



**Lower Russian River  
Municipal Advisory Council (MAC)**

**Minutes**

**April 15, 2021**

**5:30-7:30**

**Call to order** Mac Clerk/Nance Jones

**Pledge of allegiance** Group

**Roll call**

**Present:** Pip Marquez de la Plata, Vesta Copestakes, Jeanette Dillman, Tony Goodwin (alternate for Mike Nicholls), Nic Pereira, Naomi Hufstutter, Kyra Wink, Alice Teeter, Lisa Nahmanson

**Absent:** Mike Nicholls

**Oath of Office-**Supervisor Hopkins administered the oath of office for Sarah Lindsey for new alternate representative for Guerneville.

**Approval of Agenda**

Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata asked for two items to be changed on the agenda. He asked for removal of the bylaws under consent calendar and to move agenda item for AdHocs up to earlier in the agenda before the land use presentation.

Jeanette Dillman commented that the reason for pulling the bylaw item is that the board needs to receive the bylaws ten days prior to approval as stated in the current bylaws and that did not occur.

Lisa Nahmanson made a motion to approve the above changes and the motion was seconded by Nic Pereira. Motion carried 8-1-0.

**Conflict of Interest-** none

**Correspondence-**none

**Consent Calendar-**

Approval of February 2021 Minutes

A motion was made by Nic Pereira to approve the consent calendar and the motion was seconded by Kyra Wink. Motion carried 9-0-0

**Chair Statement-** Pip Marquez de la Plata

Before we start in earnest, I have a few comments to make that I hope will clarify some questions about the purpose of the MAC and what are role is in our Community. As our name suggests, the Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council, is just that. We are a body that provides the 5th District Supervisor with advice and information about what is happening in each of our communities. This, in my opinion, is invaluable to residents as our Supervisor is really the only elected person that represents our interest in an unincorporated area in the county. We don't have mayors, or city councils, we don't have police departments or city planners or other resources that we can go to air grievances or get stuff done. We, as your councilmembers, are in essence listening posts for providing feedback to our only elected representative in a more orderly and concise manner. Keep in mind that we DO NOT have authority to create policy or divvy up budgets, or get a bathroom cleaned. But what we can do is advise our Supervisor or staff at District 5 of issues that are of import to the folks that live here.

Another question that is often asked is how is the agenda determined? So, I'd like to review the process and some recent examples to help clarify. We gather agenda items from the community, from Supervisor Hopkins and staff, and from AdHoc committees. Not everything that we receive can be covered in one meeting. As you've probably experienced, too often we have tried to pack too much into one meeting, and these end up being marathons for the most resilient.

We are working to keep the agenda under the 2-hour period unless there is a disaster or some item that demands a longer time period. Decisions are made by the Chair, additional Council members, and the Staff Field Representative.

Some recent examples:

a.) Timing matters. We didn't have drought brought up as an issue at the last meeting, but it has become clear that this is an imminent problem that needs airing immediately.

b.) Timing of Land use projects - this is also out of our hands, the MD gas station in Guerneville is ready to present to us and is at the right time for comments as they are moving to the design stage.

The Gas station in Monte Rio is also still in the early stages with just an application submitted and is not yet ready for comment.

c) Other pieces of the agenda are determined by whether they are best addressed as a full agenda item or whether it is better answered in another way - whether that is by staff or council, a direct reply by a councilmember or it is covered in another public forum. One example that came up is an agenda item asking about the Armstrong Woods re-opening. This was covered at a Guerneville Town Hall two weeks ago, it is the jurisdiction of the State Parks, not the Supervisor, and it is now public information available on the Stewards of the Coast website that Armstrong Woods will be opening prior to Memorial Day weekend, therefore it isn't deemed a full agenda item that the Council needs to provide Advice on to the Supervisor.

Sometimes we invite someone who has asked for an agenda item to participate via public comment, as has happened with a requester this time from the El Molino Boosters.

So that's the process. I think we have an informative and important list of agenda items and we encourage you to continue sending your agenda items. We will continue to consider every item and address them to the best of this Council's ability.

### **AdHoc Committee appointments**

#### **Land Use Process**

Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata presented a new process for assignment of land use AdHocs. There will now be a designated land use AdHoc committee for each land use item. There are currently three land use items in the planning process so three AdHocs will be assigned.

#### **MD Gas Station AdHoc**

Nic Pereira- chair

Lisa Nahmanson

Pip Marquez de la Plata

#### **Gas Station in Monte Rio**

Kyra Wink- Chair

#### **New Resort in Dubrava (Guernewood Park)**

Nic Pereira- chair

Cynthia Strecker

Naomi Hufstutter

#### **Board Comment**

Tony Goodwin- Land Use is very important. Feels it should be a standing committee to provide oversight to AdHocs. It is very important to Cazadero

Lisa Nahmanson- Feels this model gives more board members a chance to participate

Tony Goodwin- understands it is about committee meeting but feels if it is a standing anyone in community can come. Will not happen with Ad Hocs

Vesta Copestakes- how would standing committee work if Ad Hoc are under a standing committee?

#### **Public Comment**

Lloyd Guccione- Tony brought up a good point. He asked again for clock to be taken down as he cannot see the faces of the board. This is absurd and outrageous and the Chair is being rude.

Herman Hernandez- See this as an issue of how will people be able to attend all three. He feels that the county is not being transparent and how will notification happen to community and how will community be invited and kept informed.

Noelle- question regarding Drake Road that will go under public comment

Chuck Ramsey- comment on additional AdHoc moved to public comment

Motion was made by Lisa Nahmanson to appoint three AdHocs for Land Use. The motion was seconded by Alice Teeter. Roll Call motion approved 8-1-0

### **Public Comment**

Lloyd Guccione- appreciated information from Jeanette. There are problems with transparency and timelines. He stated that John Uniack will not attend anymore as he sees it as a waste of time. He asked for the time clock to be turned off so that he could see the faces of the board members.

Chuck Ramsey- wants and AdHoc on the unhoused issues for Monte Rio. There are burglaries, dumping in the river, gang members, blocked roads with no escape during fires. Can and AdHoc address.

Noelle- There is a spot of 13 acres that crosses Drake Road that has been purchased and it is the only spot on that road where you can see the river. A new 30 ft trailer and heavy equipment is now placed there. Would like them to move. Noelle also commented on the amount of dead tan oaks in her area which need to be removed.

Keary Sorenson- He would like the new park in Monte Rio named after Steve Baxman. He also talked of a person named Red across from Lamberts.

Tasha Mattison- Spoke of the recall effort going on for the board of trustees. She advocated for the removal of the President and Vice President as they voted for consolidation. This consolidation affects travel for students and extracurricular activities. They are preparing a recall petition and it will be available soon.

Mike Nicholls- asked what is being done about the blight conditions on 116. It was cleaned up and now a mess again. There was information that property was given notice but no update on what is happening

Lloyd Guccione- outlined that he has sent in correspondence and it has not been noted on the agenda or no action has been taken. He is waiting for response. He also says that the blight on 116 has been identified for years with no action.

### **Regular Calendar Items**

### **Supervisor Lynda Hopkins update**

- Lynda read a formal resolution acknowledging Vesta Copestakes for her 20 years of untiring service to her community and her work on the Gazette. It is a GOLD resolution and Lynda read through it for all to hear. The board clapped enthusiastically and congratulated Vesta on a job well done.
- River and Draught issues are of grave concern and Sonoma county will be looking at critical water conservation
- Vacation Rental AdHoc- Thanked the team for all of their hard work which goes to the board of supervisors and will assist with writing new regulations
- New company called PACASO allows an easy way to create a time share of a residential home. The supervisors are looking at this very carefully to understand impact.
- Lynda has been working with health and human services and sheriffs to address the issues in Monte Rio. She will keep group informed
- GRANT alert- Lynda talked about 25 million from PG&E that will be set aside for vegetation management. The great news is that an RFP process to apply for 2-4 million of those monies will be made available to individuals or groups. All projects large and small are eligible to put in an RFP.
- West County was highlighted as one of two areas noted for high fire danger so having this grant process will be a bonus for our area.

### **Board Comment**

Nic Pereira- He is working on a Guerneville Fire Wise Council and is looking for 5-6 members

Tony Goodwin- Cazadero has started thinning brush and may be interested in this grant money

Vesta Copestakes- Can a neighborhood hire laborers through RFP process? Lynda responded that North Bay Jobs for Justice may be a good partner or Circuit Riders to get a group grant to get things done.

### **Public Comment**

Herman Hernandez- met Vesta 27 years ago and congrats to her. Herman asked if individuals can apply for fire mitigation or does it have to go through agencies. Lynda said if a larger risk area wanted to apply together this would be good. Herman was not sure at this point if the county was going to address or not

### **Sonoma County Water Agency - Presenter Dan Seymour, principal engineer**

Dan reviewed a slide presentation which will be included in this packet but following are some highlights from his talk.

The upper Russian River is in challenging times but all of the water shed is in trouble

We are facing historical drought of record

#### A) Lake Mendocino

- Lake Mendocino very low for this time of year
- Loss of water in reservoir is going down every year and it could possibly run dry this year
- They have file for temporary decrease of downstream flows and may have to make changes to lower river too
- This is the lowest that lake Mendocino has been since 1977

#### B) Sonoma County Reservoir

- Just inches behind 2014
- Storage levels below 2014
- 600,000 depend on this flow
- The reservoir is at 152,935 ft so there is water but in continual decline since 2020
- It is at the lowest level it has ever been
- You can track water levels at [sonomawater.org/current-water-supply-levels](http://sonomawater.org/current-water-supply-levels)

#### **Board Comment**

Nic Pereira- has there been consideration of a moratorium on hookups, or approval of cannabis proposals? Dan responded that Sonoma water is not a land use authority and he recognizes we need new homes for low income and homeless

Tony Goodwin- Are there any plans to generate water from other sources. Dan responded not at this time

How useable is the water when it gets very low? Dan responded they hope it does not get that low

How about fire? Will planes and helicopters still be able to get water. Dan said yes

Any effects on water due to covid, increased use. Dan responded no

#### **Public comment**

Lloyd Guccione- very informative presentation and should we not sell water to other agencies at this point? This means changing government habits as our current model does not work. We must consider growth.

Vira Fauss- How can mermaids help?

Michael Nicholls- Increase water flow from Eel River? Don responded they are also facing drought conditions. PG&E will reduce transfers so no real help.

#### **Land Use Presentation of MD Gas Station - Harman Dhillon and Martin Breuer Presenters**

Harmon outlined that he is representing his family and this is a mixed-use project. They have had their own issues with flooding of their home so they want to ensure this is addressed in the project.

Slides attached of proposed building

#### Highlights from the presentation

- They have been working on the project for the last 2-3 years
- The size has reduced over time to address neighbors' comments
- Gas station will remain the same size
- The housing numbers have been reduced to 4-studios, one will be the onsite managers with 2 two bedrooms, elevator, landscaping and parking only from old river road side
- They feel they have addressed most of the neighborhood major concerns
- Looking at making the building more eco friendly
- Most of the upper stories will be prefabricated and brought on site for less construction time and disruption

#### **Board Comments**

Naomi Hufstutter- Will this housing project accept HUD. Harmon stated they work with HUD now so there is no reason they won't for this facility.

#### **Public Comment**

Vira Fauss- What will happen to Fife Creek Antiques. Harman responded that they are trying to help them look for another property

Woody Hastings- from the Coalition of closing new gas stations asked if they will meet the new tank standards of double walled tanks. New ones should be above ground. Harman reported that the new tanks will be double walled.

Linda Johnson- not enough charm on scenic highway and can they add more charm. Will the top two floors be above the flood zone as **this** is the first area to flood. Martin responded that the top two floors are above the current flood zone. Harman also responded that the store hours will stay the same from 6am-10pm

#### **General Mobile Radio Service- Presenters Lois Lebovich, Damian Boune, Lt. Michael Raasch**

GMRS radio network is currently in Guerneville. Will be used in times of flood and fire for neighbors to notify each other of how they may be affected and can assist with evacuation needs. They are used when other communication systems may be down.

#### Lois's highlights:

- Grant from Sonoma County Fire
- Must be licensed

- Everyone can hear each other
- 34 individuals have been licensed to use
- Tried to get communication pods of 4,6,8 residences
- Currently looking to enhance connectivity through use of GMRS repeaters
- Members can also upgrade their handhelds
- These radios are useful during evacuations
- GMRS can contact HAM radio operators
- Can receive NOAA alerts
- Other communities looking at implementing same format

Damian Bourne highlights:

- Publicly licensed radio system
- Short range communication
- Have placed repeaters in Cazadero, Fort Ross, Timber Cove looking to place more
- Does not replace any other systems
- Available when nothing else works

Lt. Mike Raasch also presented that this is a very important system that can relay information and is a good supplement and the sheriffs support this model while they cannot use it exclusively. He also presented the use of evacuation tags which have been used in other fire zones and worked successfully to help sheriffs with checking for evacuation.

**Board Comment**

Lisa Nahmanson- Footprint depends on terrain so they try to locate in higher areas and have people relay messages

Vesta Copestakes- If neighborhoods want to join how do they. Lois will contact Vesta.

Jeanette Dillman- People are afraid to put evacuation signs in their windows due to looting. Mike responded this was not an issue in other areas and they are always watching for looters and catching them.

**Public Comment**

Lloyd Guccione- had wanted to give input on gas station as he lives behind the gas station and if you want to contact him get info from Nance.

Tony Goodwin- Lois had inspired me to get one going in his area. Can you use GMRS to communicate information from sheriffs to fire fighters. Mike responded that while they cannot support people staying, he recognized that the cazadero team basically saved many areas from burning. Lois also said that fire and other agencies cannot use but if they go through HAM radio operator the messages can be relayed.



## **Ad Hoc Reports**

Vacation Rental report out - Vesta Copestakes, Lucy Hardcastle, Cynthia Strecker, Nic Pereira

Highlights from the presentation and slides attached

Vesta Copestakes- reported that the current cap on vacation rentals has given them time to collect data and allow the MAC to influence decisions at the board level when the ordinance is updated

Lucy Hardcastle- Lack of data and adherence has not teeth and the perception is that there is an increase in numbers

Vesta Copestakes- talked about the next steps are really about sharing information

Nic Pereira- developing a guide for residents on how to interface with the county and what the rules and regs are.

## **Board Comment**

Alice Teeter- Thanked the group for all of their hard work

Naomi Hufstutter- Asked if the group is working with the two largest vacation rental businesses and if not to please reach out to them.

## **Public Comment**

Debra Johnson- encouraged the group to work on all aspects of enforcement. There are many folks doing the right thing but very often it is one bad member that spoils if for the group so enforcement is key. Deb offered her help.

Vira Fauss- Vesta is an inspiration

Cea Higgins- Thanked the team for all of their hard work.

## **Parking Permit AdHoc- Lisa Nahmanson presenter**

The champions met in March. It was determined that the group did not meet the required percentage to craft an ordinance. The focus then will be on identified neighborhood zones. For example, in Forestville, Hacienda are eligible. The AdHoc may need to refocus their work.

## **Board Comment**

Vesta Copestakes -asked if they are working with regional parks and Lisa responded all avenues are open

**Public Comment-** none

### **Trash AdHoc- Alice Teeter presenter**

The group has had great involvement in addressing trash in general but all trash that can go into the river. They are networking with other groups involved. They keep a punch list style of items to work on and are identifying county and community resources to work with. Some areas addressed are:

- Adopt a road now up to 18 groups
- Coordination of mowing and trash pick up
- Trash bags to unhoused
- New trash bins for Guerneville on Main Street which will not allow members of community to drop off their own personal trash in these bins
- Recology is now picking up trash three times a week on main street

### **Board Comment**

Vesta Copestakes- When there are accidents on the road, they do not pick up the glass and smaller pieces from the accident.

**Public Comment-** none

### **Agenda items from the board and the community**

Vira Fauss- Would like Carol Schumate and Keary Sorenson to speak on trash

### **Adjournment of meeting at 8:40pm**

A motion was made by Nic Pereira to adjourn the meeting at 8:40pm. The motion was seconded by Kyra Wink. Motion passed 9-0-0.