



Sonoma County Community Development Commission
Housing Authority • Redevelopment Agency
1440 Guerneville Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-4107

Monte Rio Wastewater Task Group
September 21, 2009
Monte Rio Community Center
6:30 pm

Meeting Notes

Introductions & Greetings:

Task Group Members Present: Dan Fein, Preston Smith, Lee Torr IV, Rich Holmer, Ken Wikle, Jim Quigley, Steve Mack, Doreen Atkinson, Rene DeMonchy, Chuck Burger, Efren Carrillo,

Note: Lee left the meeting at 7:15 pm. He doesn't want to start from "ground zero". He wants to build on information from prior effort.

Task Group Members Absent: Suzie Baxman, Gary Getchell

Staff Present: Kathleen Kane, Jane James

Public Present: None

Ground Rules, presented by Dan Fein:

- One conversation at a time
- Accept the views of others
- Keep the discussion relevant
- Silence or absence is agreement
- Speak for yourself

Roles:

Dan Fein – Will facilitate Task Group meetings

CDC – Appointed Task Group; will provide for and support meeting logistics, dissemination of information, etc.

Supervisor – Will attend Task Group meetings to learn about issues & listen to input

Members – Learn about issues, provide input

Expectations:

Purpose –

Until entity* created, can't move ahead!

* Need project leader to do planning. That should be first step. Have all needed info.

Need governance.

- Glad SSWD (SM) is here.
- All already talked enough.

SSWD bought as water district. Can't just be sewer district, too.

River getting polluted due to failing septic systems.

- Buildings being lost due to lack of septic systems.
- Downtown almost gone.

Old substandard septic systems

- Public perception that it's ok
- Need education process for community and group here.
- Before all was assumed.
- Now need to do planning work on impacts on River
- Need to build credibility
- Go out to community early
- *Who will be lead agency? Can County decide first to ID lead (to get \$)?

AB885 – time issue

Wants access to prior info

- Clean water program? Storm water management? Convert septic to sewer to help? County would lead effort.
- Needs to see facts.
- Homeless bathing, other people swimming, and wild animals are in river. E. coli may not be failing septic systems...need proof/tests
- Science is evolving; may be able to tell if E. coli is from septic systems off-site, or humans/animals in River

In-depth studies not previously done to document problem.

Agree w/~ & ~. Need meaningful analysis re: what, if anything, septic systems are doing to River.

- Doesn't see evidence of problem in prior studies.
- Water district can become sewer district.

Need to ID problem.

- Is it failed systems? Trying to build homes?
- What are alternatives? Small aerobic? Larger combined? Hook into Guerneville treatment facility?
- What are group's limits?

Cities/county might over-blow something that's not there.

- Old plan was too much and problem was over-stated.
- It was too expensive
- Not proven that septic systems were cause of problem. Guerneville plant could cause problem.
- People deferred septic maintenance because they thought sewer was coming. Need to maintain septic systems.
- Small lots will come if sewer system is created. Bad.
- Wants downtown treatment plan.

In absence of long studies, now have serious problem that unimproved properties can't be built.

- Code complying Class 1 System is required to get a building permit.
- Conditions here won't allow to get permitted
- Commercial center gone.
- Can't build new single-family homes.
- Elaborate systems required by County.
- Knowing pollution sources won't matter if no systems will be permitted.

Homes are major asset for most and they're at risk, on borderline financially, will lose all if no wastewater solution is implemented

- Need to be able to repair existing homes if needed.

When the County terminated the sewer treatment project, they were asked at a meeting what owners would do if needed repair...PRMD said there is a "disaster clause" that would allow them to get a permit.

- Need PRMD rep here for this type of information.

Will look into disaster clause.

Expectations:

Outcome –

Discussion of process:

Meetings – Future meetings more heavily advertised

Communications -

What do we want to accomplish?

- Ideas
 1. Series of meetings for education
 2. Input from PRMD, NCRWQCB
 3. Input from others who've done this:
 - People who have developed on-site systems
 - Financing alternatives
 - Guerneville treatment plant tours

Two-three people could be tasked with research trips

Previous community meetings have been disastrous.

- Need to educate ourselves first.
- Identify categories of education for group and assign to someone here.
- ~ would document types of parcels and how PRMD would handle them for permitting septic systems for those property types.
- Community meetings need to be controlled.
- This group could become educated and help to run and control meetings. Set rules.

Information gathering and information distribution.

- This group good cross-section
- Separate problems into categories.
- Then plan how to proceed.
- The quicker to community meetings the better, but need specific, clear, information to present.

Wants new ground rule that no members here should talk about each other's properties

- County has specific rules for septic systems, can't vary from those. Apply to all.
- *Whatever we do needs to be fair for all concerned.

Is there an opportunity to find flexibility in County rules? Have County come tell us.

Agree that need to increase knowledge base first.

- Definition of problem will shift as knowledge base grows.

- Carefully bring in the public.
- Avoid town hall meetings

Growth is 800 pound gorilla in the room. This issue needs to be fixed first. Need trust on this and it's not here.

- Some want to build and some want to stop growth.
- Uncertainty hurts Monte Rio property sales and values.
- Growth issue needs to be fully and openly discussed.
- Cost of implementing wastewater solutions represent impacts some to benefit others.

Bodega Bay wastewater systems works.

- Treated wastewater is used for irrigation.
- Need to look at these things.
- Aerobic system for 25-unit mobile home park by Ryan's Beach works – permitted here?
- Maybe County would be more flexible.
- Let's see what's out there.
- We should try to change County rules because they don't work.

Need community involved up front for educational component to build trust.

- Pete Parkinson said alternate systems could work with governance.
- So flexibility might be possible.

Rules aren't all County rules...need state ok for compliance with Basin Plan.

- Small treatment plant rules differ from septic system rules.

Agrees with ~.

- Agrees with ~ re: issue of growth needs open discussion.
- At end of discussion, that issue should go to voters thru General Plan policy
- Would have been good to discuss last time to avoid polarization.

Agrees!

- Has killed river area.
- Growth is planning issue – not sewer issue.
- Specific plan for River area as a parallel to this effort?

In Santa Barbara, growth controls helped water projects.

Growth issues came up last time but old lots of record is the issue.

- Growth management plan was agreed to.

Suggestion that we use approach like *Leadership Santa Rosa*

- Small groups here take on issue, research, set up public meetings on topics.
- Thinks large public meetings can be civil, informative and productive.

Homework to do first.

Agrees. Need scope of what group's ideas are about to show guidance and leadership.

- Come up with several options, with great ideas that will fit River area.
- Need more than one solution because different things will work for different areas.
- Need to make some moves rather than having years of meetings.

Millions already spent over years.

- Could point to contrasts of what was 12 years ago and today's conditions.
- What's possible now that wasn't then?
- Explore properties where nothing can be used and need system.
- Organized info for public.
- How to condense the facts of the issues to keep in control.

Suggests: Dan Fein/Kathleen Kane distill notes and categorize

- Next meeting discuss public process and next steps.

Good to distill info for all and those not here.

At next meeting or two, pass on historical knowledge. Some people have “common knowledge” – others need summary of what was before.

Likes having fresh ideas

- o Good suggestions

Plan for next Task Group meeting and closing:

Next meeting Monday evening within a month.

- o Goal for meeting: Define education process for group and community.

Will call Lee.

Wants goal. Is it to educate community?

Goal to come up with viable solution

Need problem statement first.

Agenda?

Need long-term goal with break down steps.

- o Define steps.
- o Achieve one at a time.

Develop mission statement.

Read handouts, and maybe book from which excerpt was taken.

- o Will come back with overall project plan.

What worked and what didn't work tonight?

Worked

- Bringing variety of perspectives
- Good facilitation
- Efren here
- Willingness to work together expressed.

Change

- Lee left
- Need agenda and timeline
- Need meeting goal
- Get issues from County & NCRWQCB
- Semantics re: ground zero

October 19, 2009 Tentative date for next meeting

6:30 p.m. at Monte Rio Community Center

Kathleen to check availability of MR Community Center for meeting