



**Sonoma County Coast Municipal Advisory Council**  
**Minutes**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**November 16, 2023 05:30 PM**  
**Bodega Bay Grange, 1370 Bodega Ave, Bodega Bay 94923**  
<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/sccmac>

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:39 pm by Chair - Bodega Bay Representative Brian Leubitz.

**A. Pledge of Allegiance**

Lead by The Sea Ranch / Annapolis Representative Drew McCalley

**B. Roll Call**

Present: Chair - Bodega Bay Representative Brian Leubitz, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians Representative Abreanna Gomes, Fort Ross / West Cazadero Representative Caroline Madden, Timber Cove Representative Scott Farmer, Jenner Representative Jill Lippitt, The Sea Ranch / Annapolis Representative Marti Campbell, The Sea Ranch / Annapolis Representative Drew McCalley  
Absent: Vice Chair - Bodega / Valley Ford Representative Beth Bruzzone, Bodega Bay Representative Ginny Nichols  
Staff Present: Debbie Ramirez, Lupe Catalan, Tracy Lyons (remote)

**2. Approval of Agenda, Chair Brian Leubitz**

Timber Cove Representative Scott Farmer motioned to approve. A second was made by Jenner Representative Jill Lippitt.

The motion passed with the following vote:

7 **In Favor**    0 **Opposed**  
    **Abstained**        **Absent**

**3. Consent Agenda**

- A. September 21, 2023 Minutes
- B. Chair's 2023 Annual Report

Scott Farmer noted clarification on item #5, second paragraph that it was subsequently determined that the Coast MAC shall not have term limits.

The Sea Ranch / Annapolis Representative Marti Campbell motioned to approve. A second was made by Jenner Representative Jill Lippitt.

The motion passed with the following vote:

7 **In Favor**    0 **Opposed**  
    **Abstained**        **Absent**

**4. Statement(s) of conflict of interest: if any, from Council members**

**5. Chair and Council Member Reports**

Chair Brian Leubitz commended two long standing original members, Scott and Marti, as this was their last meeting as MAC Representatives for Timber Cove and TheSea Ranch. Brian expressed gratitude towards them for their significant contributions during their terms as chair, highlighting their roles in the development and growth of the Coast MAC. He mentioned the challenges faced, specifically referring to a period where the organization had only a few meetings before entering the COVID pandemic and changes to remote meetings during that time. Acknowledging their exceptional work during this difficult time, the speaker presents certificates of appreciation to both Scott and Marti. He further thanked them

for their efforts through the hard work related to the Local Coastal Plan update. Chair Leubitz emphasized the indispensable role played by Scott and Marti in the Coast MAC and thanked them for their dedication over the past years, acknowledging that their roles have sometimes been challenging.

Marti Campbell thanked Supervisor Hopkins and her staff, as well as her colleagues on the MAC and previous colleagues, for the privilege of allowing her to serve on the MAC. It had been an eye-opening experience for her to get to know the whole extent of the coastal areas of District 5. She really appreciated it and appreciated working with everyone.

Scott Farmer thanked Courtney Scott of Zero Waste Sonoma, who had stepped up and organized a Hazmat event at The Sea Ranch. This event attracted about 200 cars in four hours and was greatly needed after a long time. He also acknowledged Xinci Tan of Zero Waste Sonoma, the Organics Manager, who for over two years had been supplying compost for a series of community giveaways, which were very popular. Additionally, he wanted to acknowledge Leo and Elise for their hard work and wished them well in their next endeavors. Furthermore, he expressed gratitude towards Lynda and her staff for their support, as well as his colleagues. He also mentioned a unique aspect of their area, thanking the two ravens that had been watching over them for years.

Caroline Madden reported that one of her neighbors was unable to find a long-distance phone carrier due to the discontinuation of copper landlines, and Frontier not offering such a service. She had suggested Credo, but they were not accepting new customers for landlines. Another issue she raised was the lack of cell phone service in the area where the neighbor lived, which also affected Madden. She noted the increasing difficulty in communication as businesses often required text messages for verification or access, but not everyone had the capability to receive texts. This issue has affected job applications and other important interactions.

Madden also highlighted the specific challenges faced by her neighbor, an older individual living in a remote area, who felt her well-being was jeopardized by the lack of reliable communication methods for accessing medical care and making appointments in the city. The neighbor, located between Fort Ross and Cazadero, has internet but not via satellite, and struggled with making it work due to her location near a down near the creek.

Marti Campbell mentioned that similar issues with landline and cell phone services were being experienced in southern Mendocino County, across the Gualala River. She referenced that Ted Williams, the County Supervisor in that area of Mendocino County, was aware of these issues. They are being told that the regulatory authorities, specifically the FCC, had passed a resolution over a year ago allowing companies to discontinue copper-based service anymore.

Caroline pointed out that cell phones, being classified as communication devices, were not subjected to the same rules and regulations as traditional phones, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

Chair Leubitz recommended that this topic be agendaized for further discussion at a future meeting.

## **6. County update from Supervisor Lynda Hopkins / Staff**

Supervisor Hopkins began by discussing the upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting on November 28th, where a tree protection ordinance will be considered. This ordinance will focus on general tree protection and specifically on Oak Woodland. It will not apply to properties under Timber Harvest plans but will affect large scale conversions of Oak Woodland into vineyards or orchards and tree removal for development. The ordinance proposes increased fees for tree removal, exemplified by the increase in fee for removing a Heritage Oak from \$800 to \$24,000. She noted that there would be specific exemptions, including for septic expansion in certain areas. In response to a question, Hopkins clarified that the tree protection ordinance should not conflict with fuel reduction management and shaded fuel break processes.

General Plan Kickoff: On December 12th, there will be a general plan kickoff, which she emphasized as a significant process that the Coastal Advisory Committee should engage in, despite its lesser impact on the coast.

Staffing Update: Elise is no longer working with Hopkins' office, Che Casul has joined as the Director of Community Initiatives.

Stangle Beach Staircase Replacement: Hopkins updated on the Stangle Beach staircase replacement project, mentioning regulatory challenges and the need for coordination with The Sea Ranch for stream bank stabilization. The project's estimated cost ranges from \$1.5 to \$3 million.

Active Transportation Survey: She encouraged participation in the Sonoma County Transportation Authority's survey for increasing bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Hopkins also mentioned discussions with state representatives about seeking a CEQA exemption for adding bike lanes to roads.

Gleason Beach Ribbon Cutting: Hopkins shared news about the ribbon cutting at Gleason Beach, emphasizing the need for resilient infrastructure against storms.

State Parks Funding and Transportation: There was a meeting with state parks regarding funding and the potential for bus service to alleviate parking challenges on the coast.

Finally, Supervisor Hopkins expressed her gratitude to Marti and Scott for their dedication and contributions to their communities.

## 7. **Update from Bill Maslach , California State Parks Russian River Sector Superintendent**

Bill Maslach shared insights on his role and the ongoing projects in the region. He discussed various challenges and developments, including:

**Staffing Issues:** Highlighted the shortage of Ranger staff and the reduced number of applicants for these positions, which is a statewide issue. He mentioned efforts to fill the existing position at Salt Point.

**Facility Updates and Closures:** Addressed the closure of certain facilities, such as Reef Campground at Fort Ross, due to various reasons like water shortages and environmental issues. Plans to reopen some of these facilities with necessary modifications were discussed.

**Environmental Concerns:** Spoke about the management of invasive species, particularly pampas grass, and the development of a management plan for this issue.

**Trail Restoration and Volunteerism:** Highlighted the hiring of a new maintenance chief for the trails program, with an aim to improve trail maintenance and potentially involve volunteers in the future.

**Collaboration with Local Fire Departments:** Discussed possibilities for collaborative work and potential funding support for local fire departments responding to incidents in state park areas.

**Parking and Infrastructure Issues:** Addressed the challenges related to parking along Highway One and the efforts being made in collaboration with Sonoma County Regional Parks to address these issues. He noted that the Bodega Head parking lots were to be regraded and resurfaced, with work anticipated to begin in early December.

**Waste Management:** Touched on the problems with waste management in park areas, noting the overwhelming amount of trash and the need for better solutions.

**Community Engagement:** Expressed openness to community involvement in park maintenance and the willingness to coordinate with local groups for trail maintenance and other activities.

## 8. **Informational Overview of the “Improved and Enhanced Local Fire Protection, Paramedic Services, and Disaster Response Transactions and Use Tax Ordinance” which will appear on the March 2024 ballot; with Sonoma County Fire District Chief Heine and North Sonoma Coast Fire District Chief Bonnie Plakos**

Chief Mark Heine and Chief Bonnie Plakos discussed a proposed ballot measure for a fire tax in Sonoma County. This measure involves a 1/2 cent sales tax countywide, expected to generate \$60-\$65 million annually. The funds will directly support local fire and EMS agencies in Sonoma County, with strict financial oversight and citizen involvement.

**Key Points:**

**Increased Staffing and Facilities:** The funds will allow for the hiring of over a hundred new firefighters and paramedics. It addresses the lack of staffing and outdated facilities, some over 50 years old and not meeting seismic standards.

**Response Time Reduction:** The measure aims to reduce emergency response times, especially in rural areas, by increasing staffing at fire stations and enhancing EMS capabilities.

**Vegetation Management and Technology Enhancement:** A full-time fuels management crew will be funded for vegetation management and wildfire protection. The measure also supports the advancement of satellite-based technology for early fire detection.

**Financial Oversight and Transparency:** The measure includes provisions for citizen oversight, legal ordinance enforcement by the Board of Supervisors, and independent annual audits.

**Benefits to Rural Communities:** Chief Bonnie Plakos highlighted the positive impacts for rural areas, like the North Coast, addressing staffing shortages and improving fire station facilities. The measure supports a blended model of career and volunteer firefighters to enhance community service and safety.

**Sustainable Funding:** The tax has no sunset clause, ensuring long-term funding for sustained firefighting and paramedic careers. The distribution of funds will be governed by an oversight committee, with adjustments possible based on changing needs.

Data-Driven Approach: Allocation of funds is based on a gap analysis, focusing on actual needs rather than uniform distribution. This approach aims to allocate resources where they are most needed, considering both urban and rural demands.

Community Engagement and Support: The plan includes supporting community programs like CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) by reallocating funds saved from infrastructure investments to community preparedness programs.

The presentation underscored the comprehensive and community-focused approach of the proposed fire tax measure, emphasizing its critical role in enhancing emergency response and community safety across Sonoma County.

## 9. **Public Safety / Winter Preparedness - Chief Heine**

Chief Heine discussed various aspects of public safety and winter preparedness, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and technology in addressing local needs. Key points included:

Ham Radio Operators and Starlink System: He highlighted the active involvement of ham radio operators in emergency situations, especially in rural areas lacking phone and internet services. The Starlink satellite-based system, which provides fast internet and voice over internet services, was also mentioned as a valuable resource in rural & remote areas.

Cellular Coverage and Radio Towers: The challenges of enhancing cellular coverage in rural areas were discussed. Despite efforts, major carriers are often reluctant to invest in less populated areas. The AT&T First Net system was mentioned as a successful initiative in bringing cell service to rural communities, prioritizing public safety communications during emergencies.

Winter Risks and Road Safety: Chief Heine emphasized the dangers of flooded roads and urged people to adhere to road closure signs. He highlighted the risks of downed trees and power lines during storms and advised staying home during severe weather.

Emergency Communication and Response: The importance of having backup communication methods like ham radio and the family radio network was discussed. These networks are crucial for maintaining communication during emergencies when standard services are down.

Flood Monitoring and Road Closure Information: Addressing the challenge of keeping the community informed about road closures, Chief Heine discussed a pilot utilizing technology like road sensors and electronic signs for real-time updates. He advised checking the County Department of Public Works website for the latest road status.

Emergency Services during Storms: The use of helicopters for emergency medical transport during storms was mentioned, providing a vital service when road access is blocked. The risks associated with recreational activities like kayaking during stormy weather were also highlighted.

Community Preparedness: Chief Heine advised the community to prepare for emergencies with essential supplies, like batteries and radios, and to have a go-bag packed. Awareness of alternative routes in case of road closures was also recommended.

Sandbag Availability: The need for local sandbag stations for flood-prone areas like Spud Point was acknowledged, indicating a gap in current emergency preparedness measures.

Overall, Chief Heine's presentation underscored the need for a comprehensive strategy to public safety and winter preparedness, involving technology, community networks, and proactive planning and communication.

## 10. **2024 Officer Selection Overview**

It was noted that Chair & Vice Chair roles would be elected at the next meeting in January and Chair Leubitz encouraged members to consider whether they would like to take one of these roles, advising folks to reach out to him or to staff for more information.

## 11. **Public Comments**

There was no public comment on items not on the agenda.

## 12. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 PM with a motion by Drew and seconded by Scott.