

Marin Conservation League
North Marin Unit
Meeting Notes
November 21, 2013

The meeting was called to order at the U'Ren home. Present were: Frank U'Ren , Pat U'Ren, Don Wilhelm, Gail Wilhelm, Rick Fraithe, Carole Dillon-Knutson, Pat Eklund, Bernie Meyers, Susan Stompe and guest Michael Frank, Novato City Manager.

Announcements included: MCL office party Dec. 13, 4-7 p.m.

The notes of the October 17 meeting were approved with an amendment to remove the NCRA discussion.

City Manager Michael Frank reviewed his powerpoint presentation on Fiscal Sustainability with the group. (This is on the City website, click on Hot Topics and go to Fiscal Sustainability). The background of the City's current fiscal situation goes back to the 60s and 70s when the City was incorporated and a lot of building was going on, revenues were increasing faster than the City needed at the time, so the City Councils kept reducing the tax rates. Then Prop. 13 froze them at the lowest level in the City's history. Since the recent recession caused additional financial stress on revenues, the City has reduced expenses, stabilized fiscal planning, personnel costs and pursued partnerships. Measure F was passed to help bridge the gap and retain services. He pointed out that Novato's property taxes are the lowest in the county, sales taxes are low per capita, there is no utility user tax, no refuse franchise and no property transfer tax. Novato's revenue per capita is \$432, where the average in Marin is \$717. 90% of city staff are below market on salaries. The City's infrastructure is deteriorating. There are limited ways the City can improve the picture and residents are being asked to have input to the City Council as they attempt to address solutions. Input can be made on the website, attending meetings, or writing letters. The City Council will be reviewing recommendations right after the first of the year. Members asked questions and provided some comments about trying to "grow out of the problem", keeping the character of the community and not creating any more Millworks.

Projects and Issues around Novato:

North Redwood Blvd: Gail told of visiting Sebastopol's new project in the "industrial" apple factory area that seems to be a positive addition to the community. Others mentioned Healdsburg and Napa as having recently done upgrades to their downtowns without losing the character. Pat E. suggested touring these areas to get information. One of the Councilmembers has been encouraging Friedmans to locate in the NRB area. The amount of space they would require would be over 220,000 sq. ft. They would have a negative impact on Pini, Novato Builders Supply and Buck's Saw Service. The consensus seemed to favor no big box, reducing retail, including mixed use with housing and limiting businesses in the area to 30,000 sq. ft. to maintain a friendly scale.

General Plan update: The focus is on NRB. The Housing Element has been sent to the state. There was some discussion about the Urban Growth Boundary expiring in 2017 and need to start working on renewal.

Redwood Landfill: The composting plan has been sent to the state. Results should be back soon.

Mission Inn: The owner has been granted a demolition permit.

Gross Field Final EIR: Susan summarized the comments MCL made to the EIR. The Final EIR maintains that there is no need to evaluate impacts or identify the planes that would be able to use the airport with the longer runway. However, US EPA also requested the same information. EPA was also critical of the fact that the EIR looked at no other expansion than the full 1100 feet. They pointed out that safety of the existing fleet could be achieved with a shorter runway. The comments must be in by Dec. 9.

Road and Trail Management Plan: Rick pointed out that the RTMP will have significant impacts on Open Spaces all around Novato and we should monitor it closely.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Notes by SS