

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
Land Use, Transportation, and Water Committee: February 6, 2019, 1 to 3 PM

Members Present: Susan Stompe, chair; Don Dickenson, Rick Fraites, Larry Kennings, Pat Nelson, Kate Powers, Judy Teichman, Ann Thomas, Greg Zitney.

AGENDA. The County Code amendments will be on the PC agenda on Monday.

PRIOR MINUTES. Minutes of January 2, 2019 approved as distributed.

NORTH BAY WATERSHED ASSN. This partnership of 20 North Bay water agencies in Marin, Sonoma, Solano and Napa Counties, has prepared a new 5-year strategic plan aiming at a stronger regional focus on managing water resources under a “one water” concept. The association membership may be expanded. The NBWA has been successful in attracting funds for projects within its member counties, including for Marin County’s Games of Floods, and several other projects related to climate adaptation in the North Bay. The revised long-term plan is to develop needs lists for funding opportunities before the opportunities arise. Susan, Ann, and Kate have attended NBWA board and TAC meetings.

WATER ISSUES. 1) The MMWD vegetation management plan EIR most recently promised for late 2018 release is now set for release in March. 2) Ann reported she and Priscilla Bull attended the Lagunitas TAC tour of the unveiling of SPAWN’s new Lagunitas Creek floodplain enhancement project, a multi-agency endeavor on federal parkland where the small communities of Jewell & Tocaloma once stood. The communities were built in the late 19th century atop grading spoils from railroad track construction that had been pushed into the floodplain. The homes were used at one time for park service personnel, then rented, eventually abandoned and demolished. The project involved removing almost 300 tons of construction debris, then bank stabilization and revegetation along a mile of creek. A second phase along a shorter strip of creek will be done as time and money permit. 3) The Ross Valley’s creek system has been identified as an Essential Watershed for recovery of steelhead in the NOAA Fisheries recovery plan, and groups there are working to remove barriers to fish passage and resolve issues related to aquatic habitat. 4) Despite the state water board’s order to increase freshwater flow into the estuary from rivers north of the Delta, the infighting continues. Agencies which would see reduced water allotments are opposing the board’s decision. 4) Sale of the Potter Valley hydropower plant is no longer planned.

TRANSPORTATION. 1) There is no new information regarding relocation of the downtown San Rafael transit center. 2) Measure AA funds will start being available in April. 3) Widening of the “Narrows” continues as money is available; the southbound direction is pretty well complete but not fully open for use. 4) Implementation of the Sir Francis Drake Rehabilitation project, from 101 to the Ross town line, has slowed down pending additional study. Construction documents are now expected to be complete in fall of this year with construction tentatively planned to begin in spring of 2020 and to continue through 2021.

NOVATO/SAN RAFAEL GENERAL PLANS. Novato continues waiting for the draft plan EIR. San Rafael has hired additional consultants to assist with portions of their plan.

COMMUNITY MARIN. At its last meeting, on January 29, the update committee began drafting a revision of the Community Development section. Next meeting is February 12.

NORTHGATE WALK. This is a proposal for redevelopment of a gas station and hotel (Four Points Sheraton) at 1005, 1007, 1010, and 1020 Northgate Drive in Terra Linda. The project proposes to demolish the existing commercial building and gas station and construct a new 4-story, 30-unit, senior residential condominium building on that portion of the site, and also to demolish the existing hotel ‘amenities’ (restaurant, meeting rooms, etc.) building and construct two (2) new 4-story, residential condominium buildings with 48 and 58 units, respectively. Total units proposed on both sites: 136 units; 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units, and 30 ‘senior’ units.

According to the October 2018 traffic analysis, the proposed project would be expected to generate 719 new daily trips, including 53 trips during the a.m. peak hour and 62 trips during the p.m. peak hour. Kate noted that only 2/3 of a parking space each are planned for the senior units, only one ADA space, and no apparent pullouts for emergency vehicles, and questioned if these would be sufficient. She reported that the project has been given a categorical exemption from CEQA review permissible for projects less than five acres in size, though some of the documents related to the project indicate the total project is 7.3 acres. The project has undergone an initial design review .and a Planning Commission workshop. It will require additional review by Design Review, and hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council. Land Use members pointed out elements that should merit environmental analysis e.g. possible contaminants on site following demolition of the gas station, proximity to creek, sufficiency of parking for projects, safety of access/exiting at a busy intersection.

Larry Kennings, and Greg Zitney volunteered to meet with San Rafael Community Development Department Director Paul Jensen to discuss with him specific issues underlying the categorical exemption. Pat Nelson will research relevant case law on “piecemealing”.

Notes: AT