

## MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

### Land Use, Transportation, Water, Agricultural Land Use: December 2, 2015, 9 to 11 AM

Present: Susan Stompe chair; Priscilla Bull, Nona Dennis, Don Dickenson, Randy Greenberg, Pat Nelson, Judy Teichman, Jill Templeton, Ann Thomas, Doug Wilson.

**November 4, 2015 Meeting Notes.** OK as distributed.

**Agenda.** OK with addition of Corte Madera Inn Rebuild Project and FEIR.

**Transportation Updates.** Comment period for the Pt. Reyes bridge is closed.

**Water Updates.** *MMWD Rate Structure.* In compliance with state law (Prop 218) the water district proposes restructuring its fee schedule and increasing rates in all tiers. There is opposition, largely from the citizen group called Citizens for Sustainable Pension Plans which complained that the district's salaries and benefits are too high. Priscilla and Ann noted that CSPP spokespeople based statements on misinformation and comparisons with other government entities that are not similar to MMWD. They also noted that the district is operating at a deficit and has infrastructure and habitat maintenance needs that are unique to their own watershed. *Flood Control.* Ann reported that flood protection for the Ross Valley took a step back with the passage of Measure D in San Anselmo, prohibiting use of the Memorial Park field as a retention pond. The Ross Valley Flood management and Watershed Program consequently will revise plans and new cost estimates are being done for several other publicly-owned locations that could serve as ponding areas in major storms, including the Sunnyside growing grounds and Deer Park. *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessments and Planning.* The County has begun coordinating a survey of low-lying land and infrastructure along the Bay shoreline that could be threatened by rising Bay waters in the future. County watershed planner Chris Choo and engineer Roger Leventhal are leading the effort and have begun meetings with designated personnel from the cities and towns to establish an operating structure. The planning effort includes water and sanitary districts as well as cities and towns. *C-SMART.* Don said that county planner Jack Liebster advised the Planning Commission that funding for the C-SMART program in West Marin ends in April. This West Marin SLR program concluded the survey, or vulnerability assessment, of threatened properties along the coast, but without funding will be unable to proceed with the second, and critical, phase: to develop an adaptation plan for properties at risk of flooding. The C-SMART findings were to be incorporated into the Local Coastal Plan, but this plan is not looking likely to happen at this time.

**Whistlestop Scoping.** Susan agreed to draft a scoping letter on the proposed redevelopment based on issues raised at the September Land Use Committee meeting.

**California Naturalist Program** Judy reported on a week-long training "California Naturalist" program sponsored by the Point Reyes National Seashore Association. Each participant is required to have a "Capstone Project." Judy chose to photo document the location and movement of Tule Elk in the Limantour Wilderness and on Home Ranch in the hope of gaining an understanding of why herds of elk are beginning to move into the pastoral zone. Judy intends to continue with the project as Seashore wildlife biologist Dave Press said that it would be helpful to know more about the location and movement of the elk in the wilderness area. Judy suggested developing a set of Q and A about the ranches just as the Seashore has developed to put confusion about the elk to rest. She said that one of her classmates announced that the ranches in the Park "are a rip off," that the ranchers pay no property taxes, that they sold their ranches the Park for fair market value and that they now rent the ranches back for a dollar a year. Judy referred the speaker to the Seashore's Ranch Management website for the legislation, which provides for a reduction in the purchase price paid to reflect the value of the initial period during which

the rancher retained the right to use the ranch, and to the leases, which confirm that the rental rate is set periodically by an independent appraiser selected by the Park.

**Corte Madera Inn Rebuild.** Ann reviewed the details of the proposal to redevelop the existing 110-room hotel with a new facility that would include 185 rooms (78 traditional overnights and 107 extended stay rooms) and which would fill in the existing wetland (Edgewater Pond), a remnant of the historical marsh complex, on the 5.7 acre property. The proposed project includes requests for a General Plan Amendment to create a new General Plan land use designation for hotels (Motel/Hotel Highway Commercial); a Zoning Amendment to create a new Zoning District for hotels (C-5) that would allow up to .55 FAR and would rezone the project site from C-3 to C-5; a preliminary and precise plan approval to allow for the specific use, floor area, site plan and design proposed; and a conditional use. The proposal to fill wetlands is also inconsistent with the town's general plan, and the property is located in a flood plain. The town Planning Commission will review the project and FEIR on December 8.

There are four alternative designs described in the EIR and DEIR, and the FEIR was recently released which had detailed mitigations. The project has elicited a good deal of public interest, both pro and con. The four alternatives include: 1) required no-project alternative; 2) an alternative with 147 rooms that would retain the pond, 3) an alternative that would fill the pond and have 111 rooms, 5) an alternative with 187 rooms that retains the pond (but requires a portion of the building facing across from the Town Center to be 4 stories). A local architect has also submitted suggestions for further redesign.

The DEIR identified the alternative with 147 rooms (Alternative 2) that would retain the pond as the environmentally superior alternative because of the following: 1) avoids filling the 0.64 -acres of jurisdictional waters and could provide for improved aesthetic, safety, and habitat conditions of this feature. 2) would avoid significant impacts associated with removal of trees of regulated size under the Town's Code. 3) Trip generation would be reduced.

Although the pond is no longer integrated into the town's flood management system, it continues to collect local rainwater in storms and the project site is in one of the lowest areas in the town and one likely to be affected by projected sea level rise.

**M/S/C (Nona/Randy) to comment to the town in support of retaining the pond for its functional flood detention benefits and habitat values, and also support improving pedestrian access into the existing Town Center shopping area.**

**IPM Update.** The group leading advocacy efforts to continue to allow Open Space managers to use IPM protocols in county open space is on hold through the holiday.

**Strawberry/Seminary Proposal.** Strawberry neighbors have retained counsel, Riley Hurd, to represent their interests in assessing the Branson School proposal for site redevelopment, which is not consistent with the Strawberry Community Plan. Nona and Randy attended a community meeting of the Strawberry Design Review. Nona will track the project.

**Local Coastal Plan.** Coastal Commission action is now deferred until August 2016.

**Bio Marin.** MCL submitted information to the City Council. There is public concern about what is planned at the former PG&E site where a cleanup is underway.

**Community Marin Action Committee.** The group met with Chris Choo for a briefing on her schedule and governance structure for the bayside vulnerability assessment re: SLR.

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