

Sebastopol City Council Meeting January 19, 2016 – Synopsis and Commentary

Vice Mayor Glass was absent.

Council Member Jacob arrived at 7:20 pm.

Proclamations/Presentations:

- Vanessa Zellmer, our newest reserve police officer, was introduced.

Public Comment (aka Open Mike):

- A speaker politely expressed her regrets about the Council's lack of “discernment” when making selections for various commissions and committees. Her point was that it was the same people getting appointed over and over again. Well, that can be explained using another “D” word. “**Divergent**” views are frowned upon in this town.
- The other speaker complained that not enough public notice was given about the meetings regarding the proposed hotel at the [Sebastopol Tractor](#) site (aka “The Lumber Yard”) across from the Mario Savio Free Speech Plaza. **Council Member Slayer** later said that the developer organized the meetings and so the City had no reason to give public notice. ***Are you kidding me!*** This Council, after the CVS debacle, **orchestrated a campaign** to bend the property owner to their will and even advertised the property to get what they wanted and not some **divergent development**. The Council even **produced a brochure** for the proposed site.

Consent Calendar: (All items approved 3:0)

- The second reading of the amendment to the landscape ordinance was approved. This will require new and rehabilitated landscape projects to conform to State standards. It's probably okay to **transplant your petunias** but if it's a project of any size, you need a permit and must meet the new standards.
- The engineering services (GHD) for the arsenic treatment on well number 7 came in \$40,000 under budget. The State requires various reports on the well and GHD can do that for \$29,745. The arsenic occurs naturally and Public Works has been all over this like a wet blanket. **There will be no Flint, Michigan story here.**
- The Council approved a draft of a **Request For Qualifications** (RFQ) that will let California artists know that we're looking for some **high-end art**. This is the very first step. The art fee that has been collected from building projects that don't provide their own art will cover the cost. The kitty is at **\$51,000** and should increase this year. Let's all hope we just get some art for art's sake. **Not everything needs a message.**
- In November of 2014, the Planning Commission approved an application from The Barlow for a 62-room hotel to be housed in several of its buildings. Now, The Barlow wants a **90-room hotel** in the **“Guayaki” building** so the City is requiring a different traffic and air study. That, too, will be paid for by the applicant.

Informational Items/ Presentation:

- The County of Sonoma wants to end homelessness within ten years. A County representative presented a **“Toolbox of Options”** to accomplish that. **Council Member Eder** said that the term that now should be used is **“shelter-less.”** Undoubtedly that term provides great solace to some poor soul sleeping under a plastic tarp in a rainstorm. According to the County, we have 94 shelter-less people here in Sebastopol.

Regular Agenda Items:

- The City's "franchise hauler," the **Ratto Group** wants to amend its agreement to **eliminate three types of materials** from the recycle list because a viable market no longer exists for them. The County filed a "cease and desist" order against Ratto because they can't move or recycle the material. ([See the Press Democrat article by Kevin McCallum here.](#)) The items are **shredded paper, film plastic and plastic bags, and Styrofoam food service containers**. City staff has determined that there is now no market but said that the material will be reinstated should that change. **Eder** asked the Ratto representative what the plans were to inform the public of the changes and just what would be allowed in the blue cans. [It's not a very long list.](#) The rep said the list will soon be updated on their [website](#) and informative stickers will soon be placed on the blue cans. The new rule of thumb is if you have any doubt, put it in the black can. You'll know when the United States is serious about recycling when we all go to one-can single stream recycling. (Passed 4:0)
- The LANTERN group wants the moral support of the Council to explore improving and expanding the library on the existing site. This topic was broached first on [July 7, 2015](#) and was approved 4:0 tonight.
- The City continues to grapple with the **Sustainable Groundwater Act**. To say that this is a deep subject is an understatement. The strategy now is to do nothing until things become clearer to everyone, and that includes me. On [October 6, 2015](#) **Eder** pulled this item from the consent calendar for discussion and so we discovered California draws 30% to 50% of its water from 14 underground "basins." The Santa Rosa Plain and the Sonoma and Petaluma Valley basins are at "medium" capacity. The City is moving cautiously toward joining a larger groundwater sustainability agency. We have an excellent supply of ground water here and the Council doesn't want to make a mistake that will jeopardize our control over it. It is **being guarded jealously**. (Passed 4:0)
- A member of the **Planning Commission**, due to term out in December of 2016, has resigned. The City will speed up the application process to **replace that seat** as soon as possible. (Passed 4:0)
- The Council discussed creating an **alternate position** on the above commission and decided to do so. (Passed 4:0).
- Council Member and city staff assignments were allotted.

Redevelopment Agency Business:

- The Council completed still more business dealing with Governor Brown's elimination of the Community Development Agencies.

A Parting Shot:

- What has become of PG&E's proposal to change out our streetlights with LEDs at an eventual saving to us of [\\$54,000 per year](#)?

Elapsed Time: 2:45 (6:00–8:45pm) *Better!*

Next City Council Meeting is February 2, 2015 at the Teen Center, 425 Morris Street at 6:00pm.

John Necker