



Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council

AGENDA

Regular Meeting

October 10, 2024 05:30 PM

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

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

<https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/j/93646781975?pwd=beLWwnzhYlqli2AVgIm3DjIjFO131fM.1>

Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata • Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls • Guerneville Representative: Joe Rogoff • Guerneville Representative: Spencer R. Scott • 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

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council will make reasonable accommodations for persons having special needs due to disabilities. Please contact the Fifth District Field Representative at 707-565-1219 during regular business hours at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to ensure necessary accommodations are made.

1. Announcement from the Spanish Interpreter

The interpreter will provide instructions on how to access the Spanish language audio channel in Zoom or get a headset to listen to the Spanish interpretation in-person.

2. Call to Order

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

3. Approval of Agenda

Discussion **Possible Action**

This approval process ensures that the agenda accurately reflects the items to be discussed and decided upon. Members may request adjustments to the agenda, including reordering or deletion of items at this time. Any changes must comply with the Brown Act requirements for public notice and agenda setting. The agenda must be finalized before the Council proceeds with other meeting items.

4. Statement of Conflict of Interest

Discussion

This is the time for the Chair, Vice Chair and Council Members to indicate any statements of conflict

of interest for any item listed on this agenda. The River MAC bylaws state that members will not involve themselves in official River MAC activities that could materially benefit them personally, their business interests, or the interests of organizations that they represent. In a conflict of interest, the member will abstain from voting, and the abstention will be recorded in the minutes.

5. Consent Agenda

Discussion **Possible Action**

These items are expected to be routine and non-controversial. The Lower Russian River MAC will act upon them at one time without discussion. Any Representatives, staff member or interested party may request that an item be removed from the consent agenda for discussion.

A. September 12, 2024 regular meeting minutes

B. September 25, 2024 special meeting minutes

6. Councilmember comment on matters not listed on the agenda

Comments are restricted to matters within the Board’s jurisdiction. Please be brief and limit spoken comments to one minute. Due to Brown Act regulations, this is not a time for discussion of any item, however a brief dialogue about considering an item for a future agenda is permitted during this time.

7. Public Comments

On Matters not listed on the agenda: Comments are restricted to matters within the Lower Russian River MAC’s jurisdiction. Please be brief and limit spoken comments to two minutes.

8. County Update from Supervisor Lynda Hopkins / Staff

Discussion

9. Discussion regarding parking restrictions in the Lower Russian River

Discussion

Matt Lilligren, Deputy County Counsel, will discuss the areas in the Lower Russian River currently being evaluated for additional parking restrictions, including Downtown Guerneville, Armstrong Woods Road, Monte Rio, and River Road near Steelhead Beach and the River Drive neighborhood near Mothers' Beach, and will seek Council & Community feedback regarding the potential options being considered.

10. Committee & Community Project Reports

Discussion

Written reports may be included for review. Committee chair or delegate may briefly highlight parts of the update, respond to councilmember questions, and receive public comment.

11. Adjournment



Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council
Minutes

Regular Meeting

September 12, 2024 05:30 PM

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

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

1. Announcement from the Spanish Interpreter

2. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls.

Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata arrived at 5:31

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls

B. 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 Representative: Spencer R. Scott, Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative: Cynthia Strecker, Hacienda Representative: Vicki Clewes, Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar, Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton

Staff Present: Debbie Ramirez, Lupe Catalan, Katrina Braehmer, Claudette Diaz & Brendan Norton. Note: Councilmember Betsy Van Dyke arrived at 5:35 PM

3. Approval of Agenda

Betsy Van Dyke arrived after this vote

Vice Chair & Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Mike Nicholls motioned to approve. A second was made by Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative: Cynthia Strecker.

The motion passed with the following vote:

8 In Favor ___ Opposed
___ Abstained 1 Absent ___ Recused

4. Statement of Conflict of Interest

There were no statements of conflict of interest.

5. Consent Agenda

A. August 8, 2024 minutes

Thai Hilton abstained due to his absence at the 8.8 meeting. Betsy Van Dyke arrived after this vote.

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**
1 **Abstained** 1 **Absent** **Recused**

6. Councilmember comment on matters not listed on the agenda

Vice Chair Mike Nicholls made an announcement regarding the upcoming California County Planning Commission meeting scheduled for September 19th at 1:30 PM regarding the Downtown Oaks Park in Forestville. He congratulated Lucy Hardcastle and the Forestville Planning Association for their long-standing efforts with this project. Vice Chair Nicholls noted that since 2007, they had been working to complete a park zoning change in Forestville. He explained that the meeting on the 19th would include a staff report recommending that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution, which calls for the Board of Supervisors to adopt a mitigated negative declaration and approve the requested zone change, general plan amendment, and use permit. He reiterated his thanks to Lucy Hardcastle and her team for their nearly 20 years of work on this project.

Councilmember Vicki Clewes added to Vice Chair Nicholls' comments, sharing that the first annual Pie in the Park event took place on August 31st, coinciding with Lucy Hardcastle's birthday. The event served as a fundraiser to help maintain the park, and it was highly successful, drawing more people than expected. Councilmember Clewes expressed her gratitude to those who attended, including Lynda, Debbie, and Tracy from District 5. She noted that a good amount of money was raised, and it was a nice complement to the upcoming park zoning event. The councilmember remarked that the event was a success and would be held again next year.

Councilmember Cynthia Strecker announced an upcoming GMRS radio training session at the Monte Rio Community Center, scheduled for Sunday from 11 AM to 1 PM. She mentioned that 82 people had already signed up, with space for up to 100 participants. Councilmember Strecker recounted how Tony Goodwin had asked her to coordinate the event, but she recommended Dave Gatlin for the role, and Gatlin graciously accepted. With assistance from M-Force, Patty Thayer, and others, the event was organized, and she expressed confidence that it would be a great session.

Vice Chair Mike Nicholls also thanked Supervisor Hopkins for providing funding for radio distribution in District 5. He reported that over 600 GMRS radios had been distributed in the last few months. He highlighted the success of past training events in Petaluma and upcoming sessions in Windsor on October 13th and at The Orchards senior living community in Santa Rosa in November. He noted that the two-way radio project had expanded significantly, with 22 repeaters now in place and detailed training guides available for participants. The project had been highly successful.

Vice Chair Mike Nicholls added that those interested in more information could visit www.wi-duit.org/radio. He encouraged anyone who had not yet attended a training session to do so, emphasizing that geography was not a barrier to participation. He mentioned that at the last event in Petaluma, attendees from Napa and Lake counties had expressed interest in expanding the program to their areas. Vice Chair Nicholls stated that efforts would be made to reach out to the supervisors in those counties to discuss potential funding for radios.

Councilmember Joe Rogoff provided an update on the Guerneville Night Market, scheduled for the following night. He described it as a fun event held in the plaza by the bridge and encouraged everyone to attend and support the community. He also shared information about upcoming Pride events, including a Give-Back Tuesday event at Timberline Restaurant, which would feature a full Thanksgiving dinner for \$10, along with prizes. The Pride events would continue throughout the week, with darts on Thursday, hula dancing in the plaza on Wednesday, prom on Friday, and the Pride Parade and Festival on Saturday. Councilmember Rogoff mentioned that the parade would begin at noon and that vendor applications were still being accepted. He invited everyone to join in the celebration.

7. Public Comments

Vikki Miller urged residents to support the park ahead of the September 19th Planning Commission meeting, noting online resources.

Sharon Martinelli expressed concern about a proposed asphalt plant, citing health risks from cancer-causing chemicals and the high fire risk in the area. She urged relocating the plant to an industrial zone.

Heather Aon, Vice President of Forestville Limited, highlighted the fire hazards posed by the plant, noting the need for HazMat responses and limited local resources. She thanked the commission for addressing safety issues and urged opposition to the plant.

8. County Update from Supervisor Lynda Hopkins / Staff

Supervisor Lynda Hopkins provided several key updates. Two items will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on October 8th: the on-site wastewater treatment system (septic) mapping study and analysis, a long-term project with KAG, and the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Ordinance, which would allow individuals to sell home-cooked meals, expanding cottage food laws and supporting small business opportunities for stay-at-home parents.

The BOS will hear a general plan status update at their October 15 meeting. Tonight's main topic is related to this work. Regarding George's Hideaway, Burbank Housing has been approved as the new developer, taking over from West County Community Services, which will continue as the operator. The goal is to have residents moved in by June 2024.

Hopkins provided details on the Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD), with a public meeting scheduled for September 25th at 6:30 PM at El Molino. The EIFD allows tax growth reinvestment in infrastructure projects like a new Sheriff's substation, fire station, and community center.

The Board has also prioritized climate adaptation, focusing on infrastructure resilience and bridge repairs. A new transportation priorities survey is part of the comprehensive transportation plan update and will be shared with the MAC and in the District 5 newsletter.

Save the Redwoods League has acquired 1,600 acres to expand Fort Ross State Park, a major addition that has been in the works for several years. Regarding the barred owl and spotted owl issue, the County is forming a working group with Regional Parks and Ag + Open Space to explore local policy responses to the federal decision to cull barred owls to protect the endangered spotted owl.

Finally, the Sheriff's Office narcotics unit has been operational since the June budget hearings, focusing on seizing opiates, fentanyl, and illegal firearms. Despite being understaffed, the unit has made significant progress targeting drug suppliers.

9. Presentation from Katrina Braehmer, Supervising Planner and Claudette Diaz, Planner from Permit Sonoma regarding the 2020 Safety Element Update and the New Environmental Justice Element

Katrina Braehmer, Supervising Planner, and Claudette Diaz, Planner, from Permit Sonoma, presented updates on the 2020 Safety Element and the new Environmental Justice Element of the Sonoma County General Plan. These updates are required by state law to address issues such as evacuation route capacity, climate vulnerabilities, and resilience policies.

Braehmer explained that the General Plan, last updated in 2008, is now outdated. Given changes in conditions over the past decade, the Safety Element and Environmental Justice Element need revisions. The Safety Element focuses on protecting communities from natural hazards like wildfires, floods, and earthquakes, while also ensuring preparedness and evacuation strategies are in place. The new Environmental Justice Element is intended to ensure that all people, regardless of race, income, or background, are treated fairly regarding environmental laws and policies.

Braehmer and Diaz emphasized that these updates are moving ahead of the larger General Plan revision, which is scheduled to begin in earnest in January 2025. The county will be holding public meetings and community engagement efforts throughout the year. The new elements will integrate findings from a variety of studies, including the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and the Evacuation Route Capacity Assessment, which will help shape the policies necessary to address community resilience and preparedness.

The Equity Working Committee (EWC), comprised of 19 community leaders, has been providing input on the Environmental Justice Element. The committee has held several focus groups and pop-up events to ensure a wide range of community voices are heard. The county's planning team has also prepared several background reports, such as the Environmental Justice Technical Report, which identifies disadvantaged communities with elevated pollution burdens and health issues like asthma and cardiovascular disease.

Diaz noted that the Safety Element is being updated to meet new state mandates, including addressing climate adaptation, evacuation planning, and ensuring access to emergency resources for vulnerable populations. Additionally, the Environmental Justice Element will focus on reducing pollution exposure, improving access to public services, and increasing civic engagement for historically underserved communities.

The presentation concluded with an invitation for community members to stay involved in the development process, with public drafts of these updates expected later this year. The updates will go to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for review and approval.

MAC Representatives provided feedback on several key issues:

- Evacuation planning must account for populations without transportation, particularly elderly, disabled, and low-income residents in rural areas.
- Representatives emphasized the critical need for clear and consistent evacuation routes in rural areas with limited access, such as Vacation Beach and Canyon neighborhoods. They noted the risk of bottlenecks due to single exit roads.
- Representatives highlighted ongoing power and communication issues in rural areas, such as Cazadero, where residents rely on emergency radio networks due to poor cell service. They advocated for better communication infrastructure, especially during emergencies.

- There was a call for the county to provide hands-on assistance to residents, especially seniors, for home hardening and wildfire prevention, including financial and physical support.
- Representatives expressed concern about the slow response to flood recovery, urging the county to streamline post-flood resources, such as providing dumpsters for debris cleanup, to ensure quicker recovery times.

Members of the public shared their concerns and suggestions:

- Evacuation challenges in communities with limited exit routes, such as Monte Rio and Vacation Beach, were emphasized. Residents highlighted the dangers of having only one road out during emergencies.
- Communication failures during power outages and wildfires were raised, with public members noting the dependence on landlines in areas with limited cell service. There were concerns about the potential loss of this critical infrastructure.
- There was a request for a formal plan to evacuate pets during emergencies, noting the emotional and logistical challenges of ensuring animals' safety.
- Public comments emphasized the need for flood prevention strategies, including better drainage systems to mitigate runoff and localized flooding.
- Suggestions included restoring floodplains and improving waterway health to reduce flood risks, with support for projects like the Hanson project that aim to reconnect river systems to natural floodplains.

Several members stressed the importance of community knowledge and requested greater collaboration between the county and local residents who have experienced previous floods and fires.

10. Committee & Community Project Reports

A. Community Stewardship Project

Vicki Clewes provided an update on the Community Stewardship project. She noted that the report was included in the meeting materials and mentioned that she has been working directly with Che and Debbie to identify priorities for traffic calming and parking. She highlighted their responsiveness and expressed her gratitude for their efforts. Clewes also added that she trusts the project will progress smoothly, as Che has assured her that he is handling it.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 7:38 PM



Special Joint Meeting of the Lower Russian River and Sonoma Coast Municipal Advisory Councils

Minutes

Special Meeting

September 25, 2024 06:30 PM

El Molino Library, 7050 Covey Road, Forestville, CA 95436

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

1. Call to Order, River MAC Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Vesta Copestakes led the Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call, River MAC

Present: Pip Marquez de la Plata, Mike Nicholls, Spencer Scott, Betsy Van Dyke, Cynthia Strecker, Vicki Clewes, Lonnie Lazar & Thai Hilton. Absent: Joe Rogoff

C. Roll Call, Coast MAC

Present: Scott Foster & John Laughlin (Alternate) Absent: Beth Bruzzone, Scott Nevin, Caroline Madden, Jill Lippitt, Brian Leubitz, & Ginny Nicholls. There was not a quorum present for the Coast MAC

2. Approval of the Agenda, Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata

The Coast MAC did not have a quorum. Members present participated in discussions, but no formal actions were taken.

Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative (River MAC): Betsy Van Dyke motioned to approve. A second was made by River MAC Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata.

The motion passed with the following vote:

8 In Favor 0 Opposed
 Abstained 1 Absent Recused

3. Statement of Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts reported.

4. Presentation and facilitated discussion regarding the formation of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) and community priorities regarding the types of projects residents in Unincorporated West County would like to be considered.

Supervisor Lynda Hopkins opened this item with an overview, expressing her gratitude to the community for their attendance and participation. She emphasized the importance of the evening's discussion, which will be focused on the formation of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) as a potential solution to the challenges faced by West County, particularly its aging infrastructure.

Hopkins explained that one of the most pressing issues in West County is the deterioration of critical infrastructure, much of which dates back decades. She cited a specific example in Rio Nido, where a culvert, originally built during the WPA era under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, had catastrophically failed over the past winter. This failure resulted in unexpected flooding, affecting areas that had never experienced such problems before, including several homes. The event underscored the urgent need for preemptive infrastructure repairs before more systems fail in ways that could endanger both property and public safety.

Beyond addressing the immediate need for infrastructure repair, Hopkins highlighted several other priorities that could be funded through an EIFD. These included enhanced recreational amenities, affordable housing, and climate resilience initiatives. She noted that these issues are particularly pressing in West County but also of interest to neighboring areas, such as Sebastopol. Both communities share a need for improved infrastructure and services, and the possibility of funding such projects through an EIFD had generated a lot of interest.

To provide more context, Hopkins introduced the idea of the EIFD as a modern approach to redevelopment. She explained that an EIFD operates similarly to the redevelopment agencies that were once widely used across California, though those agencies were dissolved in 2012. An EIFD, however, is a form of tax increment financing that does not introduce new taxes. Instead, it captures a portion of the increased property tax revenue generated from new developments or rising property values and reinvests that money into public infrastructure projects.

Hopkins gave the example of a new hotel project. Once completed, the property tax revenue from that development would be higher due to the increased property value. An EIFD would allow the county to capture this additional revenue and allocate it directly toward local projects, such as road repairs, flood mitigation, or even climate resilience efforts. This mechanism ensures that the benefits of new development are reinvested into the community, rather than being funneled solely into the general county budget.

Hopkins acknowledged that there had been some concerns raised about the potential competition between Sebastopol and rural West County when it came to how funds might be distributed. She addressed these concerns head-on, noting that while both communities had overlapping interests, there was no intention of allowing one to "steal" funds from the other. She emphasized that the goal was to create a win-win situation where both the city of Sebastopol and rural areas of West County could benefit from an EIFD. To ensure transparency and fairness, she reassured attendees that the process would involve close collaboration between the county and the city, and that any decisions about project funding would be made with input from both communities.

Hopkins then outlined the three primary options currently being considered:

1. Sebastopol forming its own EIFD to address the city's unique needs and priorities.
2. Unincorporated Sonoma County forming a separate EIFD, focusing specifically on the needs of rural areas like West County.
3. Combining Sebastopol and unincorporated Sonoma County into a single, broader EIFD,

which would pool resources and fund projects that benefit both the city and the surrounding rural areas.

She clarified that, regardless of which option is pursued, both the Board of Supervisors and the Sebastopol City Council would need to vote on the formation of the EIFD. This process was still in its early stages, and no project list had been finalized. Community input would play a crucial role in determining which projects would be prioritized.

Finally, Hopkins encouraged the group to think about how we define our communities, as many of us live just outside urban service areas and would also likely benefit from the public infrastructure projects funded by the EIFD in these areas.

Supervisor Hopkins concluded by stressing that the goal of the evening's meeting was to listen to the community's concerns, gather ideas, and begin developing a project list. She reiterated that nothing had been decided yet, and that the process would take time and require input from all stakeholders. With that, she transitioned the discussion over to Felicia Williams from Kosmont Consulting to present more detailed information about how EIFDs work and the next steps in the process.

Presentation by Kosmont Consulting

Felicia Williams began by thanking Supervisor Lynda Hopkins for the introduction and welcomed the attendees, acknowledging the presence of many community members from the river and coastal areas. She introduced herself as a Senior Vice President at Kosmont Consulting and noted that she was joined by her colleague, Joe Dieguez, who also specializes in infrastructure financing. Together, they lead Kosmont's Infrastructure Financing Division, which has been highly active as more cities and counties explore new ways to fund critical infrastructure improvements.

Williams then launched into a detailed presentation, structured to give the audience a clear understanding of Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs), how they work, and what opportunities they present for community development in West County and Sebastopol. She outlined the agenda for the meeting, explaining that the primary goal was to hear from the public about their priorities for infrastructure projects that could be funded through an EIFD. These projects could include essential public works such as roads, flood prevention, affordable housing, climate resilience, and other local improvements.

Background on EIFDs

Williams began by providing historical context on tax increment financing, explaining that EIFDs are similar to the redevelopment model used by California cities for decades. However, unlike redevelopment agencies (RDAs), which were eliminated by the state in 2012, EIFDs are a newer mechanism authorized by legislation in 2014. These districts allow local governments to capture the growth in property taxes from new developments and reinvest that increment back into the community to fund critical public infrastructure. Importantly, Williams emphasized that this is not a new tax but rather a tool to allocate future property tax growth for community improvements.

She explained that when new developments occur, such as housing projects or commercial developments, the property value of those areas increases. The difference between the original property tax base and the new, higher taxes (due to the increased value) is the tax increment. Under an EIFD, this increment is captured and placed into a special fund. That fund is then used to pay for public infrastructure improvements like roads, water systems, affordable housing, and parks. Williams highlighted that this model allows the community to retain more of

the financial benefits of its own growth rather than having all of the increased tax revenue flow directly into the county's general fund.

Potential for Funding in West County and Sebastopol

Williams noted a preliminary estimate of approximately \$125 million in potential EIFD funding for the Fifth District, which includes both Sebastopol and the surrounding unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. However, this estimate was based on several assumptions, such as projected property tax growth over a 30- to 45-year period and the inclusion of both city and rural areas in the EIFD. She emphasized that this figure is only a starting point and that Kosmont Consulting will refine the financial analysis as more data and community input becomes available.

She then discussed the geographic scope of the proposed EIFD, noting that one option being considered was to create a single district that would cover both Sebastopol and the unincorporated areas. Another option was to form two separate EIFDs: one for Sebastopol and one for rural West County. A third possibility was creating distinct project areas within a larger district, which would allow for a more flexible allocation of funds while still maintaining some separation between urban and rural needs.

Williams underscored the importance of collaboration between the city and county, particularly to address concerns about the fair distribution of funds. She reassured attendees that any decision to form an EIFD would require formal approval from both the Board of Supervisors and the Sebastopol City Council. This process would involve public hearings and input at every stage.

Types of Projects Eligible for EIFD Funding

Williams walked the audience through a slide that detailed the types of projects that could be funded through an EIFD. These projects, as defined by state law, are diverse and wide-ranging, providing a great deal of flexibility to local governments. Some examples included:

- Water and sewer systems
- Stormwater drainage infrastructure
- Roads and streets (including significant upgrades, paving, resurfacing, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements)
- Public transit systems
- Parks, open spaces, and children's recreational facilities
- Libraries and public amenities (e.g., swimming pools)
- Affordable housing (note: an EIFD does not result in any zoning changes or changes to local housing ordinances)
- Broadband infrastructure
- Wildfire prevention and mitigation
- Small business and nonprofit support facilities

Williams highlighted several examples from other EIFDs in California, noting that these districts have been used successfully to fund projects like public transportation improvements in Southern California and affordable housing developments in Northern California. She stressed that each EIFD is unique, and the types of projects that West County would prioritize would ultimately depend on community input and the specific needs of the region.

Project Ideas and Initial Input from City and County Staff

Williams then presented a preliminary list of project ideas that had already been suggested by county and city staff. Some of the early ideas for West County included:

- Infrastructure repair and upgrades, particularly for roads and drainage systems in rural areas.
- Flood prevention projects, especially for areas prone to flooding, such as Guerneville.
- Affordable housing developments, which would address the critical housing shortage in the region.
- Wildfire prevention efforts, such as fuel breaks and improved emergency access routes.
- Climate resilience projects, including efforts to strengthen infrastructure against future climate change impacts like rising sea levels and extreme weather events.
- Recreational amenities, such as expanding parks and building new facilities like swimming pools or community centers.
- Broadband expansion, particularly in under-served rural areas that lack reliable internet access.

Williams emphasized that these were only initial ideas, and that the purpose of the meeting was to hear from the community about their specific priorities. She encouraged attendees to think about what types of projects would have the most impact on their daily lives and contribute to the long-term sustainability and vitality of the region.

How EIFDs are Structured and Governed

Williams provided an overview of the governance structure for EIFDs, explaining that once a district is formed, a Public Financing Authority (PFA) is established to oversee the allocation of funds and ensure that projects are implemented according to the community's priorities. The PFA typically consists of representatives from both the city and county, as well as public members, depending on the structure of the district.

She stressed that the PFA would operate transparently and with public accountability. All decisions about how the funds are spent would be made through public meetings and with input from both city and county representatives. Additionally, if the EIFD issues bonds to accelerate funding, the PFA would be responsible for managing those bonds and ensuring that the funds are repaid using the future tax increment.

Timeline and Next Steps

Williams concluded her presentation by discussing the proposed timeline for the formation of the EIFD. She noted that the process would take time and that no final decisions had been

made yet. The current phase was focused on gathering community input and refining the financial estimates. The next steps would include more detailed outreach, financial modeling, and eventually public hearings before any official votes were taken by the Sebastopol City Council or the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

According to Williams, if there was enough community support, the EIFD formation process could begin in 2025, with initial project funding potentially starting to flow several years later as property tax revenues increased. She emphasized that the process was still in its early stages and that there would be multiple opportunities for public input along the way. She wrapped up the presentation by inviting questions and sharing thoughts on the types of projects to be prioritized, encouraging people to stay engaged in the process as it moved forward.

Council Member Questions and Comments

1. Road Improvements

One council member asked for clarification about road paving and resurfacing, noting that these types of projects were not explicitly mentioned in the presentation and expressing concern that road infrastructure might not be prioritized.

- Response: Felicia Williams assured the council member that road paving and resurfacing are indeed eligible for EIFD funding. Although sidewalk and bicycle improvements were emphasized in the presentation, paving, resurfacing, and drainage improvements could all be considered for funding through the EIFD.

2. Allocation of Funds During a Budget Crisis

A council member raised a concern about whether the EIFD funds could be reallocated during a budget crisis or whether the county could use the funds for purposes other than the intended infrastructure projects.

- Response: Williams explained that once the EIFD is established, a separate Public Financing Authority (PFA) would oversee the allocation of funds. The PFA, consisting of city and county representatives, would make decisions about which projects to fund. She assured the council that the EIFD funds are legally protected and cannot be redirected for other uses unless the entire infrastructure financing plan is amended, which would require a new public process.

3. Representation for Rural Areas

Another council member expressed concern about ensuring that rural areas, which might contribute significant tax revenue, would receive fair representation on the PFA and that funds would not be disproportionately allocated to urban areas like Sebastopol.

- Response: Williams responded that the composition of the PFA would be designed to represent both the city and unincorporated areas. She mentioned that while a PFA could include three representatives from a city and two from a county, there is flexibility to create the board composition to ensure fair representation for rural areas. The structure would help guarantee that funding decisions reflect the needs of all regions within the district.

4. Prioritization of Affordable Housing

A council member emphasized the critical need for affordable housing in West County, noting that many local businesses were struggling to retain employees due to the high cost of living. The council member asked if affordable housing could be prioritized within the EIFD framework.

- Response: Williams confirmed that affordable housing is an eligible project for EIFD funding and that many communities across California have used EIFD funds to support workforce and affordable housing projects. She added that housing is often a priority in EIFD project lists due to its broad community benefits.

5. Impact on General Fund Allocation for Roads

One council member raised concerns about the possibility that forming an EIFD could lead to reduced allocations from the county's general fund for road improvements, especially in rural areas.

- Response: Supervisor Lynda Hopkins responded directly to this concern, reassuring the council that the creation of an EIFD would not reduce general fund allocations for roads. The intent of the EIFD is to provide additional resources for significant infrastructure projects without undermining existing funding sources. She encouraged continued advocacy for road improvements through general fund channels while leveraging EIFD funds for more substantial, transformative projects.

6. Project List and Area Coverage of the \$125 Million Estimate

A council member asked whether the \$125 million estimate was meant to cover both Sebastopol and the unincorporated areas or if it was only for one specific region. They also inquired if, in the absence of an EIFD, that money would have automatically gone to the county anyway.

- Response: Williams clarified that the \$125 million estimate was a countywide projection based on property tax growth in the Fifth District, which includes Sebastopol and unincorporated Sonoma County. This figure was preliminary and based on multiple assumptions, including the lifespan of the district and varying property tax growth rates. Without the EIFD, she explained, the funds would go into the general fund, but the formation of the EIFD allows for a dedicated pool of money to be reinvested directly into the community that generates it, ensuring that West County benefits from its own growth.

7. Concerns About Redistributing Funds Between Sebastopol and Rural Areas

A council member raised concerns that Sebastopol and rural West County might compete for funds, with each area worried about losing out. They asked for clarity on how the PFA would make decisions about where money is allocated.

- Joe Dieguez responded by explaining that the five-member board was the minimum requirement. Most of the time, the board is kept at five members for ease of administration. However, the board could be expanded to seven, nine, or even eleven members, with representation balanced between the county and the city if desired. Legally, there was flexibility, though the minimum remained five members. Dieguez continued with the point that, regardless of the number decided upon, the majority of the board must be either City Council members or County Supervisors. In any case, there must be at least two public members, though more could be included. A similar situation was playing out in Santa Rosa with the proposed Santa Rosa EIFD, where there were three public members and two representatives each from the city and the county. Based on their experience, it was noted that as the group gets larger, it becomes harder to schedule meetings, maintain quorum, and accomplish tasks.
- To determine the appropriate number of board members, the agencies consider factors such as how much funding each is allocated, as well as who is willing to invest time into

staffing the board. Cities typically take the lead in multi-agency efforts, as seen in examples from Orange County and the City of Placentia, where a working group included representatives from both city and county. When it comes to signing a staff report, it helps to have a designated lead, ideally someone from the city, such as a city manager, finance director, or community development director. Dieguez acknowledged that these processes tend to be a blend of art and science.

- Supervisor Hopkins added that it was not a foregone conclusion that Sebastopol would be the lead agency, as that decision was still up for discussion. Compared to a larger city like Santa Rosa, Sebastopol had more limited resources and staffing. In fact, it was County funding that allowed for the hiring of consultants. While the City of Sebastopol was interested in the project, they were uncertain whether they had the necessary staff to support the effort moving forward. Therefore, the composition of the board remains an open conversation. Hopkins emphasized that she would not agree to a setup that heavily favored one jurisdiction, particularly if that jurisdiction provided less funding. Personally, she wouldn't mind having an even number of members. Although potentially challenging, this could set a higher bar for decision-making.

Hopkins concluded by stating that all aspects of the project were still under discussion and that there was no pre-determined solution in place.

8. Governance and Staffing of the EIFD

One council member asked whether a new agency would need to be created to manage the EIFD or if it would fall under an existing department's responsibilities.

- Response: Williams explained that the PFA, consisting of city and county officials, would be responsible for governing the EIFD. In terms of day-to-day operations, it was likely that existing staff from the city or county would manage the EIFD, negating the need for a new administrative entity.

Public Comments and Responses

1. Concerns About Rural Representation

Scott Farmer, a resident of Salt Point, raised concerns about rural communities potentially being left out of funding decisions, especially since they often feel overlooked in county resource allocations. He asked how the EIFD would ensure that rural areas receive their fair share of investment.

- Response: Supervisor Lynda Hopkins assured Scott that the EIFD's intent was to create targeted investments that would benefit all areas, including rural communities. She emphasized that rural voices would be included in the PFA, and the project list would be developed with input from all regions.

2. Need for Public Restrooms in Tourist Areas

A community member highlighted the need for more public restrooms, especially in high-traffic tourist areas along the coast.

- Response: Felicia Williams confirmed that public restrooms were an eligible project under EIFD funding and noted that they had been prioritized in other EIFDs for similar communities.

3. Flood Mitigation for Guerneville

A resident from Guerneville discussed the recurrent flooding in his neighborhood and asked whether flood mitigation, specifically creek dredging, could be included as a funded project.

- Response: Williams confirmed that flood mitigation, including dredging projects, is an eligible use of EIFD funds and would be added to the list for consideration.

4. Parking and Bicycle Infrastructure in Forestville

Lucy Hardcastle from Forestville suggested that more public parking, particularly in downtown areas, and better bicycle infrastructure should be considered for EIFD funding.

- Response: Williams agreed that both parking infrastructure and bicycle path improvements were eligible under the EIFD and would be considered as part of the project list.

5. Affordable Housing and Property Tax Concerns

Jennifer Butler from the Graton Community Services District voiced concerns about rising property taxes potentially burdening residents, even though the EIFD itself does not introduce a new tax. She also inquired about how the EIFD board would interact with existing governance structures in unincorporated areas like Graton.

- Response: Williams acknowledged the concern about rising property values and explained that while the EIFD captures tax increments, it does not raise taxes. Regarding governance, she noted that the PFA would likely coordinate with existing municipal advisory councils (MACs) and other local governance boards to ensure comprehensive representation.

6. Commercial Fishing Infrastructure in Bodega Bay

Dick Ogg, a commercial fisherman from Bodega Bay, spoke about the critical need for infrastructure improvements to support the local fishing industry, particularly highlighting the need to upgrade the aging ice house.

- Response: Williams stated that infrastructure projects supporting local industries, like the ice house, would be a high priority for EIFD funding, as they are vital to the local economy.

Supervisor Lynda Hopkins thanked all participants for their valuable contributions. She reiterated that the process was still in its early stages, with much more community outreach and input needed before any final decisions were made. She encouraged continued participation and assured attendees that more public meetings would follow. Felicia Williams echoed these sentiments, emphasizing that community involvement was critical in shaping the direction of the EIFD. She invited attendees to submit any additional project ideas for consideration.

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5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 8:16 PM

DRAFT