

Marin Conservation League

North Marin Unit

Meeting Notes

April 8, 2010

The meeting was called to order at the home of Joyce Applen. Also attending were Don Wilhelm, Gail Wilhelm, Bob Burke, Edith Piltch, Dorothy Thomas, Bernie Meyers, Bill Long, Rick Fraites, Pat U'Ren, Frank U'ren, Susan Stompe and guests Dennis Welsh and Patricia Ravitz.

Announcements: Clean & Green Day is on April 24. The MCL annual Dinner is April 23 at New Beginnings in Novato. North Bay Watershed is having a conference in Petaluma tomorrow.

Minutes: The notes of the January 18 meeting were approved as distributed.

Measure F: Bill Long and Dennis Welsh came to discuss their respective perspectives on the June Ballot Measure F. The question is: Should the Novato Sanitary District (NSD) contract with Veolia to operate the wastewater treatment plant for 5 years?

Bill Long, a member of the Sanitary District Board, supports the contract to have Veolia operate the new plant. The plant is almost finished and the Board and staff feel that contracting will provide the district with the expertise needed to run the new equipment. The new facilities were planned a number of years ago. The old equipment was not providing adequate treatment and the District was incurring penalties for clean water violations. The new facility was designed to utilize proven technology and provide redundancy (to allow operations to continue if a piece was down for maintenance). Veolia has expertise and the contract could save the District \$4 million. **Dennis Welsh**, elected to the Sanitary District Board last fall, is opposed to the contract with Veolia. He is a former staff member at NSD and also worked at the Petaluma treatment plant right after Veolia left. Petaluma had problems with Veolia. He cited other communities in the area, such as Fairfield/Suisun, Richmond, and Burlingame, which have experienced problems with Veolia. His review of the report by Eisenhart, the consultants hired by NSD to advise them on the best way to operate the new plant, showed that they never interviewed other contractors or agencies. He said the Novato employees are highly qualified to operate the new plant. His group collected 4,000 signatures in less than 4 weeks to put this measure on the ballot.

Some of the other issues raised: **BL** 4 of the current NSD employees will be hired by Veolia for a minimum of 3 years. **DW** But they will not necessarily work at the Novato plant after 3 years or even have a job. Petaluma employees left Veolia after a couple years..

BL Veolia will operate at a lower cost than hiring consultants to train current employees. Veolia has energy saving techniques that will save money and will pay any fines for violations.

DW But the amount Veolia is charging provides for corporate profit and anyone should/can conserve energy. Veolia has not always paid fines for operational violations, they had to be sued.

BL NSD has had more violations the last few years than any of the facilities operated by Veolia.

DW But violations by Veolia are huge in volume as opposed to minor ones by NSD.

DW Once the contract is signed the District is stuck with Veolia. **BL** The contract allows the NSD to terminate the contract for a \$250,000 cancellation fee.

Bernie asked if there is anything in the contract to confirm how Veolia is operating the plant.

Answer: They have to file monthly reports with NSD.

The speakers departed and the Unit members discussed the issues. In general, there was deep concern about the contract, but no definitive environmental impact, since both entities have less than sterling records. The consensus was to not take a position.

North Redwood Blvd.: The next meeting is April 28 at the old City Hall at 6:30.

North Coast Rail Authority: The FEIR should be out in June or July. Freight operations will be from Willits to Lombard.

Highway Floral Billboard: After some discussion it was M/S/C that MCL should notify everyone possible, including the City of Novato, the Board of Supervisors, MTC and our legislators that the billboard is in violation of Marin's long standing billboard ban.

Transportation: Don reviewed the status of local projects.

Water District: Rick reported that rates will be going up.

Mira Monte (Burdell Island): Baylands Advocates and Audubon are pursuing acquisition of 64 acres on the Petaluma River Marsh.

Firemans Fund/ Burdell Commons: It was suggested that an alternative to be evaluated by the EIR would be to use one of the existing buildings for a high end hotel.

The next meeting will be May 20 at Bernie Meyers.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Notes by S. Stompe