

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – October 21, 2014 – Synopsis and Commentary

All Council members were present.

Proclamations:

Recognition of [Veterans Day](#), November 11, 2014

Public Comment: (aka open mike)

The usual suspects were absent but they sent in a sub to pitch removal of the City's cell towers. Her pitching was much less effective than that of Giant's Madison Bumgarner who was ahead 3:0 at that point, according to my cell phone.

Another speaker warned the Council about allowing bike paths at the Burbank Heights and the Garden too. She made a good point relative to the speed of cyclists vs. that of us old folks. Since cyclists drive as poorly as motorists in this town, it might be a good idea to have just walking paths at Burbank.

The third speaker was the only person in Sebastopol who is seeking to unseat any incumbent on the City Council. He again attacked the idea of giving the City staff a raise and, with some pretty creative voodoo economics, described how they were going to end up with millions. The staff present looked both surprised and pleased upon hearing of their new windfall.

He left 25 minutes into the meeting. The **City Clerk** and the **Planning Director** were there until the bitter end, all 3 hours and 45 minutes of it. Do you really want someone on the Council whose attention span is so short he can last only 25 minutes?

Consent Calendar: (All of these items were approved 5:0)

- The City will send a letter of support to the County of Sonoma that is trying to obtain grants to improve transportation for the elderly and those with disabilities. Your [Sebastopol Area Senior Center](#) does a great deal of this now but would benefit from an expanded program. Click on the "[Transportation](#)" link to learn more about their transportation program.
- The City will also send \$6,564.00 to the County of Sonoma to study the [feasibility of a bike trail](#) that may run from our southern city limits to Petaluma somewhere in the area of the KOA. The City had pledged \$1,700.00 but the cost of the study has gone up so now our earnest money minimum is \$2,188.00. But your City, always enamored with the grandiose, will send \$6,564.00—**three times the required amount**—to burnish our credentials as **Sprocket Head Town, USA**. So here's the City tossing money away and then **begging for more with Measure R**.
- The City will extend the interim ordinance banning "formula" businesses to preserve our "special qualities." It's worth reading the first few "Whereas" statements of [the ordinance](#) to get an idea of how our Council perceives our town.
- The City will endorse a countywide living minimum wage proposal of \$15.00 per hour for workers of the County of Sonoma or those who are employed by companies doing business with the County.

Presentations:

Actually it was a fairly interesting presentation upon the City's plans to update the way it deals with storm water runoff—should we *ever* get storm water run off again.

Discussion and Action Items:

The project at 961 Gravenstein Hwy. South was up for review again. It may be viewed as *CVS Light* for the City Council has jerked the architect and the owners around for years. Fortunately, the owners are a long-time and well-respected family that isn't as litigious as some other “small town” groups. After all these years, the project was finally approved 5:0. Oh yeah, and the guy who filed the appeal of its previous approval **was not in attendance**. Another short attention span.

The future of the old Diamond Lumberyard was up for discussion as the Council continues to micro manage private property owners. The property owner was in attendance and they are all playing nice—for now. If the Council has learned anything from the **CVS debacle**, hopefully it's to be less myopic about the decisions they make.

A **City repair ordinance** is beginning to wind its way through the process. Expect this to move quite rapidly as **nothing is really going to get “repaired.”** It's really about one of the Council's **pet groups** that wants to paint intersections like they did at the Barlow. Well, the first thing they can do is repair the wording of the ordinance to [reflect what it's really about](#). A little **openness and transparency** every now and then is a good thing, don't you think?

Council Member Slayter also thought “repair” made it sound like a Public Works project. Well, let's try to be open-minded. [Here's a pretty good street painting](#).

Mayor Jacob proposed a “parklet ordinance.” Where *do* they come up with this vocabulary? What *this* is really about is using parking spaces for outdoor dining and general public use. There's nothing park-like about it unless they are referring to a **park less ordinance**. A little **openness and transparency** every now and then is a good thing, don't you think?

Downtown Design Standards are starting the process of getting “repaired.” Hopefully, these repairs will produce an ordinance that will enable the **Design Review Board** to give a developer a thumbs up or down within 30 minutes, as opposed to three years. And maybe they will be so well “repaired” as to be seen as clearly fair and reasonable and so help to avoid lawsuits. **Council Members Slayter and Eder** invested many hours in distilling the old documents into this preliminary one. Good idea! Let's get it codified and then actually abide by it.

A Parting Shot!

At the October 9th meeting, **Council Member Gurney's** oblique attack on the Pellini family was at the same time reprehensible and embarrassing. No elected official should ever use their official position in such a manner.

And from the grievous to the goofy: at that meeting, Council Member Eder wore black “to attend the funeral of (his) optimism.” Here you may see [Council Member Eder in his new regalia, fighting representatives of CVS, Armstrong Development and other invaders from the real world](#). For more details covering the October 9th meeting, see the [Sonoma West Times and News](#).

John Necker
Duration 3:45