

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting Notes: September 5, 2012

Present: David Schnapf, chair; Priscilla Bull, Nona Dennis, Don Dickinson, Randy Greenberg, Jana Haehl, Karen Nygren, Susan Stompe, Ann Thomas, Judy Teichman. Met at MCL, 9 to 11.

Agenda. Approved with two changes: Easton Pt added to Back Burner, and Greenbrae Interchange added to Updates.

July 11, 2012 Meeting Notes: Approved as submitted.

Balestreri Use Permit/Design Review, Greenpoint Nursery (Solar Installation). Greenpoint Nursery owner James Balestreri, and REP Energy, have applied for a use permit and design review to construct a 1.6 acre and 1.1 megawatt capacity non-reflective movable photovoltaic solar farm on the existing nursery site at the corner of Atherton and Olive Avenues in unincorporated Novato. The 755 panels would be about five feet from the north front line along Atherton and five feet from the west front along Olive. The existing nursery would remain and the site is zoned agricultural, which permits a solar operation with a use permit; setbacks and FARs are waived in design review. A field trip to the site was set for September 6 and it was M/S (Jana/Susan) to request environmental review provide information on effects of at least the following areas of concern: visual/aesthetic, land use and precedent-setting nature of use in agriculturally-zoned lands, water usage, biological resources and wetland and wildlife impacts.

County Housing Element. A program EIR has been done on sites listed in the 2009 element (which the state required be revised) and those planned for inclusion in the 2014 element, along with key changes needed in the 2009 draft to get the state's approval. The current, or 2009, element includes 240 units on Grady Ranch among the sites identified in demonstration of the county's capability for additional housing. Nona expressed concern that sufficient review of the sites would not be done until a project is actually proposed.

San Rafael Airport Sports Complex Legal Involvement. As recommended at the July committee meeting, the executive committee approved contributing up to \$2,500 to a coalition effort to have an attorney submit a letter to the San Rafael City Council to encourage re-circulation of the project EIR. The Council removed consideration of action on the EIR from their agenda; they said this was to get clarification on the mayor's potential conflict of interest with regard to the project, and other issues.

Plan Bay Area EIR Scoping and Alternatives Comment Letter. The MCL letter regarding the EIR scope on this project was submitted prior to close of the comment period but was apparently ignored, and likely not even read, by staff. A Plan Bay Area staff memo to Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) members, who were adopting alternatives for inclusion in the RIR, was written (and dated) before the end of the comment period. Committee agreed that in the future letters to staff regarding this issue should be copied to all TAM members as well as ABAG and MTC county representatives. It was M/S (David/Priscilla) and approved to send a short cover letter to Plan Bay Area staff, copied to agency and county officials, noting that it appears from publically available records that they did not consider our comments, and asking for clarification of this issue. A copy of the original letter will be attached to all parties.

Community Marin. The document was circulated to the committee for review prior to the meeting, and Karen submitted suggestions in writing.

Port Sonoma/Carneros project. David will write a letter from MCL on EIR scoping.

Marin General Hospital Remodel EIR. The County CDA has given the Healthcare District consultants comments on the EIR's administrative draft. Most of them were of a fairly technical nature concerning traffic evaluations, utility improvements, construction phasing and the like. The public draft has been released and comments are due October 19. Ann to review.

Novato Tree Permits. Susan reported that the North Marin Unit reviewed Novato planning consultant Bob Brown's recommendation to expedite the planning process by eliminating the city's permit requirement for heritage tree removal, except for three species. Unit members objected to this approach and the City is now considering retention of the heritage tree ordinance with minor modifications for commercial areas.

SMART Station Design and Neighborhood Reaction. Nona and others reported that the land use planning for areas surrounding the future Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) stations has provoked opposition to proposed height and density standards – for the Civic Center station location. Susan will invite San Rafael planner Paul Jensen to attend the next Land Use meeting to update committee on plans for the station area.

North Coast Rail Authority (NCRA). Susan, David and Don Wilhelm met recently with Bernie Meyers, who is a Marin County representative on the board of this state agency, which owns the rail right-of-way from Willits to Eureka and leases it to a freight hauler, Northwest Pacific (NWP). NWP has started hauling freight through Novato, but is no longer making lease payments to NCRA, and negotiations to revise the lease are stalled. As a result NCRA, which has a history of financial problems and has been heavily subsidized by taxpayer funds, is apparently essentially bankrupt. David will write to NCRA to ask for information on their finances regarding their arrangement with NWP.

Highway 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Corridor Project. This reconstruction of entries and exits on 101 between Corte Madera and Larkspur continues on track. An informational open house is set for Monday, September 17 at Redwood High School and the draft EIR is expected to come out late this year or in early 2013. Karen cautioned that she believes the flyover from Sir Francis Drake Blvd to the Wornum Drive area would be disruptive.

Local Coastal Plan. A schedule for Board of Supervisor review and action on this plan is now set, with public hearings planned for October 2 and 23, and November 11 if needed.

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