

Sebastopol City Council Meeting December 15, 2015 – Synopsis and Commentary

Vice Mayor Glass was absent.

Proclamations/Presentations:

- A Years of Service award was presented to Jack Piccinini (35 years).
- The City recognized Paula Downing for her work as the Director of the Farmers' Market.

Public Comment (aka Open Mike):

- The first speaker wanted to meet with the Council to expand his idea of walking outside at high noon every Friday and waving at those who look as if they may need it.
- The second speaker, dressed in an outfit and hat that broke every law of fashion, lectured the Council on constitutional law. Her comments made one wonder just what country's constitution she was referencing.

Consent Calendar: (All approved 4:0)

- The Council approved the pay rates for certain city employees. State law requires the rates be published on the City's website each time there is a modification. [You may find that information here.](#) If you scroll to the top of page two, you will find yet another reason few are interested in serving on the City Council.
- The **Way Finding Sign Project** was awarded to [Studio L'Image](#). **This is for the design phase only.** The cost is **\$31,200**. It was budgeted at \$12,000 so **\$19,200 will be siphoned from the traffic impact fee fund.** The actual **implementation phase will be another cost** and take place later. The objective is to “Assist visitors in navigating **Sebastopol, which can be confusing** due to the one-way street system. The [current] signs were primarily intended to help guide drivers.” Also, it will standardize city signs, design new gateway signs, add an informational kiosk at the Burnett Street parking lot and the “Town Plaza” (which closely abuts The Mario Savio Free Speech Plaza). **Now the text on that sign should be interesting.**

Informational Items/ Presentation:

- Our consultant on the General Plan process gave us an update. We are about halfway through the process and there will be more meetings in January, February, and March. [Click here for much more information.](#)

Regular Agenda Items:

- **Council Member Jacob** introduced a resolution urging the County to put a “**medical marijuana**” policy in place before March 1, 2016. If the County does not act, it cedes control to the state – something Jacob dreads. He claims that such an occurrence would cause “a local **financial crisis**” and “**tens of thousands of jobs**” will be lost, and he referred to it as a “**billion dollar industry.**” A billion dollars is a whole lot of sick people. Only a small fraction of people use it as medicine. Almost all of it is for those who just want to get stoned. It's time to drop the pretense and address the inconvenient reality. [Do these folks look like they are medicating to you?](#) And though it may seem questionable that the Council member who introduced this resolution has such a strong **monetary tie** to selling pot, the City Attorney has assured us **his actions are legal.**
- The **\$89,200** Laguna Preserve Management Plan was continued. It became clear, within a few

minutes, that the Council was not going to vote on this without Vice Mayor Glass being present – she being the resident expert in matters of this kind. Nevertheless, they all got down into the weeds (and blackberries) on this for over an hour before it was continued, to be regurgitated and re-chewed again later. **And oh, the irony of it all.** This plan was “suggested” largely because of the Open Space District's concerns over damage caused by a volunteer project at the Railroad Forest (aka Railroad Brier Patch.) But that didn't stop the organizer of those volunteers from presenting to the Council a 24-point paper defining what **he**, not the qualified experts, thought should be done. Here is some history provided by *The Sonoma West Times and News*. [Article 1](#) [Article 2](#) [Article 3](#).

- The Council discussed and approved Sculpture Jam's proposal to place a coyote in the parking lot adjacent to the senior center. No, not that [coyote](#), this [coyote](#).
- The Council will apply for a block grant for an extra \$75,000 for repairs on mobile homes, sewers, and earthquake bracing. We already have about \$250,000 available to us now but what it can be spent on is limited. [See our November 18, 2014 Consent Calendar section](#).

Emergency Add-on to the Agenda:

The Council will send a letter to the CPUC protesting PG&E's plan to charge Sonoma Clean Power an “exit fee.” Power companies usually buy their power years in advance and are entitled to an exit fee from those who were customers at the time the utility entered into long-term power contracts. [See a more detailed explanation in the Press Democrat article by Robert Digitale](#).

First, if you didn't want to switch to Sonoma Clean Power, you had to opt out. (Wow! Wouldn't you just love to have that advantage over your competitors?) **Second**, why should their customers be excused from absorbing those charges and PG&E customers have to cover for them? **Third**, and the big one, why does this surprise Sonoma Clean Power? Don't they know the laws that govern them? Suspicious minds wonder if Sonoma Clean Power isn't being managed by a herd of cats. ([No cat profiling intended](#).)

A Parting Shot:

- Our Planning Director has struck gold again! This time it's in the form of a \$381,000 grant to make improvements at the skate park. He will not consider writing grants for individuals. That's already been looked into and ended with great disappointment.

Elapsed Time: 4:30 hrs (6:00pm – 10:30pm)

Next City Council meeting is **tentatively** scheduled for January 5, 2016 at the Teen Center, 425 Morris Street at **7:30pm**. It will be **preceded at 6:00pm** by the Public Arts Committee selection interviews.

John Necker