have to wait until the end of the evening. Nevertheless, several speakers were allowed to address the subject right then. One of them insisted on delivering her comment then because she “...couldn't stay until later.” Well, isn't she just special? One wonders if they had opposed the City's questionable ordinance, would they have not heard the gavel sooner.

Some of the public commentators who could follow instructions:

- ✧ Thanked the police department for their help with safety at the skateboard park
- ✧ Announced the 6th annual Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival from March 21st-24th. Find out more at <http://www.sebastopolfilmfestival.org/>
- ✧ Fingered the UN for “plotting our decline”-whatever that means
- ✧ Declared Occupy would remove its tent from the Mario Savio Free Speech Plaza (aka The Downtown Plaza) no later than April 8th-----of THIS year.

Do you suppose that Occupy decided to leave because of us wanting a tent there too? Isn't that kind of like, “Well, there goes the neighborhood!” We would have been good neighbors too. There would have been no EMF hazards, no leaf blowers, no Smart Meters, no UN plots and no marijuana - medical or otherwise.

Consent Calendar

The City approved the City Manager Contract. Our new City Manager is Larry McLaughlin, who is our current city attorney and he will fill that position as well.

Informational Presentations

Henry Mikus spoke for the [Sonoma County Waste Management Agency Board](#). Much of his talk was of an “administrative” nature but go to the link above to get some practical solutions about disposing of household hazards, including paint and e-waste.

Discussion and Action

There was way too much discussion on how to come up with the \$560.00 Council Member Slater needed to hire a bus to pick up our Sebastopol World Friends group visiting from Japan at the airport. The Council was finally able to do the math but what a waste of management time it was.

Then there was a discussion about a driveway connection between the Burnett Street Parking lot (the big one on South Main) and the lesser known *free public parking* hidden behind the Chamber of Commerce. It's short walk to the Post Office if you are brave enough to cross there. There were some administrative issues voiced by Sue Kelly, Engineering Director, but she was ready to look into it. Basically it would connect the two lots losing just four spaces and no trees. A member of the public had the whole project all figured out for them and presented a very strong case for moving forward with it.

Well, Council Member Gurney didn't like anything about the idea, referring to it as a “dead zone” and questioned the notion that there was a parking problem downtown. She wasn't alone. The idea failed on a 3:2 with Kyes and Jacob in the minority.

Oh, there are some “dead zones” in Sebastopol alright!

Doing something about the old Johnson Street (the dirt area near the theater) never even got off the ground. It's now private property, has a high pressure gas line below the surface and needs resurfacing even if the City could afford to buy it. It failed 5:0. Although Council member Gurney thought it would be a good idea to plant flowers there the other members didn't want to have anything to do with it.

The Ives Park Renovation Plan was presented. It got a lot of support from the public but less so from the Council. Council Member Eder wanted an ADA ramp added immediately. Council Member Gurney wanted that plus a connection to the Joe Rodota Trail via what she again referred to as a "the dead zone" that will not be connected to the Burnett Street Parking lot. Mayor Kyes had interviewed five people at the park (only two of which actually lived in town and one from Sonoma, one from Santa Rosa and another from "...just out of town"). Based on that vast random sample he concluded the whole plan need reconsideration. Council Member Slater liked the plan that has been in the works for years and suggested the City adopt it. It passed 4:1 with Kyes in the minority.

The last public business concerned a proposed ordinance governing inspection and repair of lateral sewer lines in the City. This is in response to a lawsuit won by River Watch due to seepage of sewage into ground water. About 15 people stayed until the bitter end (past 11:00) to make public comment. All spoke against the ordinance on one or more of these points:

- Private property owners should not be responsible for maintaining the laterals in the public right-of-way, as it is written in the current ordinance. The new ordinance would expand private responsibility all the way to the main line.
- A point-of-sale clause was included as a trigger to cause an inspection and potential repair. This aspect was derided as both ineffective for solving the problem and unfair to real estate professionals.
- Water and Sewer rates have just been set to double over the next few years. The shifting of financial burden from the City to private parties is onerous.

This topic is far from over. Some discussion was held by Council, but will get added to a future agenda for more deliberation.

--John Necker