

Marin Conservation League
North Marin Unit
Final Meeting Notes
March 15, 2012

The meeting was called to order at the Stompe home. Present were: Joyce Applen, Rick Fraites, Bernie Meyers, Edith Piltch, Dorothy Thomas, Frank U'Ren, Pat U'Ren and Susan Stompe. Guests: Bob Brown, interim Novato Community Development Director; Anne Moore, interim General Plan director; Sue Potter and resident Anne Moore.

Announcements included: MCL Annual Dinner on April 20 with a new speaker, Caryl Hart, chair, California State Parks Commission. Clean and Green Day, April 21, for which Edith and Joyce volunteered where needed.

The notes of the February meeting were approved as distributed.

Bob Brown and Ann Moore were introduced as the interim planners for the city of Novato. Since they have been with the city only a week or two, the emphasis of the discussion was on issues the Unit is concerned about.

The first issue was Novato's tendency to not adhere to the standards in the General Plan, as demonstrated by the recently approved Hannah Ranch project. Susan pointed out the inadequacy of the road and the "give away" of the floating easement which the City Attorney said was in exchange for the bicycle/pedestrian path –which is not on their property and which the developer does not have to build if SMART does it first. Rick emphasized that the use of the flood control land, setbacks and parking are not consistent with city standards. In general the city ignores creek setbacks and frequently even buries creeks. It was pointed out that the NMU got the ball rolling for the Urban Growth Boundary which was adopted in 1997. Bernie was the author of the Hillside Development ordinance. Other issues raised included concerns about heights and discussion of FAR's excluding parking. Bob Brown pointed out that there are 2 purposes for FARs one is for bulk and one is for parking requirements. Many expressed their dislike of the Millworks because of the bulk and design of the building. The state imposed density for affordable units was disputed by the City Council which reduced it to 20 units per acre in the Housing element. The Council also sent a letter to ABAG requesting peer review of the economic projections upon which they base their plans. Concern was also expressed about the general deterioration of the traffic flow throughout town. Some discussion was about school traffic and whether Safe Routes to School helps. Sue Potter, who is on the Novato Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee, said there are programs in most Novato schools.

Bob said he worked in San Rafael 14 years and has been a resident of Hamilton for 12 years. He has been a leader in promoting sustainable practices throughout the state. He said the San Rafael City Council set the vision for the downtown to have high density residential, which was supported by the San Rafael community. Novato is much more split. He said Novato doesn't have many projects in the pipeline. In-N-Out Burger is having a problem mitigating emissions to comply with new CEQA regulations. A 50 unit senior housing project at Hamilton at the Commissary area is proposed to be built by Thompson construction. The Buck housing is not yet under construction. Dorothy commented on how imposing the senior project is on Diablo.

Anne has been a resident of Marin for 35 years, residing in Terra Linda. She has worked on General Plans in Larkspur, St. Helena and Palo Alto. For Novato the idea is to not start with a blank slate, but to base a new GP on the 1996 plan. An Existing Conditions Report was done just year or two ago. Policies and plan alternative will be addressed in the EIR.

Susan updated the status of the Port Sonoma/Carneos Ranch project. Some were not familiar, so it was quickly reviewed. MCL board member David Schnapf wrote a letter to the Sonoma Board of Supervisors pointing out the irregularities in their process and received a letter from Sonoma County Counsel that MCL would be notified when work begins on an EIR.

Rick reviewed the status of the Water ReUse Authority. The pipes are being laid to provide recycled water to Valley Memorial Park on Bugiea Lane. There is also a plan to extend service to the Ignatio area, working with Las Gallinas Sanitary District. An existing buried reservoir at Hamilton will be used to store the recycled water.

The Water ReUse facilities will be done in four phases.

Resident Anne Moore asked about MOST plans for the Pacheco Valle parcel near the entrance. Joyce responded that MOST is working with the Homeowners Assn. A survey of residents will be done to determine whether there is interest in supporting acquisition. She recommended talking to Bill Long for more details.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

The next meeting will be April 11 at Edith Pilch's.

Notes by SS