



Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council
Minutes
Regular Meeting
December 14, 2023 05:30 PM
El Molino Library, 7050 Covey Road, Forestville, CA 95436
<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/lrrmac>

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm by Forestville Representative Vesta Copestakes.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Lead by Forestville Representative Vesta Copestakes

B. Roll Call

Present: Forestville Alternate Lucy Hardcastle, Guerneville Representative Joe Rogoff, Guerneville Alternate Kathy Dahl, Pocket Canyon & Greater So Guerneville Representative Betsy Van Dyke, Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative Cynthia Strecker, Cazadero / Duncan Mills Alternate Tony Goodwin, Hacienda Representative Vicki Clewes, Forestville Representative Vesta Copestakes

Absent: Chair - Rio Nido Representative Pip Marquez de la Plata

Staff Present: Debbie Ramirez, Lupe Catalan, Tracy Lyons (remote)

2. Approval of Agenda, Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata Cazadero / Duncan Mills Alternate Tony Goodwin motioned to approve. A second was made by Pocket Canyon & Greater So Guerneville Representative Betsy Van Dyke.

The motion passed with the following vote:

<u>8</u> In Favor	<u>0</u> Opposed
<u> </u> Abstained	<u>1</u> Absent

3. Statement of Conflict of Interest

There were no statements of conflict of interest.

4. Consent Agenda

A. October 12, 2023 Minutes

B. November 9, 2023 Minutes

Betsy Van Dyke and Tony Goodwin abstained due to being absent from one or more of the meetings.

Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative Cynthia Strecker motioned to approve. A second was made by Forestville Alternate Lucy Hardcastle.

The motion passed with the following vote:

<u>6</u> In Favor	<u>0</u> Opposed
<u>2</u> Abstained	<u>1</u> Absent

5. Council Member Comment: On matters not listed on the agenda

Cynthia reported that she attended a meeting of the North Coast Water Board Topic: Yesterday, there was a talk about a 2019 incident where sewage got into the river. Someone asked if there's a way to report a broken pipe. The person in charge of maintenance said yes and shared a phone number (707-523-1070) that's available 24/7 for reporting such issues.

Vesta reported about a proposed new building in Forestville. It will be discussed by the Permit Sonoma design review board on December 20th for a public review hearing. The building will be next to the

Forestville Club, in a spot that's been empty for a very long time. The building is being made by Earth Design Group and is a bit over 4,000 square feet. You can find all the details like plans and parking online. The project's file number is DH22-0014. People need to give their opinions by December 19th. The building seems nice and fitting for Forestville. It has some parking in front and more at the back. You can send your thoughts to Wil Lyons at wil.lyons@sonoma-county.org before noon on December 19th. There's also a public meeting on December 20th at 1:50 PM at 2550 Ventura Avenue in Santa Rosa.

Vesta also reported that this is her and Lucy's last meeting. They were eager to join the River MAC and are happy with how it's working. They announced their retirement earlier at a town hall. Lonnie Lazar and Thai Hilton, who were chosen by the community, will replace them and she is very grateful that they stepped up to participate. Vesta and Lucy have been involved in the community for a long time and are happy to help with any questions about Forestville's history.

Vicki thanked Vesta, Lucy and Nic who was not in attendance for their time, service, support and knowledge as well as their love for their community.

Joe remarked that the land use committee hadn't met since February. The reason for this, he explained, was due to the timing of projects and restrictions under the Brown Act, which made it challenging to schedule meetings. He expressed regret over this because the committee members were capable of thoroughly examining and gaining community perspectives on various projects. Joe suggested that discussing this issue further and including it in future agendas might be beneficial. He believed that if they received information about projects earlier, even before they were finalized, the committee could review them more effectively. He noted that the current process at Permit Sonoma or elsewhere in the system should change to allow the committee to receive project information sooner and meet more frequently.

Joe also mentioned that some residents have expressed concerns about feeling unsafe in downtown Guerneville, especially around the square and during events like seeing the Christmas tree. However, there are also positive events like tree lightings and parades that bring the community together.

Tony thanked Vesta for her work and leadership on the MAC and reported on community events in Cazadero.

Betsy mentioned her role at Catholic Charities and the medical respite shelter in downtown Santa Rosa, highlighting the shelter's work in providing a safe recovery space for individuals, particularly those over 50 with chronic health issues, often exacerbated by drug and alcohol use. She mentioned the shelter's location next to a drop-in center and the anticipated visit from West County representatives to observe their operations, despite previous cancellations. Betsy also expressed a desire to obtain a timeline for the George's Hideaway facility and noted ongoing efforts to collaborate with the West County community for better planning in Guerneville. She acknowledged the long and ongoing nature of this process, including the expectation of state funding, and committed to providing a future update on these efforts. She also shared that currently, four individuals from Guerneville, previously known in the community and who were struggling with homelessness, were staying at the shelter. These individuals were now sober. The shelter provides a safe space for people to recover from hospital stays, which are often related to drug and alcohol use. This use often exacerbates other health problems.

6. Oath of Office for Brian Andriola, Hacienda Alternate

Supervisor Lynda Hopkins administered the Oath of Office for Brian Andriola over Zoom, recognizing the work he's done in the Hacienda community and welcoming him to the MAC.

7. County Report

Supervisor Hopkins began by acknowledging the outgoing members of the Lower Russian River MAC, Vesta, Lucy, and Nic, praising their transformative leadership and community involvement.

She discussed the tobacco retail ordinance, emphasizing the importance of community outreach and feedback before its adoption. The ordinance was paused to gather input from affected communities.

Hopkins explained EIFDs, a method for funding community infrastructure improvements without additional taxes. She mentioned Santa Rosa's interest in EIFDs and the possibility of a countywide or West County-wide EIFD.

Oak Woodland and Tree Protection Ordinance: She expressed support for these ordinances and noted the need for community vetting. Concerns included exemptions for necessary tree removals, like for septic system repairs or hazardous trees, and the high mitigation fees for homeowners.

Supervisor Hopkins updated on the George's Hideaway project, anticipating completion by October 2024.

Wastewater Solutions in Monte Rio: She mentioned a meeting about wastewater solutions in Monte Rio and the role of the TMDL ombudsman in facilitating homeowner solutions to state regulations.

General Plan Update: Hopkins highlighted the kickoff of the county's General Plan update, emphasizing the importance of incorporating the unique needs and voices of unincorporated communities.

Climate Action and Resiliency: She discussed a workshop on climate action and resiliency, focusing on public EV charging infrastructure.

Avian Influenza Concerns: Hopkins addressed the threat of avian influenza to home poultry flocks, providing information on prevention and response.

Internship Opportunities: She mentioned internship and shadowing opportunities within the county for students.

Political Landscape: Finally, Hopkins noted the political changes due to Jim Wood's decision not to run for reelection and the ensuing campaign process, encouraging community members to familiarize themselves with the candidates.

8. Presentation on Lower Russian River Governance Study Draft Solutions Report

In his presentation, Matthew Newman emphasized that the session was not a substitute for the comprehensive community meeting scheduled for January 27. He addressed key governance issues for the Lower Russian River region, describing options to increase local control over services and proposing a Community Services District as a pragmatic alternative to incorporation, which is currently hindered by state law constraints. Newman also highlighted efficiencies of a larger district for economies of scale in managing resources and services.

9. Presentation on proposed Tobacco Retail License (TRL) Update for County of Sonoma Unincorporated Area

Alyssa Hamilton, Health Information Specialist, Sonoma County Department of Health Services, presented proposed updates to the county's tobacco retail license (TRL). The updates aim to align with state and local policies, particularly the California flavor ban, to deter youth tobacco use. Key proposals include increasing the minimum price per pack, setting pack size limits, banning discounts and online sales, and prohibiting the sale of electronic cigarettes. The presentation emphasized the role of flavored tobacco in attracting youth and targeted marketing towards young and minority populations. High rates of vaping among high school and alternative education students, especially within LGBTQ and minority groups, were highlighted, underscoring the need for stronger enforcement and retailer compliance to protect public health.

Councilmembers posed questions about various aspects of the proposed tobacco retail license updates. They inquired about the status of similar policies in neighboring cities, the effectiveness of the proposed updates, enforcement mechanisms, and the impact of online sales. Questions also focused on how these policies would affect youth, particularly in educational settings, and the environmental impact of disposable vaping products. Additionally, the councilmembers discussed potential collaboration with health services and other community organizations to enhance the effectiveness of the tobacco control efforts.

In response to councilmember questions, the presentation team clarified various aspects of the proposed tobacco retail license updates. They discussed ongoing efforts in Santa Rosa to implement similar policies and acknowledged the unique challenges posed by local casinos. The team also addressed the enforcement of the license, explaining the penalty system for non-compliant retailers and the process for license renewal. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of partnering with healthcare providers and educators to address youth vaping and discussed the complexities of disposing vaping devices, emphasizing the lack of efficient disposal methods.

During public comment members of the community, including representatives from health action coalitions and advocacy groups, shared their insights and opinions. They emphasized the importance of uniformity in tobacco control policies across the county, the impact of tobacco on youth, and the challenges in disposing of vaping devices. The public comments generally supported the proposed updates to the tobacco retail license, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco, especially among young people and minority communities.

10. Officer Selection Overview

The chair advised that officer selections will take place at the January meeting. There was no discussion.

11. Public Comments

Lisa Nahmanson, attending as a member of the public via Zoom, made the following remarks: I got to learn how to do this from the dynamic duo of volunteerism.

Both of you help me to unwire my brain and open my heart which is a real inspiration.

I will do this in alphabetical order.

Lucy exudes a subtle exuberance. She is at one with her yellow pad which contains all of the information that you need to know (but you didn't know that you needed to know it).

The first time that Lucy took me around the town to introduce me to shop owners she gave me a list on a yellow pad paper, which I keep to this day in my MAC notebook.

Lucy is detailed, has nuanced connections, is thoughtful and a deep listener.

For our trash committee, Lucy led the town of Forestville community clean up and commissioned a video for the event which is on the MAC website. She taught me how to engage volunteers, organize an event and promote it around the town.

Vesta is a vivacious veritable passionate and indefatigable advocate.

Vesta is an OG disrupter.

Vesta is a get it done now and ask permission afterwards.

She says lets go do it!! Of course we can do it!

Vesta taught me to muck in and make it happen.

Only with Vesta would I find myself knee deep in the back of a truck at the shoveling Mirabel Park and Ride Green Waste at the dump.

I have so much gratitude for the work of these wonderful passionate women.

A community member expressed appreciation for Vesta, a local official, during public comments. The speaker, new to the community, acknowledged feeling disenchanted with local government but appreciated the considerable time and respectful dialogue Vesta provided, despite differing viewpoints.

12. Committee Reports

- A. Community Clean Up Ad Hoc, Report from Chair Lisa Nahmanson delivered by Vicki Clewes Vicki reported on the Clean Up Committee's activities, noting they organized six community cleanup events over the past year. The committee developed information for community cleanups, available on their website, and ensured all materials were translated into Spanish, reflecting their commitment to inclusivity. They are exploring expansion into "Adopt a Road" initiatives and other methods to assist community cleanups. Currently, the committee is considering micro cleanups and is in the process of determining their focus for the upcoming year.

- B. Land Acknowledgement Ad Hoc, Report from Chair Lisa Nahmanson delivered by Vicki Clewes

The Land Acknowledgement Committee, formed about six months ago, is exploring the possibility of developing a land acknowledgment policy for the Municipal Advisory Committee. As they delve deeper into the topic, they realize its complexity, likening it to an intricate onion that requires careful peeling. The committee is currently educating themselves on the issue, looking at how other agencies within the county have approached land acknowledgment, and considering alignment with these practices. They are also contemplating collaboration with the Coastal MAC, which has a Kashia representative. The committee is learning that land acknowledgment involves more than just stating words at meetings; it includes ongoing education, continuous communication with indigenous tribes, and potentially having tribal representation on councils. The committee is still in the process of understanding the full scope and implications of land acknowledgment.

- C. Communications Ad Hoc, Report from Chair Joe Rogoff Joe, Communications Committee Chair reported on committee activity. He, Vicki, Betsy, and Patty have focused on enhancing public awareness of the Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC). Their efforts included attending 24 events in 7-8 months, creating handouts and resources, and establishing a presence with banners and canopies. They aimed to increase engagement, particularly with the Latinx community. Goals for 2024 include more media coverage, enhanced connection with Spanish-speaking residents, and broader event participation. They also plan to finalize a budget for promotional materials and review

the community engagement plan. The committee proposed forming a Community Engagement Committee and emphasized the importance of MAC member involvement in community engagement activities.

13. Adjournment

On a motion from Joe, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM

DRAFT