



Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council
Minutes

Regular Meeting

November 14, 2024 05:30 PM

Guerneville School Community Room, 14630 Armstrong Woods Road Guerneville, CA 95466

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/lrrmac>

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mike Nicholls

A. Announcement from Spanish Interpreter

The Spanish interpreter provided instructions for listening to the meeting in Spanish via headset in person, or remotely via accessing the Spanish channel in the Zoom app.

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B. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata

C. Roll Call

Present: Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata, Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls, Guerneville Representative: Joe Rogoff, Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke, Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative: Cynthia Strecker, Hacienda Representative: Vicki Clewes, Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar, Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton

Absent: Guerneville Representative: Spencer R. Scott

Staff Present: Debbie Ramirez, Field Representative & Clerk Lupe Catalan, Field Representative Tracy Lyons (remote via Zoom) Marcie Woychik, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board

2. Approval of Agenda Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar motioned to approve. A second was made by Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls.

The motion passed with the following vote:

7 In Favor Opposed
 Abstained 1 Absent Recused

3. Statement of Conflict of Interest

There were none.

4. Consent Agenda

A. October 10, 2024 regular meeting minutes

Joe Rogoff abstained from voting on the minutes from the October meeting because he did not attend the meeting.

Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls motioned to approve. A second was made by Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar.

The motion passed with the following vote:

6 In Favor Opposed
1 Abstained 1 Absent Recused

5. Councilmember comment on matters not listed on the agenda

Food For Thought Fundraiser – December 5th

Vicki Clewes announced that Food For Thought, a food bank and medical nutrition program, will host a fundraising event on December 5th. Participating restaurants will donate a percentage of their sales to the program. Many restaurants will be open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A full list of participating establishments is available on the Food For Thought website.

Homelessness Prevention Program

Thai Hilton provided an update on a new homelessness prevention program for county residents facing eviction, utility payment issues, or overdue rent. The program will provide financial assistance and legal support and is a partnership between the County of Sonoma, the City of Santa Rosa, and Aluma.

The program will operate through regional hubs, including West County Community Services in West County. Additional information can be obtained by emailing West County Community Services at kph@westcountyservices.org. The program's website, keeppeoplehoused.org, will launch on December 16th and include an online application portal.

Compostable Plastics and Recology

Lonnie Lazar shared feedback from community members regarding local restaurants using compostable to-go containers. It was noted that Recology currently lacks the equipment to process compostable plastics, recommending instead that they be disposed of in the trash.

Lazar suggested that if Recology had the proper equipment, the compostable plastics could be converted into soil, aligning with sustainability goals. He proposed that the issue could be discussed further by the MAC, with a recommendation potentially forwarded to the district supervisor.

Supervisor Hopkins' office will review the feedback, as the county oversees the contract with Recology. This issue may also be considered as a future MAC agenda item.

Parade of Lights – December 7th

Pip Marquez de la Plata announced that the annual Parade of Lights will take place on December 7th. This year's theme is "Wonderland," and organizers encourage broad participation in the spirit of the theme. De la Plata confirmed that ongoing construction in the area is not expected to significantly impact the event. Additionally, a Give Back Tuesday fundraising event for the parade will occur on December 3rd at The Rainbow (Cattle Co.)

6. Public Comments

Vesta Copestakes raised concerns about the increasing amount of trash being dumped along River Road, particularly over the past week. She reported seeing bags of trash repeatedly discarded on the roadside and described significant dumping at an intersection near Park Avenue or Trenton Road, where large quantities of trash, including mattresses, furniture, and black plastic bags, were left.

Copestakes noted that the situation is becoming dangerous, citing an example of a school bus struggling to navigate around the debris safely. Additionally, she observed a large pile of trash at the intersection of River Road and Waller Road.

She also addressed the issue of people leaving “free” items on curbs, such as furniture, toys, and other goods. While well-intentioned, these items often end up in homeless camps rather than being responsibly reused. Copestakes emphasized that when these camps are cleaned, volunteers frequently find these discarded items, which then require removal before the river rises and causes further environmental concerns.

She highlighted a limitation with reporting these issues: Sonoma Connect (SoCo Connect) can only address trash on public land or within the right-of-way and cannot act on items left on private property, even if they are near the road.

Copestakes suggested the need for a public awareness campaign to discourage illegal dumping and the irresponsible placement of items labeled as “free.” She urged the committee to consider ways to encourage more responsible behavior in the community.

7. County Updates

A. Supervisor Hopkins

Supervisor Lynda Hopkins was unable to attend the meeting as she was in San Francisco attending the California Coastal Commission meeting, Debbie Ramirez provided the County report.

B. Staff

A report was provided on the approval of the Local Coastal Plan (LCP):

- The LCP was passed with an addendum preserving support for agriculture and vegetation management.
- In the originally revised version of the LCP, Coastal Commission staff had removed certain provisions related to these areas. However, Permit Sonoma staff and Coastal Commission staff worked together to finalize acceptable language, ensuring the ordinance’s intent was maintained.
- Public comments during the meeting were overwhelmingly in support of the addendum.

An update was shared regarding the Caltrans construction project in Guerneville:

- A group of community leaders, including Che, Mags Van Dyne, Nick Schwanz, and Philip Tymon, is collaborating with Caltrans to improve the retaining wall area and incorporate more green space at the town’s entrance.

- Public Infrastructure is working with Caltrans to identify more business-friendly approaches for completing the sidewalk portion of the project.

Concerns were raised about the project's progress, particularly during the winter season. The following points were noted:

- Businesses located between Church Street and Armstrong Woods Road are worried about disruptions to access.
- The county has not provided updated timelines, leaving the community without clear information about the project's impacts.
- Caltrans estimates 260 working days for the project, but specifics about phases and timelines remain unclear.
- Questions were raised about design changes, such as the widening of sidewalks, which have led to additional costs.

The county will follow up with Caltrans to gather updated information and provide further updates at the next MAC meeting.

Virtual Town Hall – November 20th

Supervisor Hopkins will host a virtual Town Hall on November 20th from 6:00 to 7:30 PM. The event will feature presentations from local organizations dedicated to supporting LGBTQIA folks, health care access, our undocumented community members, mental health services, the environment and the social safety net.

Each organization will give a brief five-minute overview, followed by a Q&A session. The goal is to provide an overview of current and new efforts, particularly in response to challenges faced by the Latino community. The Town Hall will be recorded and made available online: <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/we-take-care-of-us>

George's Hideaway

An inquiry was made about the timeline for the Georges Highway project. The project was originally set to begin in mid-October, but delays occurred due to shifts in funding sources. It was noted that the project must be completed by June 1st to comply with government grant requirements. No updated timeline was available at this time, but county staff will follow up and provide additional details at the next MAC meeting.

Clerk of the Board Appreciation Week

The week of November 20th was designated as Clerk of the Board Appreciation Week. Tonight's presenter, Marcy Woychik, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board, was introduced and recognized for her team's vital contributions to open and accessible government. The Clerk of the Board team manages approximately 35 mandates, including overseeing the assessment appeals process, managing appointment processes, and providing support for county council meetings. The Board of Supervisors presented the team with a Gold Resolution acknowledging their work. Team members include Marcie, Jennie, Cynthia, Michelle, Benjamin, Kyreen, and Noelle. Many council members have interacted with the team, including during their oath of office ceremonies.

8. Discussion regarding Board of Supervisors Calendar of Significant Items

Marcy Woychik, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board, provided an overview of the Board of Supervisors' Calendar of Significant Items, a tool used to organize the Board's policy priorities throughout the year.

Purpose of the Calendar: The calendar helps coordinate major items of public interest, such as land use decisions, proposed ordinances, and other significant actions. It promotes transparency, aids public tracking of issues, and helps departments plan for upcoming discussions and actions.

Development Process

- Development begins in the fall, with input requested from County departments regarding major anticipated items for the following year.
- The County Executive Officer and the Chair of the Board collaborate to draft the calendar, which is reviewed by the Office of Equity and finalized for public release.
- A public workshop is held in January to gather input from the community on the draft calendar.

Public Participation

- Members of the public are encouraged to participate through:
- Submitting comments or letters to their District Supervisor or the Board of Supervisors via email or phone.
- Attending Board meetings and providing public comment during the designated periods.
- Participating in the January workshop, where the draft calendar is reviewed.
- Public input helps inform the Board's decisions, and recurring feedback often shapes future priorities.

Prioritization

- Priorities are determined by factors such as funding deadlines, ordinance expirations, and volume or urgency of public input.
- Items not completed in the prior year are typically addressed early in the following year.

Accessing the Calendar

- The calendar is attached to Board meeting agendas, which are available on the Board of Supervisors' website. Agendas include clickable links to supporting documents and details for each item.
- Members of the public can subscribe to receive email notifications when agendas and addendums are published.

Flexibility: The calendar is a living document that may change throughout the year due to unforeseen events such as natural disasters, funding delays, or new policy developments.

Public Workshop Date: The 2024 public workshop to review the draft calendar is scheduled for January 10th.

Board of Supervisors agendas can be found here: <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

9. Committee & Community Project Reports

There were no committee or community project reports.

10. Adjournment

With a motion from Mike Nicholls and seconded by Vicki Clewes, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 PM

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