

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Land Use, Transportation, Water, Agricultural Land Use: October 7, 2015, 9 to 12

Present: Susan Stompe chair; Nona Dennis, Don Dickenson, Rick Fraites, Heather Furmidge, Randy Greenberg, Jana Haehl, Bob Johnston, Pat Nelson, Kate Powers, Ann Thomas. Guest: Dan Carney, MMWD conservation chief.

September 2, 2015 Meeting Notes. OK with one edit: p. 2, Bio Marin – “MCL sent a letter to the City Council Planning Commission requesting additional review beyond the negative declaration that the San Rafael Planning ~~Commission Staff~~ had recommended.”

Announcements. The Business Breakfast slated for this month is rescheduled to January 29.

Artificial Turf Presentation. Dan has extensively researched manufacturer, sports, and medical studies and reports on artificial turf and reported on the product uses and concerns. He noted that this is a complex topic, with overlapping issues.

Background. Artificial turf products are carpets of plastic grass leaves with a mixture of sand and crumb rubber intermingled with the plastic blades to help provide the feeling and flexibility of natural grass.

Pros. The main pro for the outdoor carpet, in his view, is for use on fields that are used almost continuously. There is no natural turf product that can be kept in viable condition under constant use and there are areas with a deficit of playing fields which must heavily use what is available.

Maintenance Needs. Contrary to sellers’ advertising the product does not require less maintenance than natural grass, e.g. 1) The newer artificial turfs are porous so they need drainage systems the same as grass. 2) Special rakes are needed to smooth out or rearrange the crumb material and sand. 3) Static builds up with use so the product must be sprayed with anti-static chemicals. 4) Anti-microbial spray should also be sprayed on.

Cons. Athletes find that the crumb material can get in their nose and mouth and players get cuts and abrasions when they slide on the artificial turf; because the product has great grip it adds to tendon stress when players turn their feet. The product kills or sterilizes the soil beneath it and also superheats it, up to 20 degrees higher than the ambient temperature, creating a heat island. Also about 40 million tons of discarded plastic turf wind up in landfills annually. [He noted the Denver Broncos use a combination grass and artificial turf product which may be improved.]

Households with Children. The main culprit is the crumb rubber, which can be hazardous for children. Plastic fibers in themselves are inert.

Coastal Commission Letter re: LCP. Committee reviewed a memo and letter Judy T had drafted; the letter is to the Coastal Commission regarding agricultural provisions in Marin’s Local Coastal Plan update. Susan noted edits suggested by this committee, which raised some issues about design review of on-site retail sales structures, ability of a farmer to give farm tours, and uncertainties regarding property divisions and intergenerational housing. It was M/S (Jana/Ann) and approved to send the letter, as revised. A major concern was clarifying MCL’s concern that a condition be imposed that if a “legal lot is proposed to be sold after the second intergenerational house is built on the farm tract that the lot must not be part of the acreage that was required to qualify the tract for the additional house.”

Ag Policy Committee. The group, chaired by Sally Gale, and at work on a comprehensive ag policy, last met on October 5 and produced a working draft, which the committee briefly reviewed. The policy working group meets again on October 12 and a final document may or may not be ready for board review in October; if not, it will be on the November agenda.

[Note: The quarterly agricultural committee will be held October 30 at the Marin County Farm Bureau in Pt. Reyes Station. Speakers will include: James Bartolome, Ph.D., Wildland Resource Scientist and Professor of the Graduate School, College of Natural Resources, U C Berkeley; Dr. Stephanie Larsen of UC Ag Extension; and Michelle Cooper of the MALT Stewardship Dept. The main topic will be an historical perspective of coastal grasslands and the coping mechanisms of individual plants and plant communities.]

Unimpaired Flow in Delta Sign-on Letter. Committee agreed that, based on past actions, MCL could add its name to a sign-on letter prepared by the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance and Friends of the San Francisco Estuary. The letter, to State Water Board head Felicia Marcus, asks that the water board reject a request from largely southern California water agencies to abandon the “unimpaired flow” approach to water management in the Delta estuary.

Transportation Issues. Bob reported that Caltrans revised the scoping documents for the Lagunitas Bridge replacement project and new studies have been done. There is a workshop on October 14 on this project. [Note: Preliminary plans for changes on the SFD corridor from 101 to the Ross town line will be reviewed October 28 at the Kentfield planning board meeting.]

Tomales Bay Oyster Permit. The Tomales Bay Oyster Company in Marshall, which was ordered by CDA to shut down most of its operation pending non-compliance with permits, has withdrawn an application submitted after the cease and desist order was enacted. The company is expected to return with more information but until the permit gets worked out they are under an enforcement action to close picnic facilities on October 11 and, starting October 16, to only open Fridays through Sundays for cash and carry sales, as allowed in the 1987 permit.

Community Marin Action Committee. Rick reported that group met with Jack Liebster for an update on SLR. County planner Chris Choo is assuming responsibility for the vulnerability assessment work along the bay. Jack continues to head up West Marin SLR activities.

Bio Marin/Expansion/San Rafael Corporate Center. The San Rafael Planning Commission split 3-3 on the Bio Marin application, and did not consider issues raised by MCL, but decided to move the application on the City Council for consideration of merits. The letter MCL submitted to the PC will be revised to ask the Council to address the issues raised earlier. Bob offered to work with Kate on reviewing the proposed negative declaration in order to add further substance to the letter that goes to the Council.

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