

DRAFT Fairfax Town Council Minutes
Special Meeting
Small Town Mayors Conference
Fairfax Women's Club
Saturday, October 25, 2008

Call to Order/Roll Call:

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Bragman
Susan Brandborg
Mary Ann Maggiore
Lew Tremaine
David Weinsoff

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Rock, Town Manager
Judy Anderson, Town Clerk

Mayor Maggiore called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

Approval of Agenda and Affidavit of Posting

M/S, Tremaine/Bragman, Motion to approve the agenda and the affidavit of posting.

AYES: All

Open Time

No speakers came forward.

Introductions

Mayor Maggiore welcomed those in attendance and stated three reasons for the meeting: to hear what others had done and to exchange ideas; to secure a voice at the table for small towns that had trouble being heard as individual cities; and to have an excuse to spruce up the building for visitors.

Mayor Maggiore gave each visiting mayor or city/county representative five minutes to speak.

Robin Goble, Mayor Pro Tem of Windsor, described the creation of the downtown of her 16-year-old city on vacant lands. She stated that the main issue facing her city was raising revenue. She described efforts by her city to base fees on full cost recovery, to buy locally as a strategy for economic health; to raise their Transit Occupancy Tax to 12% to match the rest of Sonoma County; to build a stronger local business core; and to support economic development by offering Park and Recreation programs that employed people and helped pay for the upkeep of buildings. She stated that Windsor had been the site of a car commercial site which had provided free advertising for the city. She further stated that the City decided the type of businesses they wanted to attract and then went after those businesses. She described the importance of sustainability to her city and how they had recycling at all community events; didn't allow water bottles at events; allowed the Sonoma Bike Coalition to provide valet parking at town events; supported SMART; had an energy efficiency plan; had their own water conservation employee; and had a green purchasing policy. She noted that green building techniques were to be used in the building of a fire house; that they were creating affordable housing but were not creating enough and looking at Petaluma as an example of how to produce more; and that historical houses in Windsor were being revamped.

Linda Kelly, Sonoma City Manager, representing her City Council, stated that they had a strong tourist trade and locally controlled revenue sources like the 2.5 Million dollar Transit Occupancy Tax that also created an incentive to keep the Town attractive; that the State take-away from Redevelopment cost Sonoma \$396,000; that affordable housing dollars weren't affected by the State; that 46 affordable units were currently being created; that the Council had directed that the affordable housing project be a model for water conservation and green building for low and very low income families; that Sonoma ran their own water utility; that they had a "grass for cash" incentive to reduce water usage; that all new homes had to have zero-scape yards; that Sonoma had 80 full-time positions with two frozen; that to move forward with sustainability programs in a slow economy was a challenge; that disaster preparedness needed improvement; and that the Visitors Bureau provided a card to visitors to get input.

Elizabeth Patterson, Mayor of Benicia, noted that Benicia was founded in 1847 and was the capitol of California briefly; that it was a full service city with strong ties to Sonoma County; that the Army had been the reason for Benicia until 1964; that it had been a Civil War post, a port and a manufacturing center; that there was no transitional plan when the Army left Benicia; that the Town had been desperate for financial stability and had allowed a refinery to be built which allowed the city to provide amenities; that there was a very large planned unit development in 1964 that caused the population to go from 6,000 to the current 28,000; that the downtown had been left alone and had many historic structures that provided a basis to make the downtown attractive; that there had been a water fund initiative to keep the waterfront as an anchor for the downtown; and that the city had received a 14 million dollar settlement from Valero that was used for solar panels on the schools and the development of a climate action plan.

Larry Chu, City of Larkspur Council Member, described Larkspur as a city of 12,000 on 4 sq miles at the crossroad of the two heaviest traveled roads in Marin County, Highway 101 and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard; stated that the city's biggest challenge was financial; that they shared a police department with Corte Madera and were in the process of trying to fund a police building through a Mello Roos District; that it was a "pay as you go" community with no substantial debt; that they were trying to fund a new library, hopefully through private funding and with the help of their Library Foundation; that their Public Works Department was very aggressive about pursuing grants and that they had received over 4 million dollars in grants; that because of the ferry, Highway 101 and Sir Francis Drake, more funding was available; that providing affordable housing was probably their biggest challenge; that there were only 11 parcels that could be developed for housing in Larkspur; that they just didn't have the land and would have had trouble meeting the affordable housing mandate; and that wood burning had been banned in Larkspur.

Alexandra Cock, Corte Madera Council Member, stated that she had been on the Council for less than a year; that Corte Madera had a population of about 9,000; that most of the Town's revenue came from sales tax; that flood control was a big issue in Corte Madera with \$20 million in projects needing to be done; that the staff had been successful in securing grants; that the Chamber received most of the Transit Occupancy Tax; that they were updating their General Plan; that the new police station was going to be certified as a green building; that the placement of solar on the Town buildings had gone out to bid; that a 79-unit affordable housing apartment building was built with the help of Ecumenical Housing; that they had the luxury of having the right space for the project; suggested that the towns band together to deal with the State about the limitations on the ability to provide affordable housing; and that there was a beautification committee in Corte Madera formed in response to the high priority for landscaping in the Town that had been successful.

Ted Freeman, Mayor of San Anselmo, population 12,400, stated that the Town was still feeling the effects of the flooding of December '05; that the downtown merchants were installing floodgates; that the flooding of the police department, Town Hall, Fire Department and the library provided an opportunity to do green building in the reconstruction process; that, thanks to the efforts of a good Town Manager, they had been able to get funding for most of the work; that they had been devastated by the floods but that it had given them an opportunity to do things they wouldn't have

done otherwise; that they owned about ten acres that had a half million of debt attached that they were deciding what to do with; that they had paid the Conservation Corps to do a massive cleanup on the creek before the rains; that they had recently passed a Floor Area Ratio Ordinance and were facing a referendum on the ordinance; that he served as liaison to the Chamber of Commerce that had concerns even before the financial collapse; that the Town didn't have any car dealers or major sales tax producers; and that they could raise the Transit Occupancy Tax but only had one small hotel so it would produce little revenue.

George Rodericks, City Manager of Belvedere, population 2100 in less than one square mile; budget of 5.5 to 6 million dollars with 3 million from property taxes. He stated that they were working on the update of their General Plan and meeting the affordable housing mandate of 17 units; that the utility underground districts were paid for by the residents directly; that they had two parks and local paths to maintain; that they had seven sworn police officers and a contract with the County to provide a Chief; that they kept their citizens involved through a community foundation; that they encouraged volunteerism; and that they had two unique ordinances that raised revenue, one that provided for up to a \$200,000 penalty if construction deadlines weren't met within two years and a road impact fee charged on every construction project done in the city.

Shawn Marshall, Mill Valley Mayor, 14,000 population in Southern Marin, 4.5 square miles; stated that property tax provided most of the general fund; that they had been very vigilant about keeping their reserve fund at approximately 40% of the budget; that it was very helpful to have that cushion during the flood; that the city was technically "built-out" as were other cities in Marin that she would like to discuss with other cities the issue of the adaptive use of property and mixed use; that their second unit amnesty did produce some affordable units; that they had hired a sustainability consultant for \$30,000 and that it had been money well spent; that this was a position that could be shared with other cities; that they had passed a plastic bottle ban and were about to pass a green building ordinance; that they wanted a bigger place at the table; that they had done better working with the County by serving on Task Forces; that they were promoting a regional approach to flood control like Ross Valley; and suggested that the North Bay Division of the League of California Cities could provide a forum for small cities to deal with some of their issues, perhaps with the formation of a small cities division.

Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Mill Valley Council Member, stated that she was a freshman Council member, that the city had to stretch to meet State mandates; that she supported the sharing of the best practices for small cities, that they had passed a parcel tax for vegetation management and had used the funds to create fire breaks around the city and to widen some of the roads to allow trucks to pass; and that the project had been a big private-public partnership guided by the preparedness committee, CERT and "Get Ready." She further stated that the Council had been working more effectively with the city's boards and commissions to communicate goals.

Mary Ann Maggiore, Mayor of Fairfax, population 7500, described Measure "F" passed by the voters that sustained the budget through 2010 when the Council would work for renewal of the measure; that the Council was working to build a stronger business community including using a "First Friday" of each month to open up all the businesses to celebrate the downtown; that an initiative to ban plastic bags in retail stores in Fairfax was to be on the November ballot and noted that the businesses had stopped using the plastic bags voluntarily; that Fairfax was also having trouble creating affordable housing with limited sites to work with; that the Youth Commission had been active; that the Town had five live music venues; and that Fairfax was often the sole voice on an issue, but that was where innovation happened.

Mayor Maggiore led a discussion about how the small cities could collaborate in the future. Vice Mayor Weinsoff suggested that the group pursue the idea of creating a small cities unit of the Northern Division of the League. Councilmember Marshall of Mill Valley stated that the League could help create a larger seat at the table for small cities, but to meet just to pollinate ideas might be more effective if done informally.

Fairfax Councilmember Tremaine related the history of the polystyrene ban in Fairfax in the 90's and described how the plastics industry sued the Town and then a group of citizens gathered signatures on an initiative petition that was subsequently passed by the voters. He described the similar process used for the plastic bag ban wherein the Town was sued, the Council made the ordinance voluntary, and then a group of citizens led by Sustainable Fairfax and Green Sangha circulated the initiative petition that was subsequently passed by the voters. Councilmember Bragman stated that the key was to educate the community about the issue and noted that the initiative had been supported by the Chamber and the solid waste hauler.

Elizabeth Patterson, Benicia Mayor, stated that her city was recognized as a national and international artist community and that they were supportive of green issues; that the artists had made the waterfront movement viable; and that they had been a big part of the "shop downtown" movement; and she suggested that each town look at their own constituency to see what the driving force was and to use it.

There was a discussion about downtown revitalization efforts.

Linda Kelly, Sonoma Town Manager, stated that they used a partnership with the County and the Chamber to promote local business; that they had funding from a Redevelopment Agency; that the Chamber provided staff; and that they had recently held a summit/breakfast meeting to recognize the top sales tax producers in their city. She further reported that Sonoma had an Economic Development Program Adviser and Economic Development Committee, and that the Adviser was a contract employee who met with the Committee monthly for direction.

Larry Chu, City of Larkspur Council Member, stated that his city used the revenue from the Transit Occupancy Tax to put back into their local businesses including providing loans for small businesses. He further stated that some of the land use designations in their downtown areas needed to change to accommodate small businesses.

Elizabeth Patterson, Benicia Mayor, stated that her Council had adopted a mixed use area for downtown that gave flexibility to businesses.

Shawn Marshall, Mill Valley Mayor, described the success of the Sustainability Director in her city and stated that adding sustainability responsibility to the regular staff didn't work, but having a person with sustainability as their focus really got things done; that part of the position was to make it self-funding so the employee had to come up with the money to pay for the position by 2010. She further reported that the Sustainability Director had secured funding for the installation of solar on a town building, served as the City's green coordinator and had brought ordinances from other cities to the Council to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Mill Valley Council Member, stated that she was interested in economic development as well as sustainability.

Larry Chu, City of Larkspur Council Member, stated that cities couldn't afford to do the sustainability things, but might be able to do more of them if they could be tied to economic vitality.

There was discussion about the formation of the Marin Clean Energy JPA in Marin County and the opportunities that it would provide for sustainability.

Mayor Maggiore adjourned the meeting for a break from 11:20 to 11:30 a.m.

Open Time

Jo Carson, described a Sunday Streets program wherein the town could close the streets for the day to encourage pedestrians and shopping in the downtown.

John Merton, a resident of the area, stated that great ideas evolved from meetings like the one being held, but that the ideas weren't always embraced by the community, and asked how the support of the community could be secured.

The city representatives discussed how to get participation and community support.

Elizabeth Patterson, Benicia Mayor, stated that community organizing was how you gained support and gave an example of how Benicia developed acceptance of their General Plan for sustainable development with education and through meetings with the community.

Robin Goble, Windsor Vice Mayor, stated that it was difficult to get people to participate even with lots of outreach; that many projects were driven by political will and that the public had to be educated through the process; that it didn't always come easily and that they had experienced a recall election early in the creation of their downtown; that it helped to have a great staff to support you and a community that didn't get in the way; and that sustainability was always a goal.

Lew Tremaine, Fairfax Council Member, stated that the renovation of Center Blvd. in Fairfax had really involved the community in the process of the development of the plan; that the Council was currently going through the process of creating a Mixed Use Overlay Zone to facilitate the creation of affordable housing downtown; that the politicians directed it and brought it forward, but the community had to be allowed to be involved in the development; that controversy was okay but that it was critical to get the buy-in from the community.

Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Mill Valley Council Member stated that the Executive Director of the Transportation Authority of Marin had noted that citizens in Marin wanted to contribute and did participate and that high intelligence and high creativity were part of the culture of Marin and that needed to be considered.

Mayor Maggiore stated that there were different cultures, that Fairfax had an influx of young people, and that a "Welcome Wagon" would be a good way to acclimate new citizens to the culture of the Town.

Alexandra Cock, Corte Madera Council Member, asked how the other cities publicized public workshops and questioned whether or not it was the best way to get input, and asked whether or not any of the towns had annual Council retreats that she recommended as useful.

Larry Chu, Larkspur Council Member, stated that it was difficult to keep connected to the community and noted that Mill Valley had a program to get the Council members out into the community.

Susan Brandborg, Fairfax Council Member, described a Welcome packet that had been prepared by the Volunteers for Fairfax in the past that had been distributed to new residents and contained information on Town services, local schools and local service agencies. She stated that Fairfax had a General Plan Advisory Committee that had been started by Elizabeth Patterson that brought different citizens into the process; that their ideas were sent to the Planning Commission and then to the Council; and that sometimes, at the Council level, they received comments like, "what are you doing?"

Elizabeth Patterson, Benicia Mayor, stated that she had office hours at Town hall; that she had an email list that she used to send out information on different topics two or three times a week; that she had about 300 residents on the list; that she had tried to get the city to do something similar; that committees and commissions were a good way to provide smaller venues for dialogue; and that a continuous effort was necessary to engage the public.

Robin Goble, Windsor Vice Mayor, stated that they didn't have Council retreats, but had a Friday and Saturday session every two years for priority setting; that their Council meetings were

televised; and that they had a fabulous Web site that provided information for new residents and others.

Larry Bragman, Fairfax Council Member, asked how many cities in Marin were televised; expressed his desire to have the Council meetings televised; stated that he sent out emails to communicate and did his own outreach to let people know what was going on; and that people didn't seem to respond to public notices.

Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Mill Valley Council Member, stated that Mill Valley had an annual retreat to set priorities and that the public was invited.

Lew Tremaine, Fairfax Council Member, described the Strategic Planning process that the Town had undergone when Linda Kelly was the Town Manager that included the development of a financial strategic plan as well; that the process had strengthened them as a group and allowed them to be creative; and that they had actually developed goals and strategies to accomplish the goals.

Mayor Maggiore led a discussion about how to go forward and asked when the group wanted to meet again. She suggested that Fairfax host the meeting at least one more time.

Larry Chu, Larkspur Council Member, suggested that representatives of the small cities could meet an hour earlier than the official start of the MCCMC meetings to discuss issues.

Shawn Marshall, Mill Valley Mayor, stated that she was looking at the League as a venue for discussions, not to control things; that she would like future discussions to be on affordable housing; that she would like to meet twice a year, perhaps in subsets on various topics; but that affordable housing was the critical topic to her at that point.

Elizabeth Patterson, Benicia Mayor, suggested that the group meet in Fairfax or another city once a year and with the League once a year as a small cities group on common issues.

Lew Tremaine, Fairfax Council Member, suggested that it happen twice a year as suggested with Fairfax hosting one and the League hosting a second and more inclusive one.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.