

## Sebastopol City Council Meeting – August 7, 2012 – Synopsis and Commentary

In Sebastopol the wheels of democracy turn exceedingly slowly and grind for a long time too. In a tortuous six and a half hour meeting the City Council voted 3:2 to approve the Armstrong Development's appeal of the Design Review Board's rejection of their project. Well sort of.

Council members Shaffer and Slater voted with Mayor Wilson to grant the appeal with certain conditions. Those conditions consisted of changing the “in only” access from Petaluma Avenue to an emergency access only lane and installing a door at the corner of Petaluma Avenue and Sebastopol Road. It probably surprised no one that Council Members Gurney and Kyes voted against as they both had been throwing wenchies into the political process machinery all night.

While the Council Members protested that they were not qualified to make design changes, that is exactly what they did. Council Member Gurney in particular spoke about the “...massively long...” design that she felt still needed some work, comparing it to a big box store in a suburban shopping mall. Both Gurney and Kyes wanted the driveway eliminated, changed to a fire lane and planted with grass. Kyes even managed to take a few pot shots at City Council candidate Kathy Austin in the process.

That the City Council had offered three choices to Armstrong and now the Council was rejecting the one that was chosen didn't seem to give pause to Wilson, Kyes and Gurney.

There are several smaller issues outstanding, many of which have been complied with, but Gurney and Kyes left little doubt that they will use those issues to try to thwart the progress of the Armstrong project.

This is not over yet and the City inches closer and closer to a lawsuit which they cannot win.

### Other Actions:

Since the water and sewer rate increases were only opposed in writing by less than 100

people from the public, the Council passed the increases on a 3:2 vote for water rates (Shaffer, Kyes opposing), and a 4:1 vote on the sewer rates (only Kyes opposing). Shaffer has always opposed it but the surprise was Kyes. Although several weeks ago it was he who proposed the increase, at this meeting he voted against it.

We have been paying artificially low rates for these services for years and to make up for that, the water rate will increase by 25% this year, 22% in 2013, 18% in 2014 and 15% in 2015.

The sewer rate will increase 12% for the next four years. The rate increases are to be reviewed by the City Council each year but in four years both systems should be solvent with a contingency fund to handle maintenance and emergencies. At that time, the rates should drop and be steady and in keeping the actual costs of running the systems.

John Necker