

Fairfax Town Council Minutes
Adjourned Meeting
Fairfax Women's Club
Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Call to Order/Roll Call:

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Bragman
Pam Hartwell-Herrero
John Reed (7:18 p.m. arrival)
Lew Tremaine
David Weinsoff

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Rock, Town Manager
Laurie Ireland-Ashley, Finance Director
Judy Anderson, Town Clerk

Mayor Bragman called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Approval of Agenda and Affidavit of Posting

M/S, Weinsoff/Hartwell-Herrero, Motion to approve the agenda and affidavit of posting.

AYES: All

Announcements

Mayor Bragman made the announcements as printed on the agenda. He also announced that there would be a speaker from our sister peace community in Colombia at the Community Church on April 2nd and that the California Public Utilities Commission had ordered PG&E to come up with an alternative to Smart Meters.

Open Time

Jean Berensmeyer, representing the San Geronimo Valley Planning Group, thanked the Council for their efforts on the Smart Meter; presented an overview of the history of the establishment of the Spirit Rock Center; and expressed concern about the proposed expansion. The expansion, she stated, would allow an unlimited number of people to attend events at the retreat; that their car pool program had not been successful; that the Planning Group was trying to protect the open space and the environment; and that she supported a limit on the number of visitors allowed at one time; and that big events would produce increased traffic through Fairfax.

Jory Prum, Wreden Ave., stated that the Town's handling of the business licenses had created a lot of bad will in the business community; that he had thought the Town was going back to the way it used to be done; that the Town didn't have to charge the \$25 administrative fee; explained the savings originally anticipated; stated that the \$25 fees already paid should be refunded; that the business licenses should be processed in Town and not sent to Alabama after being paid directly to the Town.

Mayor Bragman stated that it was impractical to refund \$25 to those who had already paid and that no late fees would be charged.

Councilmember Tremaine suggested that, citizens could wait to pay the license fee until the contract expired, and, since no late fee would be assessed, the Town could be paid directly and the \$25 would go to the Town of Fairfax.

Rose Taber, Hillside Drive, stated that she was very upset about the business license program; that it should have been presented properly; that employees were paid a lot of money to get it right ahead of time; and asked why all the research wasn't done by staff ahead of time instead of by Jory.

Discussion/Consideration of allocation of \$2500 from Measure I Youth Services funds to the West Marin Little League for the completion of the batting cage at Contratti Field – *Bragman*

Mayor Bragman presented the request; stated that the project had been completed; that the coaches had reported that it had been well received; that the funding would be taken from Measure I; and that the batting cage made it an even better baseball field.

Mayor Bragman opened the discussion to the public.

Jory Prum, Wreden Ave., stated that the hill leading up from the bridge was full of mud.

Mayor Bragman stated that the Town had talked to a landscape architect about a plan for that area.

Holly Bragman, Hickory Road, spoke in support of the batting cages and stated that any support of youth programs was good for Fairfax youth.

M/S, Tremaine/Hartwell-Herrero, Motion to approve the allocation of \$2500 from the Measure I Youth Services fund for the batting cage at Contratti Field.

AYES: All

Mayor Bragman suggested that the plaque wording should include that the money was from Measure I.

Discussion/Consideration of a local sales tax in the Town of Fairfax – *Bragman*

Property taxes and sales tax revenues have been going down. We are facing deficits. We are not able to meet the growing costs of medical and pension for our employees. We need to look at how to increase revenues, ½ cent would raise \$150,000 per year. Would indicate a holistic approach to solving the financial problems. Have to look at other sources – perhaps paid parking; Spirit Rock expansion will impact FX parking and the development of Albertsons will also impact parking; Need economic restructuring; even healthy real estate sales at lower prices will continue the decline.

LT: we are not going to balance the budget on the backs of the homeowners or the employees; everyone would pay the tax; the entire ½ cent would go to Fairfax. Has been talking about it in the community for about 6 months. There is widespread support for the tax but not about what we would do with the income. The less specific we are the easier will be to pass, just 50% to pass; if we are specific we need a 2/3 vote for it to pass. We only have until August to talk to the community and discuss the matter. It is an excellent idea. Need to discuss all the necessary issues involved.

John Reed, unlike the business license decision, this one needs to have a lot of discussion; not a huge revenue generator in the Town; food is not taxed; other businesses will be affected. It is passed along; restaurants would be affected; likes the message it sends to the staff; \$150,000 will not solve the budget shortfall.

PHH: We're trying to reduce our expenses, doesn't like the tax, but thinks we need to consider it and do it in an inclusive way.

DW: Should be at the top of the agenda for the next few months; should actively engage the Chamber immediately; get the conversation with the community going.

LB: had a meeting with the Chamber and talked about it yesterday. A couple of Saturday

meetings or weekday morning meetings would be helpful. Reach out to the community to explain it and promote it and take the pulse of the community.

Open to the audience.

Jory Prum, referred to sales tax figures in the budget.

LIA, explained that it was the 1% that Fairfax received from the sales tax.

Jory: 23 restaurants in town that would contribute which would capture income from people outside the Town. Thought the idea of it being spent on something specific might make it easier to sell.

LB: limitation on the duration of the tax?

Mimi Newton, there was a financial committee a few years ago that produced a report. Have you read it lately? Harness the fact that we are a small unique community and capture that to increase revenue.

Mark Bell, the last time he paid sales tax was a long time ago; sales tax was regressive; he buys online to avoid sales tax; reviewed some of the increases to the sales tax SMART, etc. 1.75 for Transportation and SMART; if we could get that money back, he would support a tax in Fairfax. Totally against an increase in the sales tax. VAT in Europe but they get social services for that tax.

LT: cautionary note is that even if it is proposed as a general tax; Corte Madera funded all sorts of things for their sales tax and when the economy crashed, they lost that income. Cannot become complacent about sales tax, skating on thin ice when you go forward with a sales tax increase.

David Weinsoff, food and beverage is the main source; the bars are doing better in the recession; our sister cities sell stuff more than we do; the amount we would raise in sales tax would be more static in our community

Jory: most venues charge their prices to include the tax.

Morgan Hall, Bolinas Road, it is really important to keep in mind that the businesses would be the ones paying it – retail businesses would suffer a little for it; restaurants and bars – kind of a use tax. Bars require more police attention; think about how much the businesses use the Town's services.

LB: reviewed all the income sources available to the Town in the past when we considered past measures; could go back to the property owners again but we did that two years ago, people may not be open to that; relatively few choices for revenue; should request a report and review information..

LT: The UUT is the most equitable tax we have. It is a diminishing thing at this point. Need to spread the pain; Sales tax impact lower income people more than others.

LB: Franchise fees – road impact fees, cable franchise fees, garbage franchise fees; we do have a franchise with PG&E, could look into it at some point. About a 60-year-old franchise. Need to look at all our options.

LIA: San Rafael's is a ten-year; some are 15-year or 20-year terms.

Item 1 for the April agenda.

John Reed, 30% of health care costs come from automobile; road infrastructure; the real cost of a gallon of gas would be \$18.50. If you had a pump that sold it at that rate in Fairfax.

LB: install electric car charging stations and charge them for it.

JR: is investigating installing electric charging stations.

LB: Used to have bicycle license fees. Need to do due diligence.

Jory: had a bike license in southern CA; there was an article in the Chronicle about bicycle licenses.

MKR: Gas tax hasn't been changed since 1994 and could be raised. Could talk about it at a future meeting; Excise tax has not been changed;