

Marin Conservation League

North Marin Unit

Draft Meeting Notes

January 31, 2011

The meeting was called to order at the home of Susan and Brian Stompe. Attending were Nona Dennis, Joyce Appen, Bob Burke, Rick Fraites, Pam Drew, Carole Dillon Knutson, Bernie Meyers, Edith Piltch, Eleanor Sluis, Pat U'Ren, Frank U'Ren, Don Wilhelm, Gail Wilhelm and Susan Stompe. Guests included Michael Frank, city manager; Pat Eklund, Sue Potter and Fred King

Announcements: Business Breakfast on Friday features state Senator Mark Leno; the next Housing working group is Feb. 9 at Hamilton; MCL Walk into History at Hamilton is Feb. 12 at 9:30 a.m.

Minutes: The notes of the Dec. 9th meeting were approved as distributed.

About an hour and a half was spent in discussion with Michael Frank, Novato City Manager.

Susan reviewed the issue of a revised Novato Sanitary District solid waste Franchise Agreement that MCL will be commenting on and asked about the city's relationship with the Sanitary District(NSD). Michael gave some history of the discussions the city has had regarding the damage the waste hauling trucks have on the city streets and whether some of the franchise fee should go to the city. The other issue was whether the city would agree to have NSD sit on the county Joint Power Authority(JPA) representing Novato, since the city opted out of participating. Pat said a City Council subcommittee met with a NSD board subcommittee, but that was terminated when Dan Keene was city manager. Michael said bylaws are being developed for the JPA that will allow NSD. AB939 requires each community to report on waste reduction.

Gail reported on the work she was doing to have Old Town listed on the National Registry of Historic Sites. She said the effort was begun when it came to light that Caltrans would not allow a sign on the highway unless there was state and/or national recognition. The city is working on "way finding" signage. Michael said the firm working on the signage has come back with improved designs that will be at a Design Review meeting soon. Gail said the Historic designation will take some time. The Dept. of Interior will survey every property owner. 50% or more need to approve. The Downtown Merchants Assn. and property owners will be briefed.

Rick pointed out that it is getting more and more difficult to walk on downtown sidewalks because of all the sandwich board signs. Michael agreed that without the code enforcement officers, it has gotten worse.

A question came up about whether the city can protect the funds our Redevelopment Agency (RDA) borrowed from the General Fund and other city funds if the state's proposal to kill Redevelopment succeeds. Michael said Novato and other cities are scrambling to find ways to protect their RDA's. He said there is a limit of 3 to 5 years for bonding and the city is not ready to use those funds right now. The RDA does not have the 20 million. He said the City Council will be reviewing a series of agreements identifying loans from a variety of city funds.

Don asked what the city is doing in response to SB375. Michael responded that the City Council meeting the following night would include a presentation by the Planning Director on the requirements of SB375 and what the Housing Working Group will be doing. Rick pointed out that some residents encourage the city to ignore the whole set of requirements. Michael said that could take away the city's ability to do their own planning, or to issue building permits. He said Assemblyman Huffman has told the city that he could not get the votes to have Marin or Novato moved from a metropolitan designation to a suburban one. That would change the default density for affordable housing from 30 units/acre to 20

units/acre. Michael said the city would like to have an approved Housing Element, but that is what the Housing Working Group is addressing. Pam said she talked to the state Housing & Community Development(HCD) and was concerned because they said Novato cannot designate sites for senior housing since that is considered a “constraint”. Gail felt that with the aging population in the community, designating sites near doctor offices, hospital, shopping would help seniors relocate and free up their single family detached houses and would help the city defend the designation. Nona inquired how this would help with the Sustainable Community Strategies and the SMART corridor. Michael pointed out that the SMART station density is an average over the whole corridor and the Firemans Fund station already satisfies the requirement. Pat stated that MCL should be attentive to the performance standards being developed by ABAG, BCDC, AQMD, and RWQCB. Pam pointed out that Dave Wallace has been working with ABAG to get Novato’s RHNA numbers down since ABAG averages past development in projecting future requirements. Hamilton development created an unusual spike and was a onetime occurrence. He was able to get ABAG to recognize the unique Hamilton process and reduced Novato’s requirement by 13%. Gail pointed out that the spike should not be part of the calculation at all. Michael’s parting advice was watch out for unintended consequences. His personal interest is to avoid tearing the fabric of the community, knowing it takes years to heal. The costs and benefits should be truly weighed before action is taken.

Stafford Lake Bike Park: Don reported that he attended the tour of the site on Saturday, 1/22. Steve Petterle who is on the NMWD board was a leader. Dozens of people attended. He has concerns about it becoming a dust bowl. The Feasibility Study was passed around. Rick said the concept is to provide a place for bicycle radicals to work out instead of building illegal structures on Open Space. Nona gave some background of the BOS subcommittee efforts to address the trail conflicts by producing three projects: a trail and road inventory, a multiuse 680 trail and the bike park. She felt there may not be an EIR, but a detailed negative declaration. Rick pointed out that recreation has recently become part of the Open Space mission. He feels enforcement of regulations is a bigger problem than ever with staff cutbacks. Some social trails on Mt. Burdell may be taken out. There will be a meeting in Novato on Feb. 9. Don will get that information and Susan will pass it along.

North Coast Rail Authority: Bernie had to leave before we got to this issue. Shortly after the Dec. Unit meeting Bernie submitted a memo to the Board of Supervisors(BOS) outlining many irregularities in the NCRA contracts. He left word that the BOS wrote to invite NCRA to a meeting and received word back that they would not be available until after NCRA and NWP negotiate a new Operating Agreement with SMART.

Transportation issues: Don reported on the TAM board meeting and SMART without Lillian Haymes.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30.

Notes by S. Stompe