



Sebastopol Citizens

E d u c a t e - C o m m u n i c a t e

Sebastopol City Council Meeting May 16, 2016 – Synopsis and Commentary

There was a 4:00pm closed session because of anticipated legal action.

At the regular 6:00pm meeting, all Council members were present except Robert Jacob who is on extended leave.

Proclamations/Presentations:

- June 2nd was proclaimed [National Gun Violence Awareness Day](#).
- **Students from Park Side School** gave a presentation as part of their [International Baccalaureate](#) program. They were my favorite speakers of the long evening because they were short. Oh, that too, but their presentations were concise and to the point, void of all personal information, unlike the many who followed.

Public Comment (aka Open Mike):

- Two speakers opposed the proposed [AB 2395](#) that would allow **AT&T to decommission landlines**. The speakers wanted the Council to also oppose that bill and put it on an upcoming consent calendar. Well, that would be one way to stifle *comments* on a controversial subject.

Consent Calendar: (All consented to *without comment* 4:0)

- The Council approved their portion of the meeting's minutes with the Planning Commission.
- Weeds on private property were declared a public nuisance. This may be a fire issue or a move to oust our local "medical" weed dispensary. (**Late breaking news: It was the fire.**)
- V.F.W. Post #3919, the [Lions Club](#) and the [Sea Serpents](#) were all approved to sell fireworks.
- A notice of completion was approved for the recent street repairs.

Informational Items/ Presentation:

- **Cittaslow** gave a glowing report of itself. [You may see that here](#). (If you want parts of it translated to standard English, you're on your own.) We await, somewhat patiently, more tangible results that justify its \$10,000 budget.

Discussion and Actions:

- Discussed were traffic and pedestrian safety at Bodega Avenue, Ragle Road, Nelson Way, and Washington Avenue. Discussion then expanded to Florence Avenue and Robinson Rd. More modern striping and signs, as well as a general study to slow traffic on Bodega, are in the works. The Chief of Police informed the gathered that, by law, 40 MPH is as low as we can go there and still use radar. And without radar, [traffic enforcement is nearly impossible](#).

Public Hearings:

- Amending some of our housing ordinances to comply with state law was discussed.
- The City is re-adopting and revamping the City Code. It has hired [Code Publishing Company](#) to reorganize, republish, review, and set up online access and Internet hosting for the sum of **\$13,000**. The staff and Council were very excited about this. Apparently, the City Code will now be readable in English instead of [its present form](#).
- A proposed zone change at [7765 Bodega Avenue](#) was granted. Developed in 1978, the owners want to change the zoning from medical use only to a variety of office uses, including retail and other services.

Regular Agenda Items:

- An informal group calling itself “**A Group of Advocates**” has approached the City about changing **Village Park** into an **affordable housing** area that the group would administer. The property, which was purchased for “park purposes,” operates at a loss and is in the 100-year flood plain. At this time, the group just asked for, and received, some staff time to explore the possibilities.
- The **Sebastopol Independent Charter School** wants to move from downtown to the [Hurlbut Avenue area](#) just north of the City limits. At 20,000 square feet plus a 19,500 square foot assembly hall, it would accommodate 360 students on 20.36 acres. And our Council really has its collective **knickers in a twist** about this plan. In spite of a room very full of supporters, whose comments lasted over an hour, the Council will send yet another letter to the County opposing the move. Citing traffic/pedestrian safety, use of our fire and police services and cars crossing the West County Trail (**now know as a “Liner Park”**) all Council members professed their love for the school and their lack of rapture for the move.
- [Citizens for Healthy Farms and Families](#) has asked **Mayor Gurney** and the Council to endorse the Sonoma County **Transgenic Contamination Ordinance** that would ban such scourge from Sonoma County. As it turns out, it’s **not a sexually transmitted disease** at all. It’s a sesquipedalian phrase for which **GMO** would probably work just fine. The group has collected enough signatures to qualify for the ballot but this time wants the County to ban it by an ordinance instead. This maneuver would avoid the distasteful process of engaging the voters who rejected it last time. Here are two **articles you may find interesting**. One is by [Derek Moore](#) at the *Press Democrat* and the other is an AP article by [Seth Borenstein](#). And our Council did endorse that ordinance and is, at this writing, the only one in the County that has done so.

A Parting Shot:

- For the record, there was a closed session after the regular meeting so your **Council and staff probably put in seven to eight hours!**

Elapsed Time: 6 hours (6:00pm – 12:00am)

Next City Council Meeting is May 31, 2016 at the Sebastopol Community Center, 390 Morris St. at 6:00pm when the Council will make a decision on the proposed [KOWS radio antenna](#).

John Necker
[SebastopolCitizens.org](#)