

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – May 20, 2014 – Synopsis and Commentary

There was a closed session at 4:00 PM dealing with the CVS lawsuit against the City and also something to do with the property at 385 Morris Street (the old Shamrock Concrete Plant). Nothing was reported out of that session.

The regular meeting started at 6:15 PM and all council members were present.

Public Comment (aka open mike)

One speaker accused the Council of not working for “us” but for large corporations. It was understood that she was excluding CVS and Chase. Another bemoaned being “cooked” by fluorescent lights. (More on her later.) Yet another wondered what happened to the “new normal” that has become very sick. (If she is looking for “normal,” she is doing it in all the wrong places—especially here!) A fellow then droned on about “geo engineering” plots and complained about other speakers wasting our time—he did that for a full three minutes. One speaker questioned the wisdom of paying consultants and another, who, at times, can really bare her fangs, asked for “protocol” and “respect” at council meetings. She must have overlooked my [link on meeting protocol](#) in the May 6th summary.

Several folks praised the fire department's actions at a recent fire. We also discovered the [Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce](#) has won *Northbay Biz Magazine's* gold medal for the best Chamber event.

Consent Calendar

All of the below were approved 5/0 without discussion:

- A resolution declaring weeds (*that's weeds, folks, not weed*) a public nuisance. A list of perpetrators is available at the City. One name on the list had a **suspicious resemblance** to a member of the Design Review Board. Probably just a coincidence. Well, no matter, he and the rest of the scofflaws will have to remove the weeds by June 3rd or the City will do it and bill them.

- Temporary permits to sell fireworks were granted to VFW Post 3919, the Gravenstein Lion's Club, and The Sebastopol Sea Serpents. You can see why the fire chief wants those weeds removed by June 3rd.
- The final blessing to make it okay to practice fortune telling, astrology, clairvoyance and other odds and ends was bestowed. **Voodoo** wasn't mentioned, so you're on your own there.
- The City rejected a claim by someone who reported his windshield was broken by a "weed whacker." It's probably safe to assume that he thinks a City worker was responsible—even though that wasn't stated in the claim. Well, the City had to reject it because it already can't use leaf blowers or Roundup. What would be left to control weeds, Voodoo?

Informational items and Presentations

Cittaslow gave a 20-minute presentation of its mission to preserve our "unique town character." Hmmm... which character? Anyway, they are going to do it by helping the rest of us:

- Support locally made products and agriculture
- Share the joys of our community with visitors and amongst ourselves
- Integrate technologies for improved well being
- Promote the health of our environment
- Develop community-friendly infrastructure

Aren't most of us doing the above now? Do we really need a \$20,000.00 bureaucracy that consists of ten volunteers, to verify it?

In typical *Cittaspeak*, the presentation was long on verbiage and short on verification. What they did do is move out from under the fiscal sponsorship of our very own and much loved

and trusted Sebastopol Community Cultural Center. As of February 1, 2014, they now operate under the watchful eye of [Inquiring Systems, Inc](#), an out-of-town organization in Sonoma that specializes in this sort of thing. Well that shouldn't be too much of a task for ISI. For years now, Sebastopol has been one of only three cities in the United States that is designated a Cittaslow city. As stated here before, it's either a very exclusive club or one no one wants to join.

Council Member Eder feels Cittaslow is “a great return on the investment” and the **City Manager** stated that it has helped with “existing goals.”

Mayor Jacob then opened **Public Comment**. All comments in this portion are required to address, in this case, the Cittaslow presentation. Well the gadflies swarmed, getting way out there on non-related pet peeves until the mayor pulled them up short and insisted they stay on topic. They were furious. The EMF zealot said her ideas were more important as she adjusted the sun hat she was wearing over aluminum foil and an ice pack. (She wears that because EMF is “cooking her brain.” Too late!)

But His Honor pushed back and cut them off. Doing the math for everyone, he showed just how much meeting time this small group consumes. (My notes show it's usually about an hour.) Well, good on him and **Council Member Slater** for supporting the Mayor. Not a peep out of the other council members.

Discussion and Action Items

There was an appeal of a denial by the Design Review Board. Since last October, a fellow has been trying to build a house on Norlee Street. It has been **before the Design Review Board three times**.

The neighbors like it, the staff recommended granting the appeal, even the **Mayor** lamented the City having insufficient guidelines for building this simple house. But **Council members Gurney, Eder and Kyes didn't like it!**

What They Said:

Council Member Eder: Stated that he wasn't an architect and then went on and on with suggestions that made one think that he doesn't know one end of a hammer from the other. He maintained that for "a few more dollars you can have something really cool." (Far out, man!)

Council Member Gurney: Tried to get others to suggest changes to the project. She had no suggestions but **wanted to delay granting the appeal** because we will be approving a "mediocre" house.

Council Member Kyes: Wanted the front of the house shingled so it's more Berkeley-like, the porch changed and "something" over the window.

Council Member Slater: Didn't like the floor plan or design but said that was **none of the City's business**.

Mayor Jacob: Was disappointed it was before the Council because we have no real guidelines. Wanted to approve the appeal, return the fees, and apologize. **The appeal was granted 3/2** with Council Members Gurney and Eder in the minority.

A resolution opposing fracking in California passed 5/0.

The Complete Streets Advisory Committee and Cittaslow proposed that bicycle and pedestrian routes be established throughout the City. They will work with the City to do so.

A parting shot!

Two members of the Design Review Board spoke about the house on Norlee Street mentioned above. One said if she hadn't been called away on a family emergency, she would have approved the house, making the vote 3/2 in favor. The other, who falsified his qualification on the DRB application but was granted the seat anyway, said "it's not a bad house but could look a lot better." It was "meek" looking and the roof was "kind of awkward."

The Mayor is right, we need some strong guidelines (not meek ones) and we need them now!

Duration 4:30

(For the City Council members, both meetings worked out to about 6:30 hours.)

John Necker