



**Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council**  
**Minutes**  
**October 21st, 2021**  
**5:30-7:30pm**

\*Video recording on the 5<sup>th</sup> District YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqKIKs0XO4M>

**Call to Order at 5:31pm Chair/Pip Marquez de La Plata**

**Pledge of Allegiance**                      **Vesta Copestakes**

**Roll Call**                                      **MAC Clerk/Mary Agneberg**

**Present:** Pip Marques de La Plata, Vesta Copestakes, Jeanette Dillman, Mike Nicholls, Nic Pereira, Kyra Wink, Lisa Nahmanson, Alice Teeter

**Late:** Naomi Huffstutter

**A. Approval of the Agenda**

**B. Statement of Conflict of Interest** – No reported conflicts of interest

**C. Correspondence** – Bruce Robinson memo of 10-14-21  
Dubrava Village Community Letter of 9/26/21

**D. Consent Calendar**  
Approval of the August 19, 2021 minutes  
Motion to approve the minutes as stated by Mike Nicholls, seconded by Nic Pereira, passed 8-0.

**E. Public Comment -**

**Jackie Brazieal** – Appreciates the work of the MAC to involve the community in issues with a special shout out to Vesta, Lisa and Alice. A press release stated emergency generators are considered for the Forestville yard which is prospective site for Skatespot. The site still not confirmed, but if the yard is selected it offers and opportunity for a partnership with Skatespot and increased resiliency and an opportunity for the community to get together during emergencies with water, bathrooms, and shaded seating area. Ms. Brazieal invites the fire safe council or anyone working on the generators to contact her.

**Vira Fauss** – Has heard that bathrooms are being considered for various places and that the Guerneville Park and Ride may be a rest stop with bathrooms. Trash and the homeless situation all need to be talked about and the good work coming out of Keary and Sally Sorenson working with West County Community Services.

**Roberta MacIntyre** – Advised that she is President & CEO of Fire Safe Sonoma, the county-wide Fire Council and she is available to answer any questions about Fire Safe Councils.

**Eric Koenigshofer** – Introducing himself – he was recently appointed to the Planning Commission, he applauds the formation of the MACs by Supervisor Hopkins, thinks they are beneficial and he plans to make full use of them to engage in the community discussion. He will sit in and listen to the discussion about the Guerneville Park resort proposal.

**Cynthia Strecker** – How are the meetings noticed? People have wanted to go to the land use meetings but they don't know how to find out about them.

**F. Opening Comments from Supervisor Lynda Hopkins**

**Supervisor Hopkins** is excited to announce \$300,000 has been allocated to the 5<sup>th</sup> District this time around from the **Tourism Impact Fund** and the application is live on the 5<sup>th</sup> District website. The criteria established by the River and Coast MAC will be utilized for awarding grants. Please go back to your communities and get the word out about the application. She expects there to be renewed interest in Fire Safe Councils and disaster prevention work and hopes to support some Fire Safe Councils and Fire District projects this year.

She serves on the Sonoma County Transportation Authority Board and is happy to report that funds have been approved to finish the **missing mile of the West County Trail**. Once completed the project will fix those two areas that currently drop you into traffic and ruin the experience of the bike ride.

**Eric Koenigshofer** introduced himself earlier – he is also a representative on the **redistricting commission** which will draw new district maps. There are maps under consideration which split the river district and give the coast to the 4<sup>th</sup> District and she is not in favor of these. She thinks they have narrowed it down to five maps. The Board of Supervisors vote on the districts will happen in December and she encourages everyone to let their voice be heard. The next meeting to solicit public feedback is tomorrow.

Tens of millions of dollars have been allocated to Sonoma County from the **American Rescue Plan Act** (ARPA) to support recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, vulnerable populations, enhanced disaster services and disaster resiliency. ARPA funding will come before the BOS on Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> and in December. Right now they are establishing the goals of the funding and identifying projects. If you have any thoughts please participate in the process.

**MAC Comment –**

**Rep. Mike Nicholls** is on the redistricting website and is unable to tell which of the maps are the five selected. Supervisor Hopkins found an interactive map with five maps but she isn't sure they are the correct maps. She will confirm with staff and send that information out in a newsletter. This topic is of keen interest to anyone who lives and votes in the west county.

**Rep. Vesta Copestakes** – Asked if the link in the chat was for the meeting tomorrow and this was confirmed.

**Rep. Kyra Wink** asked who is going to replace Alisha as the **ombudsman on the CAG?** **Supervisor Hopkins** stated it was a sudden departure and they are in the midst of the process of drafting of a new job description and the recruitment. More information will be forthcoming soon.

**Chair Marquez de La Plata** asked if the **ARPA funding** is strictly Covid-related? **Supervisor Hopkins** said the purpose of the funding is broadly defined and the Board of Supervisors has an interest in broader purposes and projects such as safety net and social services, “human infrastructure” possibly rental assistance, help to families hard hit by the pandemic. Eligibility issues are under consideration. The board is also discussing **\$10 million dollars in PG&E funds** earmarked for climate work benefits fire risk reduction, carbon sequestration, forest management, etc. These types of projects will come before the Board in February.

**Public Comment –**

**Eric Koenigshofer – (20:21 on the YouTube video)** The **redistricting process** has been truncated due to the failure of the previous federal administration to finish the census process and issue results, which created a severe impediment on public review. The Board of Supervisors is statutorily required to adopt

a map no later than December 15<sup>th</sup>. The redistricting commission received the five maps from the consultant on Monday, suggested modifications, the next meeting is Friday and then again on Monday for the final action on which map should go forward to the BOS. Mr. Koenigshofer explained the districts won't be re-mapped for another 10 years, as well as complexities involved with the drawing of the maps in unincorporated areas versus incorporated areas with their own city governments looking out for their interests, and a "city dominance" where the voice of unincorporated areas is diluted. Link to maps: <https://ndcresearch.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=be8ba62ab82c4b03ad7c891d0bfe24d3>  
**Gregory** – No access to chat- where is the map? Supervisor Hopkins advised him to Google "Sonoma County Advisory Redistricting Commission" and to click the draft maps link on the left.

## **G. Regular Calendar Items**

### **1. Fire Safe Council**

**Lois Lebowich (30:06 on the recording)** - Fire Safe/Safer West County – no "council" it is Fire Safe Guerneville. Mission is to area are to promote wildfire prevention, educate residents about evacuation preparation, build community cooperation, minimize risks to life, homes, natural and human-made resources and forge strong partnerships with first responders and other fire safe organizations. Here are some areas of interest for the groups:

- Green reflective address signs at Sonoma County Fire District (needs a grant)
- Evacuation tags for evacuated residences so law enforcement knows you are gone. Call to ask for one 869-0202
- NOAA Radios – access information during an emergency
- Marine Foghorns – these are loud and will let people know there is an emergency
- Use radios when evacuated
- This weekend "storm watch" net using GMRS radios
- Strong Relationships with first responders – fire and sheriff. Planning a meet & greet.

The main focus is fire suppression not fire protection – let's stop the fires before they start.

**Alina Haigler (37:22 on the recording)** – Discussing challenges and qualities of the diverse geographical features that create micro climates and micro communities with needs unique to different areas. Some goals for coping with the lovely topography include:

- Focus on Neighborhoods – sometimes the closest neighbors are 2 miles away in timber
- Home hardening assessments- and suggestions for neighbors
- Neighbors working together to influence insurers and all agencies
- Environmental sensitivity
- Water tanks ready on ridgetops
- Maintain fire roads
- Fire Safe Sonoma can be fiscal sponsor
- Look at Marin County as a model with elected officials, fire officials, stakeholders and funding plans.

**Elizabeth Lawson (41:38 on the recording)** – Safer West County and Fire Safe Occidental are looking to teach neighborhoods how to be resilient. Green signs worked with Fire Safe Sonoma on assessments. Became an NPO for a wider area, was already working with the Camp Meeker Fire Safe Council. We live in a "fireshed" and a watershed, and protection plans should also include earthquake and flood. Fire Safe Occidental now has sixteen neighborhoods participating and a Groundswell of community building is needed. They have received grants from the state council for educational materials and had successful educational programs.

They became a nonprofit in order to get insurance for events like workdays and they help other fire safe groups with similar challenges, and so they expanded to become Safer West County and now work with several neighborhoods/communities. They want to create a safer, more resilient west county.

#### **MAC Comment -**

**Rep. Lisa Nahmanson** asked where to go for green signs, and Lois Lebowich replied that they have been \$25 each and they are looking for a grant.

**Rep. Mike Nicholls** stated there is a local source for the green signs.

**Chair Marquez de La Plata** – Safer West County Meeting - How to start it and have a meeting of the councils? Contact [info@firesafeoccidental.org](mailto:info@firesafeoccidental.org).

#### **Public Comment -**

**John** – Alina Haigler brought up the proposal to improve fire roads as escape routes. Is this on the radar for the Guerneville Fire Safe committee? Some are impassable and have locked gates. Permit Sonoma does not allow gates on public roads. How have these people been able to do this? Contact Permit Sonoma with the addresses of the gates for follow-up.

**Elise Weiland** stated that Mac alternate Sherrie Owens and Representative Naomi Huffstutter both expressed an interest in mapping and prioritizing repair of the deteriorated fire roads. – **Lois Lebovich** received evacuation maps and fire personnel ingress routes from Chief Turbeville from 2017 & 2018 and has them on her computer. Forestville to Cazadero.

**Jill Templeton** – should not be just fire, should be flood and other emergencies too. Review the maps & routes used in emergencies.

**David Rosen** stated the Occidental Hardware hand-makes signs every Sunday. The trigger the Fire Safe was an emergency that made them aware they had no way to tell neighbors. Working on emergency contacts, neighborhood leaders. Could look into an autodialing service

Q&A:

**Lisa** - How are we addressing getting the word out to people who are not internet savvy? Suggests a buddy system.

**Vira** - Water tanks for ridge tops?

**Tia R** - Map with escape routes be published?

**Vira** - Can Moscow Road be cleared and be restored to two lanes going to Duncans Mills?

**John** – has questions about water logistics

**Alina** – responds to Vira – already looking at water catchment tanks in the ridge tops

**Matti** – Would like to see more support for renters who are not responsible for perimeter. Make sure renters are fire safe, and that landlords are not taking advantage of increased insurance rates. **Elizabeth** – we have been working on it. Task force has been challenged by covid - you can't gather renters together – knows it is an issue. Will continue to develop.

## **2. Selection process for MAC representatives**

**Elise Weiland** – three openings, Forestville, Rio Nido and Pocket Canyon which included south Guerneville/Vacation Beach/Drake area. Take a look at the map. Would love to have more engagement.

Same timeline as last year until October 31<sup>st</sup> – then ballot – vote by end of November. Info is on the LRR MAC page on the county website, in the newsletters, or call or contact [district5@sonoma-county.org](mailto:district5@sonoma-county.org). MAC rep. application is online, and we need to get the word out. It is not available in Spanish. Translator has just been put under contract.

## H. Committee and Staff Reports

### 1. Land Use Committee Report (79:11 on the recording) – Chair, Kyra Wink

There was a special land use meeting on 8/18 which covered the permit process for events and the main issue identified is the lack of timely notice. Ministerial events may be of concern to the Coastal Commission. May want to limit permits and open fires during fire season. Overlapping events. Our Land Use Committee meeting was 9/27 – future meeting time will be 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays, except for November, and Land Use committee communications and noticing will follow Brown Act rules. There will be a new slightly different Land Use logo. We are working to find the best way to notice meetings and get the word out, and we will be asking MAC reps to help with their areas. **Projects of interest:** The next hearing for the **Lok Development** has been set for October 28. We covered it in a couple of meetings and Information was given to Georgia McDaniel, the project planner at the county. We discussed **timberland to cannabis conversion** in Forestville. The **Monte Rio gas station** is in complete and stalled. Also discussed the need for rezoning sites for affordable Housing (LUC Report attached).

**Chair de la Plata** – Land Use has been hard thing to figure out and to coordinate with the county, Permit Sonoma and staggering meetings & scheduling and there has been a lot of work done and thank you to Chair Kyra Wink for taking it on. It is not the end all be all say yes or no for projects – but it is on its way to being a resource the community can use to get information and give feedback.

**Rep. Kyra Wink** – This has been a learning curve with finding out who to work with at the county, what the process is and how to with it. Lok Development is the next topic and we will be taking reviewing the document that came out today, pay attention to the hearing on October 28<sup>th</sup>, and this is something we will have a healthy discussion at the next LUC meeting.

#### MAC Comment:

**Rep. Jeannette Dillman** – Progress with the LUC is coming along nicely.

**Chair de la Plata** – Thank you Kyra, Mike, Nic, Elise, Gary everyone- it's coming along

**Rep. Vesta Copestakes** asked for timelines for various projects, public meetings, noted re-zoning has been going on for over a year.

**Rep. Kyra Wink** –We will follow every single project of interest for updates and discussion particularly during the critical time of public comment.

**Rep. Vesta Copestakes** Are you following projects that haven't file for a permit? Like Forestville skatepark that doesn't have a site yet but that the community really wants? **Kyra Wink** – Reports she will take the idea to the committee.

#### Public Comment:

**Lawrence Wilcox** – 10/28 Permit Sonoma meeting ink in documents did not work. He was advised to visit the Hearings and Events section to find the link on the Permit Sonoma website.

## **2. Communications/Outreach Committee - (92:57 on the recording) Lisa Nahmanson, Chair**

Has had great input from Nic Pereira and Naomi Huffstutter, and all the reps have now gotten back to her. The final report is being drafted with input coming in from the MAC reps about the best places to hang posters. Where's the best place for a Luddite to go get information? Also collecting information about social media – Nextdoor, Facebook, etc and also the county website. The goal is to get all the information in one document. **Elise Weiland** is also collecting information about groups who can help get the word out, and states there will be a big push for a Russian River MAC and Land Use newsletter.

## **3. Vacation Rental ad hoc committee – Chair, Vesta Copestakes**

**Gary Helfrich, (96:21 on the recording)** 30-year Camp Meeker resident, 22-year volunteer fireman, and long range planner for the county assigned to the Local Coastal Plan and the Vacation Rental Ordinance Update. Would like to solicit input, share input to date, give insight to, what we're planning to change and get more suggestions and recommendations to make a good ordinance, and to fix the problems. **Rep. Vesta Copestakes** points out the vacation rentals are a big part of the economy but also have a huge impact on our neighborhoods.

There currently is a cap on new vacation rentals with some VR permits available. Hosted rentals have their own rules and are treated differently. VR ordinance update will deal with un-hosted rentals.

### **Issues the VR Ordinance Update needs to fix:**

- Complaint system is ineffective and frustrating for the public to use.
- Website is out of date and hard to navigate
- Negatively impact the character of neighborhoods
- Blocking emergency access and evacuation routes,
- Housing stock is reduced
- Housing prices are increasing because
- Limit or prohibit vacation rentals and high-fire severity zones.

Direction received from the workshop with the Board of Supervisors:

- Create a business license program to regulate vacation rentals.
- Study the impact on single family housing supply
- Improve our reporting and our monitoring system. and our enforcement process

**Gary Helfrich** has solicited feedback throughout the county from varied interests in order to hear all sides of the issues. He is available to groups who would like to set up a Zoom meeting with him.

### **Recommendations:**

- Switch to a twenty-four seven 800 number complaint hotline with documented response and follow-up (can be done as an internal performance action rather than via ordinance)
- Increase accountability of property managers with heavy penalties for failure to act
- Property managers must educate guests about appropriate behaviors and emergency evacuation at the warning stage
- Availability of parking will limit occupancy and there will be rules for on-street parking
- Regulate density ratio of VR/non-VRs and their proximity to each other
- Apply the same lighting standard used in the permit process (no light past the property line that is brighter than one lux (equivalent of a full moon).

Next step is to take comments and ideas and create a draft for a Planning Commission workshop on November 18 for discussion and refinement before draft goes before the Board of Supervisors in January.

**Rep. Vesta Copestakes** asked a follow-up question about the application of rules for proximity and density with an example of the woman who is surrounded by vacation rentals on Gray's Court. **Gary Helfrich** states this will be a policy decision of the Planning Commission and there is no cookie-cutter answer that can be applied across the county. Santa Rosa has 1000 feet, but it may be better at 300 to 500 feet in West County. Planning Commission will consider best practices from different areas, and they want it to be context sensitive.

The ordinance should be flexible, reasonable with flexibility to both accommodate itself to how the neighborhood is situated, constructed, and operates but at the same time giving the property owners a reasonable ability to responsibly rent their houses out on a on a temporary basis. **Rep. Vesta Copestakes** asked if there would be data available about the impact of vacation rentals on school enrollment, and was told this was not a part of the scope of the study by Dr. Eyler and it will be difficult to get actionable data on school enrollment.

**MAC Comment:**

**Rep. Kyra Wink – 1. What is the difference between short term and long term rentals? 2. Where can the draft for public review and comment be found? 3. How can our constituents find out about hearings and get engaged?**

1. Short term is defined as 30 days or less.
2. Draft is not ready yet – still doing analysis. There will be policy options rather than a draft ordinance at the Planning Commission. They will get direction from the Planning Commission and then draft the ordinance.
3. Visit the Vacation Rental section on the county website and then use the email link for new vacation rentals and it will get to me.

**Rep. Nic Pereira** asked if the vacation rental agencies have been participating. **Gary Helfrich** - they have been positive about the idea of more enforcement and getting rid of bad actors that affect their business. They are sensitive to bad press.

**Public Comment**

**John** – Questions the terms proximity vs density, the significance of the measurements, and is the 11/18/21 meeting a public meeting? How to get more info about it? **Gary Helfrich** – Go to search for Permit Sonoma, Vacation Rentals. It's usually the first item that Google brings up. We will present different ways of determining the distance between rentals and that's one of the policy decisions at the forum.

**Steve Trippe** - Thank you for the presentation. He appreciates the focus on property managers since his experience with property managers has been negative and they have been non-responsive. He even had to put out a fire in a fire pit during a red flag warning. He suggests renters/property managers sign up for Nixle. During the fire evacuation there were tenants who would not believe him when he told them about the evacuation. Also has aggravations from the way garbage is managed and dogs roaming free. **Gary Helfrich** – These concerns are already in the regulations except for dogs which fall under animal control. Once the 24/7 complaint line is launched the vacation rental managers need to be responsive or they will lose their license.

**4. Trash - Lisa Nahmanson, Chair**

The committee has the Trash Talker materials at the end of the packet. Thank you to Elise and Alice. Will hit the highlights. **Rep. Alice Teeter** - put the link to the TPW adopt a road 2 miles in one of both sides of

a one-mile-stretch. It's fun and easy and will keep some of that stuff out of the river.  
<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/TPW/Roads/Services/Traffic-Engineering/Adopt-A-Road/>

**Funding trash** – \$7500 to Keary & Sally Sorenson and \$20,000 to the Russian Riverkeeper

**Tarpping** loads from Republic – need better enforcement

**Clean California** - public art on trash cans with an open call for artists

**Tri-bins** - Grants for trash/compost/recycling need help finding locations, criteria for placement

**Mowers** – cause micro-plastics to fly everywhere and wind up in the river

Some sound issues – the trash talker spreadsheet is attached for reference

**Elise Weiland** – We've been working on **The Trouble with Trash** for about a year and going after each of the elements by following up on projects, funding and different ways of looking at the issues.

**MAC Comment:**

**Rep. Vesta Copestakes** – Her Revitalization group assembled a list of public restrooms and trashcans. There is an app that you can use for finding them that you could add to the Trash Talker spreadsheet.

**Rep. Nic Pereira** – Have you reached out to the chamber, Rotary and other groups? He will adopt the road across from his business.

**Ad Hoc Chair Nahmanson** agreed that is exactly the thing they need to do – to promote it, to walk through town, go to businesses and find volunteers to do it.

**5. Staff Report – Elise Weiland**

The BOS has an upcoming funding consent item on 12/4 for funding a local services study - trash, bathrooms, parks. She found a source of funding to bring in a team of people to study issues and help us work on solutions with local control over local services. It's exciting that this is moving forward!

**MAC Comment -**

**Jeanette Dillman** – Are you talking about beginning special community district? **Elise Weiland** stated there is no goal in mind. We will be identifying and mapping community service districts and talking about which ones are there, their role, etc.

**I. Proclamations – none**

**J. Call for Agenda Items**

- CAG report
- Election for chair and vice chair
- Vira – Keary & Sally - more money

**K. Adjournment**

Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kyra Wink made a motion to adjourn, Lisa Nahmanson seconded and the motion carried 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.