

Sebastopol City Council Meetings – January 6, 2015 – Synopsis and Commentary

The special meeting to interview applicants for seats on the design review board and planning commission started at 3:00 pm. All Council members were present.

Those applying for two openings on the **Planning Commission** were:

- Michael Jacob
- Zachary Douch*
- Michael Carnacchi

In answering the questions presented by the Council, Mr. Jacob expressed a wish for more guidance from the Council, denser growth, less automobiles and felt our parking issues were more a matter of perception than fact.

Mr. Douch also hoped for more guidance, had the same opinion of parking issues, commented on how difficult it is to define “formula business” and said that ordinances should be created for **what is wanted, instead of what is *not* wanted.**

Mr. Carnacchi envisioned an electric rail system connecting large parking lots north and south of town and to the Smart Train. He said that parking just wasn't being used wisely and that becoming a tourist destination was a good idea because it would bring money into town.

Those applying for three opening on the **Design Review Board** were:

- Zachary Douch*
- Ted Luthin
- Christine Level

Council Member Eder recused himself at this point because he has a matter before the DRB.

Responding to questions, Mr. Douch reiterated that we need stronger guidelines, especially in the residential area, that some members of the DRB have different “boundaries” regarding respect for members and the public, and that we need more density downtown.

Mr. Luthin said there is often disagreement on the board but if it becomes acrimonious, he prefers not to engage. He too feels we need stronger guidelines and some sort of vetting process at a very early stage before plans even get to the DRB.

Ms. Level thought that a stronger chairperson might reduce the level of rudeness. She believes the Board can be arbitrary and inconsistent and that consistency is what we need.

*Applied in both categories.

This meeting ended on time. Duration 2:00

Well, this lot was a big improvement [over last year](#) in that all of them seemed to have told the truth about their qualifications.

The regular City Council meeting started at 6:00pm.

Proclamations/Presentations

- A certificate of appreciation was given to Administrative Services Director, Karen Cano, who is retiring. She will be replaced by Ana Kwong.
- A proclamation honoring the [Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation](#) for 25 years of service was read.

Public Comment: (aka open mike)

Weak. Oh, [Miss Sonoma County](#) stopped by to say hi.

Discussion and Action Items:

The Council seated the following applicants on the Planning Commission with little debate:

- Michael Jacob
- Zachary Douch

The Design Review business was a little more complicated. **Mayor Slayter stated he wanted more applicants** and would ask the sitting members to continue serving while the City reopened the application process. This would leave Ms. Level, a licensed and practicing civil engineer as an alternate, denying her full membership. Several members of the public spoke on her behalf but to no avail. **Council Member Jacob** said he had no confidence in Ms. Level as she had politicized the process by asking others to speak in her behalf. **Politicized the DRB! He was shocked, shocked to find that politics were going on in the DRB!** Apparently politicizing wasn't as shocking when *he* attacked CVS or when *he* asked for a show of hands in a Council meeting jacked up with his anti-smart meter zealots in an obvious attempt to intimidate those who might want smart meters.

Council Member Gurney and, after a good deal of waffling, **Council Member Glass** both voted to seat Ms. Level, someone with both experience and qualifications. **Mayor Slayter and Council Member Jacob voted against.**

By a 2:2 vote, the applications will open again – this time to fill only two seats. A 4:0 vote installed Mr. Luthin.

So if you want to be on the DRB, get your application in and don't worry about your qualifications. It's just a popularity contest.

Consent Calendar:

An ordinance banning drive-throughs ([see what we'll be missing](#)) and the contract for the City Clerk were approved 5:0.

Informational Item/Presentation:

There was a report on the 2014 Minute Orders upon which the City Council had taken action. Minute orders are a less formal way of getting business done on things that are not going to set everyone's hair on fire. Last year the Council dealt with 202 agenda items and 61 resolutions.

Public Hearing:

In 1976 the City created a business district that included:

1. Acquisition, construction or maintenance of parking facilities
2. Decoration of any public place

3. Promotion of public events
4. Furnishing music in any public place
5. General promotion of retail trade.

For reasons unknown, in 1977, items 3-5 were dropped. The Sebastopol Downtown Association (180+ businesses) is now asking for them to be restored and the **self-assessed taxes** downtown business owners pay be transferred to the Sebastopol Downtown Association bank account. The Downtown Association brings you the Christmas lights, supports the [Rotary Cajun Festival](#) and the [Kiwanis](#), and provides print and radio advertisement. Since its reestablishment, the members have seen their sales increase every year. Ahh... measurable results! Their request was passed 5:0

Discussion and Action Items:

The discussion of getting naturally occurring arsenic in our drinking water down to 5 ppb continued. The federal and state standards are 10 ppb but **then Mayor Jacob**, without offering any scientific reasoning for his position, believed it should be 5 ppb. The report by the Superintendent of Public Works made it abundantly clear that we can't get our water down to 5 ppb with our present system. Getting well 7 alone down to that number would require an extra annual expenditure of about \$20,000. It again begs the question: **Why not 2.5 or even 0?** (On January 22, 2001 the EPA adopted a new standard of 10 ppb, replacing the old standard of 50 ppb.)

This is just the sort of silliness by Council members that could make a body *WANT* to **drink water laced with 100 ppb of arsenic.**

The City Council approved meeting dates for 2015.

The Council also confirmed the City's goals and priorities for fiscal years 2013-2015 and stated its intent to start the process for upcoming goals and priorities.

Staff and Council committee appointments were made.

A Parting Shot:

There was some discussion of a recommendation by staff to poll the public for input on how to spend all this **“Measure R” money**. It went nowhere mostly because a scientific survey couldn't be produced in time and within the budget. We will probably get an open forum for input. That should be lively. Only **Council Member Eder** broached the idea that since Sebastopol citizens voted for and will be taxed because of it, they, and the business owners, should have more to say about spending it. **Taxation and representation – what a concept.**

John Necker
Duration 3:20