



LOWER RUSSIAN RIVER MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

In accordance with Executive Order AB361 regarding the Brown Act for public meetings during the public health emergency, the River MAC meeting will be held virtually. The meeting will be on Zoom and on Facebook live, links below. After the event, videos are available both on Facebook and on YouTube. YouTube Channel can be found under Sonoma County 5th District.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/j/93805817750?pwd=Wk9HaTBNNEVzdHE5U29BcWhTTGJYdz09>

Passcode: 581118

Or One tap mobile:

US: +16699009128,93805817750# or +12532158782,93805817750#

- Streaming Facebook Live on Supervisor Lynda Hopkins page

<https://www.facebook.com/supervisorlyndahopkins>

MINUTES

Thursday, April 21, 2022

1. **CALL TO ORDER – 5:31 P.M.** - Meeting was held by Zoom conference due to COVID-19 restrictions.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – All members.
3. **ROLL CALL**
Present: Vesta Copestakes, Lisa Nahmanson, Pip Marquez de la Plata, Naomi Hufstutter, Nic Pereira, Kyra Wink, and Tony Goodwin
Absent/Excused: Alice Teeter
4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Corrections:

1) Lieutenant Tim Duke will be replacing Tom McNeil for tonight's meeting
2) Discussion on homeless solutions will include Tina Rivera and Paul Osmindson

Vesta Copestakes made a motion to approve the agenda with noted corrections. Nic Pereira seconded the motion. Motion was approved 7-0-1.
5. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST** – None.
6. **CORRESPONDENCE** - None.
7. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Members voted for approval of the last meeting minutes.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

Lisa Nahmanson provided an announcement on a recent townhall event which covered the following topics: City of Forestville, sidewalks, downtown parks, new businesses, etc. She reported that the event had a great outcome with participants and mentioned an upcoming community meeting, which the public was also invited to attend.

Lisa Nahmanson inquired about the procedures of inputting emails from the public into committee meetings.

Elise Weiland responded that this particular email was answered and that any future emails will be directed to its appropriate department.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

1) Alex Averba made a public comment regarding the Guerneville redrawing and inquired about the implementation of new bike lanes within the downtown area.

2) Alvara False made a public comment regarding the concern of homeless creating fires under the bridge and near 4th street.

8. REGULAR CALENDAR ITEMS:

A. UPDATE FROM SUPERVISOR HOPKINS

Discussed the following:

Working on coordinating a mapping system:

- Includes health services, fire agencies, Sonoma County Sheriff's Offices, and requires involvement of community members.
- City of Sebastopol and other leadership providing housing assistance to the homeless, as well as community members of the Russian River Valley.
- Working on securing Project "Home Key" funds.

No public comment at this time.

B. CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP:

Rich Holmer gave a presentation on current issues affecting septic systems:

- Goal is to restore and maintain surface water quality
- Russian River Valley drainage is having issues of pathogen contamination

- Advance Protection Management Plan: Implements results of TMDL and affects around 8,000 parcels within the Russian River Valley
- Systems will need to be upgraded/replaced if they do not meet APMP standards

Kyla Brooke provided an additional update as to the current status and future plans on how to address this issue as well as its impact within several communities:

- Advising the Interagency Team and Supporting citizens in understanding these new regulations
- Reviewed the current CAG members and their roles within this project
- Four focus areas: Advocacy, Influence, Collaboration and Communications
- Discussed past, present and [future] planned accomplishments
- Current meetings are via ZOOM on the fourth Thursday of each month

Board Comment:

Vesta Copestake inquired about the progress of composting toilets, use of aerobic systems and timeline for real estate agents to be required to inform potential buyers of this system.

Rich Holmer responded that the composting of toilets can be found in Sonoma County standards but needs to be amended and that aerobic systems require an operational permit and commonly used throughout the county.

Kyla Brooke also responded that real estate agents will be informed as the regulations become more defined.

Supervisor Hopkins responded to the question regarding composting toilets, mentioning that it isn't very implementable at this time, but is something the county and her team are currently working on to improve.

Public Comment:

1) Alexis made a public comment inquiring about grants from public agencies to help with this current project.

- Rich Homer responded that grants are possible but only through a county agency and that money is also available to community-wide solutions.

- Kyla Brooke mentioned that much of the funding is allocated from septic to sewer as opposed to other alternatives.

2) Michael asked if MAC members considered the problem of lower flow in the Russian River as important as bacterial contamination in septic tanks.

- Rich Homer responded that the water quality control must meet summer and winter time flow levels, but currently, it will be difficult to keep the river clean.

3) Alexis inquired if there was a map from the extent of the Monte Rio Bellow area.

- Rich Homer responded that the final areas will be determined by the consultant.
- Supervisor Hopkins responded that they are in the second round of interviews at this time and have an application in for a \$75,000 budget request, as well as \$350,000 for a big picture study that will look at solutions beyond the defined area.

C. RISK MITIGATION FROM FOREST FIRES:

CalFire Chief Ben Nicholls provided the following updates:

- Increase of rain that, while good, will determine future fire containment levels, but also removed these areas from extreme drought problems
- Discussed top three causes for fires: 1) Debris burning 2) Accidents 3) Campfires
- Working on ways to minimize wildfires by working with several agencies within the communities to ensure people stay safe and to prevent fire season

Sonoma Fire Chief Cyndi Foreman provided the following updates:

- Discussed resources in collaboration with Fire and Law Enforcement agencies
- Discussed responsibilities within the organization
- Spoke about the importance of being educated and prepared in the event of wild or accidental fires

Board Comment:

Chair Pip asked about the statistics of how fires are typically started, as well as guidance to when individuals jump to conclusion regarding an active fire.

Ben Nicholls responded:

- Campfires consume the majority of started fires and recommended that community members continue to report illegal or uncontained fires to the police and fire department to maintain safety
- Mentioned that a person can only receive a misdemeanor for a fire, and will not be arrested by law enforcement in order to promote better community behavior rather than facing criminal consequences
- Due to the drought, fires have a higher significance of spreading and causing significant, if not life-threatening, damages
- If you see a fire, call it in so that it can be addressed in a timely manner

Tony Goodwin asked about fires, specifically the ones on the highways 101 corridor, caused by arson.

Ben Nicholls responded that this often happens when mufflers in cars become blocked or if a car suddenly gets a flat tire. Overall, there are multiple ways that fires can start both accidentally and criminally.

Vesta Copestakes inquired about the statistics of cigarette butt caused fires as well as yearly cleanup around these affected areas.

Ben Nicholls responded that cigarette-caused fires cover a small percentage of most fires.

Kyra Wink asked if fire agencies could supply a monthly report of recent fires, the cause(s) of the fires to better update the public without making assumptions.

Ben Nicholls responded that information can only be shared with closed investigations and expressed the importance of the community having confidence in the fire responders who are dealing with these fires.

Public Comment:

1) Kari made a public comment asking if homeowners could get grants to take care of fire hazards.

- Fire Marshall Cyndi Foreman mentioned several county programs that could help with these types of issues.

-Supervisor Hopkins suggested reaching out to Agricultural Preservation Open Space District team, Sonoma County Energy Independence Program, as well as listed several other resources.

2) Kerry made a public comment regarding her disappointment to MAC meetings, claiming that they never provide direct answers that affect certain communities, for instance, fire or homeless encampment concerns.

- Ben Nicholls responded by clarifying the legal repercussions for arson fires, explained that the fire department is continuing to extinguish illegal/unsafe fires, have reached out to the members of the homeless community on how to legally stay warm at night, but do not have an "official" plan at this time as to how they will proceed with this ongoing issue.

3) Cynthia made a public comment asking about the current controversy between CalFire and the Board of "Soups" and whether or not certain development constructions is allowed on one-lane roads.

- Supervisor Hopkins responded that there are no current or ongoing issues between CalFire and Board of Supervisors, additionally mentioning that the Board of Forestry along with Sonoma County and its agencies are still working on a decision regarding this matter.

- Chair Pip mentioned that homelessness and fires have been ongoing concerns but that solutions are underway for the benefit of the public and other community members.

D. RISK MITIGATION FROM ENCAMPMENTS, WARMING AND COOKING FIRES:

Tim from the Sonoma County Sherriff's office discussed the following:

- 1) The Sheriff's Department has limited staff that can help with fire issues
- 2) Discussed the importance of Boise v Martin and how it affects homeless within western states
- 3) Discussed the process of handling issues stemming from the homeless, starting off with establishing jurisdiction, public or private property, etc.
- 4) Next steps depend on whether it's determined a criminal act, parole violation or has a current warrant
- 5) This process can take a few hours, which takes a huge toll on current resources
- 6) For private property violations, a citizen's arrest form or private trespass request form would be required
- 7) For public property violations, the department of Health Services will be contacted and will come in to offer services such as housing, vehicle maintenance, etc. to help get them going
- 8) This is especially difficult towards homeless who have some sort of addiction or mental health problem as they won't be able to process information as fast as the deputies assisting them

Board Comment:

None.

Public Comment:

1) Robin made a public comment regarding a fire that occurred last summer, in which differentiating warming and cooking could not be accurately established. She then inquired about who can and cannot have fires.

Ben Nicholls responded that this specific incident was an illegal fire and when it comes to warming and heating purposes, apologized for the misunderstanding by the Rio Nido CalFire department and concluded that they will continue to monitor fire danger issues as they arise in the future.

2) Kerry made a public comment asking how homeless would be removed from forested areas, which would decrease fire risks amongst public areas.

Tina Rivera responded that the HEART (Homeless Encampment Access Resource Team) has weekly meetings to address fire issues when it comes to campsite clearing and enforcement.

Tina Rivera additionally recommended that the public contacts HEART or INDT, which then alerts the Health Department and provides enough data to be able to address these issues and provide resources in a timely manner in respect to the encampment's location, danger, and other safety risks.

E. HOUSING SOLUTIONS AND GEORGE'S HIDEAWAY PRESENTATION:

Paul Osmundson discussed the following:

- 1) Sonoma County now owns George's Hideaway
- 2) A \$6,000,000 grant has been requested for renovations, sewage, construction, etc. of homes that will eventually help house up to 21 homeless individuals

Board Comment:

Nic Pereira inquired about outreach to neighborhoods near George's Hideaway and when will public forms be addressed despite the consistent "no" vote from public residents.

Supervisor Hopkins responded that the community voted George's Hideaway was voted as the number one option, mentioning the ongoing substantial support from the community due to the safety it can provide to the 21 residents.

Vesta Copestakes made a comment mentioning how cleaner areas remain safer and inquired if any of the village-like spaces could be sanctioned for safety and fire cleanup.

Supervisor Hopkins responded that sanctioning specific areas only draws more concerns to potential fire dangers and less housing opportunities. She further mentioned several creative solutions that could help reduce the risk of current or future encampment issues.

Naomi Hufstutter expressed her concern regarding George's hideaway but is concerned with how the navigation center was closed out.

Public Comment:

Kerry made a public comment thanking Supervisor Hopkins for her support to this 21-unit Housing project that will help put a stop towards homelessness.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS:

AdHoc Reports.

Trash:

Lisa Nahmanson updated the committee that a newsletter is being created to spread awareness on trash issues, reaching out to community recycling and composting efforts. Also looking for volunteers to participate in the trash collection committee.

Board Comment:

Vesta Copestakes inquired how people could get involved in the County's Adopt-a-Road program as well as what this program entails.

Lisa Nahmanson responded with her contact information for anyone who may be interested in joining.

Public Comment:

1) John made a public comment inquiring about public disposing locations for trash drop-off and community clean up days.

2) Vera made a public comment asking about what the Russian River area plans to do about trash that cannot be picked up in a timely manner due to its overflow with current company that try to assist with trash pickup and removal.

Elise Weiland responded that there are several agencies working on trash pickup and removal.

3) Kerry made a public comment regarding the need for funding for trash pickup, as most of the time other jobs need to be done before trash can be picked up.

Land Use:

Kyra Winks provided an update mentioning that the proposed area was too large and will have to go back to the board for adjustments. The next meeting would be on May 26, 2022 to discuss further land use issues.

Vacation Rentals:

Vesta Copestakes provided an update stating the board will need to continue to work on alternative solutions for vacation rentals, to include a 24-hour phone line to address issues for the public/community to use.

Public Comment:

1) Alexis made a public comment regarding her concern for how the cap level

was discussed, million-dollar housing converting to affordable housing if homeowners don't/can't get vacation permits, and how to get money from vacation renters to get the services the community needs.

Staff Report on Ongoing Issues:

Strategic Plan RFP

Elise Weiland discussed the following:

- RFP that would be sent out in May 2022
- Reviews gaps of the local Russian River,
- Looks at payment, and management issues
- Analyzing better ways to use community services
- Phase 1: Discovery and Analysis
- Phase 2: Return to the community and discuss ways to move forward
- Phase 3: Will propose solutions followed by further discussion
- This plan will likely start during Fall of 2022

RR Confluence Update:

- Discussed the agency and its purpose in supporting the Russian River Valley
- 18 different groups are working out of this agency for additional support

Three main initiatives:

- 1) Establishing a governance structure
- 2) Establishing technical and environmental (collaborating with R3M3)
- 3) Establishing communication tools to engage with the project

April 27, 2022: Meeting with Mike McGuire on CALTRANS ADA replacement

May 5, 2022: Sonoma County Water Agency meeting on solutions and fixes for the lift stations and water mains that broke several months ago

May 31, 2022: Guerneville Townhall of Neighbors meeting on George's Hideaway

10. PROCLAMATIONS – None.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata sought a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12p.m. Kyra Wink made a motion to adjourn the meeting and the motion was seconded by Vesta Copestakes. The motion carried 7-0-1.

The next meeting of the Lower Russian River MAC is **Thursday, June 16, 2022.**