

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting Notes: July 6, 2011

Present: Gail Wilhelm, Chair; Priscilla Bull, Nona Dennis, Don Dickenson, Randy Greenberg, Jana Haehl, Kathy Lowrey, David Schnapf, Susan Stompe, Ann Thomas, Don Wilhelm. Met at MCL, 9 to 11:15 AM.

June 1, 2011 Meeting Notes: Deferred.

Hanna Ranch Draft EIR. Susan described the proposed project on a 19-acre site above the Vintage Oaks shopping center in Novato. Major elements include the following: a 116-room hotel, two restaurants, and two mixed use retail/office buildings next to the pond. She has begun reading the DEIR and believes major issues are impacts on the wildlife area, including the area across the railroad tracks which is part of the Petaluma Marsh and the separation of the pond from wildlife; proposed bicycle/pedestrian path alignments which could require significant retaining walls and tree removal; the awkward access from Rowland Blvd in back of Costco; significant unavoidable traffic impacts, though additional lanes on Rowland would spread the load; and uncertainty about whether an alternate could be arranged from Route 37 due to cost and other factors. Gail and Don offered to take some on-site measurements to see if the proposed project would actually fit as described.

Committee members generally thought it would be preferable to include some small amount of housing in the project rather than more retail and office. Housing was included in one of the alternatives studied in the EIR.

Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM)/Gift to SMART. Don W sketched details regarding the TAM's proposal to give \$8 million from its local discretionary funds to SMART toward construction of SMART's initial operating segment (IOS); the \$8 million, paired with an allocation from Sonoma County, would enable SMART to receive additional funds from the Metropolitan Transportation Agency that, the rail board said, would close their funding gap for the IOS and enable them to proceed with sale of construction bonds. The MTC, according to SMART, would vote on this at their July meeting, thus requiring TAM to act this month. At the May 23 regular meeting of the TAM the board initially voted 7-7 on the disbursement but the Larkspur member reversed her vote and the \$8 million gift was approved. She did so in response to being told that her "no" vote would jeopardize funding for a Sir Francis Drake Blvd overpass that Larkspur wants built. Since the public had left the TAM meeting after the initial vote a special meeting was then set for July 7 to reconsider, and presumably re-affirm, the vote. Susan spoke on behalf of MCL on May 23 asking that the TAM retain the funds which, if not given to SMART, would be used for local roads and transit needs.

Since May 23 a number of issues have surfaced that would make deferring any decision premature. These include the following: a need to address allegations from members of the public that revised IOS cost estimates show an additional funding gap that has not been publicized to TAM commissioners or the public; money being provided by Sonoma County is a loan and not an outright gift, calling into question why Marin would give money outright; the TAM has not prepared required documentation to present its funding request to MTC so MTC would not have this on their agenda until September or later, removing the need for immediate action.

Lawson's Landing. Nona continues to follow this and was currently preparing for a Coastal Commission hearing July 13 in the BOS chambers, following a field trip on July 12 to the project site. A major problem is that there are two sets of applicable Coastal Act policies in conflict with each other and this has resulted in a program to continue renting out the trailers. She is reviewing documents and will focus mainly on a proposed conservation easement, red legged frog habitat, and removal of trailers preferably to allow space for visitor-serving uses. She will emphasize the need to protect natural resources on the site.

Easton Point/Martha Property and Alto Robles. The Tiburon Town Council will review the revised Alto Robles plan on September 7. There is nothing new on the Easton Point application.

San Rafael Downtown SMART Station Planning. Don D attended a presentation on the vision plan for the downtown train station that was devised by the City-appointed citizens' advisory committee under an MTC grant. Broad elements include moving the transit center to the Whistlestop and Cal Bank building sites and having this serve as both a transit center and SMART station; redeveloping the existing transit center site with four or five-storey office buildings; building a 500 car parking garage across the street, west of Tamalpais Avenue; and adding a bike path along Francisco Blvd. He noted that there is no funding available for any of these proposed elements and that Redevelopment Agency funding, which might have been involved, was removed from the state budget.

Local Coastal Plan. Nona and others will attend the PC meeting July 11 to support inclusion of habitat protection measures in the plan.

Next meeting August 3, 2011

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