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City of Sebastopol City Council/Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: February 9, 2016
Agenda Item: 8A
To: City Council and Planning Commission
From: Kenyon Webster, Planning Director
Subject: Review of GPAC Draft General Plan
Recommendation: Provide Comments
CEQA Status: Environmental Impact Report to be Prepared

Introduction:

This memorandum recommends that the Council and Commission accept public testimony and provide comments on the GPAC (General Plan Advisory Committee) Draft General Plan (previously transmitted).

General Plan Process:

Three joint meetings of the Commission and Council were set for initial review of the draft General Plan. The first meeting on January 12 considered the Land Use and Circulation Elements. The February 9 meeting will address the Community Services and Facilities, Conservation and Open Space, Community Health and Wellness, and Community Character Elements. The March 8 meeting will consider the Noise, Safety, and Economic Vitality Elements.

The purpose of these initial meetings to identify any *major* issues with the Elements prior to preparation of the formal Draft General and its Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Are any policies unacceptable? Are there significant new policies that should be added? Any minor edits can be provided to staff.

After the formal draft General Plan and EIR are prepared, there will be a public comment period followed by preparation of a Final EIR. Then, the Planning Commission will conduct its formal review in a public hearing process and make recommendations to the City Council, which will also conduct public hearings prior to adoption of the new General Plan.

At this time, the General Plan timeline anticipates adoption of the new General Plan by the end of 2016. To maintain this schedule, it is important that the project keep moving forward. Any additional meetings will likely have both budget and schedule impacts.

Elements for Review February 9:

The attached memorandum from the General Plan consultant highlights several key issues regarding the four Elements to be discussed at the February 9 meeting.

Meeting Process

In terms of the structure of the meeting, staff suggests the following:

- Overview presentation by City's consultant
- Council and Commission questions of the consultant or staff
- Opportunity for initial public comment on any of Elements on the agenda
- Consultant facilitation of Commission and Council Element-by-Element discussion/comments, with opportunity for public comment prior to discussion of each Element

Attachment:

De Novo Memorandum



MEMORANDUM

TO: Sebastopol City Council and Planning Commission

FROM: Ben Ritchie and Beth Thompson, De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: Preparation for the February 9th Joint Workshop on the General Plan Update

DATE: January 20, 2016

INTRODUCTION

This memo provides an overview of the General Plan topics and elements that will be discussed during our joint workshop on February 9th. The intent of this memo is to assist in focusing your review of these elements on key issues and topics, in order to make the most beneficial use of our time together as we prepare the Draft General Plan for public review.

As with the last workshop, it is requested that you focus your review and comments on *major* policy issues and concerns.

The February 9th workshop will address the following elements. Please read and review these elements carefully prior to the workshop, and please come prepared to discuss any specific concerns and provide specific input related to these topics.

- **Community Services and Facilities;**
- **Conservation and Open Space;**
- **Community Health and Wellness; and**
- **Community Character**

Key issues you may wish to consider for each element are summarized below. Our discussion is certainly not limited to these issues.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The GPAC and the public identified a wide range of infrastructure and service-related issues and challenges. The General Plan addresses nearly all of these, with topics ranging from water supply, to police services, to library services, to sidewalk improvements.

Issue to Consider: Given that the City has limited funds available to address all service and infrastructure needs in the near-term, and that there are differing opinions on which issues require the most immediate attention, the General Plan includes Action CSF-1d, which calls for the City to develop and regularly update a comprehensive plan which establishes priorities and corrects existing inadequacies in the City's infrastructure system. Additionally, Action CSF-6j calls for the City to establish priorities and funding

mechanisms for projects and improvements to public and community facilities and buildings. The priority-setting process should include an extensive public outreach and participation program, and should assess needs and opportunities associated with the following types of buildings and facilities: Library, Community Cultural Center, City Hall/City offices, and other community buildings and needs identified by the public and the City Council.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach by not specifically prioritizing one particular infrastructure or service need over another, but rather, calling for the City to complete a needs assessment and develop priorities based on public outreach and technical assessment of existing facilities?

Issue to Consider: The City does not currently have a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The General Plan identifies numerous priorities and standards aimed at increasing and enhancing parks and recreational facilities throughout the community (see policies and actions under Goal 2), but does not make specific recommendations as to exactly where new parks should be located, and what specific types of facilities or improvements should be prioritized. Rather, the General Plan calls for the City to develop and adopt a Parks and Recreation Master Plan (see Action CSF-2a). The Parks and Recreation Master Plan would guide and prioritize the City's efforts in this arena.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue?

CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE

The Conservation and Open Space Element strongly states the City's intention to be a regional leader in sustainability and environmental stewardship. This element address a wide range of natural resources, including biological habitat, special status species, surface water quality, riparian habitat and wetlands, groundwater, the Laguna, trees and native vegetation, air quality, greenhouse gases, energy and waste reduction, historic and cultural resources, hillsides and visual resources. This element builds upon and strengthens the policy direction from the City's current General Plan.

Issue to Consider: Goal COS 4 and the supporting policies and actions clearly state the City's priorities towards management, protection, and restoration of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. Rather than spelling out the specific details of how this goal will be achieved, the General Plan includes Action COS-4a, which calls for implementation of the Laguna Wetlands Preserve Restoration and Management Plan as the primary tool to achieve the community's objectives for habitat protection, restoration, and public access in the Laguna. This approach allows the General Plan to provide clear, broad-level direction on priorities, but defers to the Management Plan to provide the nuanced implementation details. The City's priorities for the Laguna are not likely to change during the life of the General Plan, but the path to implementation and management may need to be adjusted over time. Under the current approach, the City may elect to make periodic amendments to the the Laguna Wetlands Preserve Restoration and Management Plan, without the need to update or amend the General Plan.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue?

Issue to Consider: In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat the effects of global climate change, the General Plan calls on the City to continue to participate in Climate Action 2020, which is a

collaborative effort between Sonoma County and all nine cities in the county. This approach allows the City to leverage regional resources in support of this effort, and to take an approach that is consistent with other cities and the County.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? The City could elect to take a course of action that calls for the preparation of a stand-alone, Sebastopol-only, Climate Action Plan. The “pros” of this approach would be that the City may end up with a climate change response that is more customized to Sebastopol. The “cons” of this approach are that the preparation of a stand-alone Climate Action Plan would be costly to prepare, require significant staff time to implement, and may not be consistent and collaborative with ongoing regional efforts. Regardless of which approach is taken, the City would still have extensive flexibility in implementing local policies and ordinances aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainability.

Issue to Consider: Policy COS 9-2 requires all new buildings constructed in Sebastopol to meet CALGreen Tier 1 standards for energy efficiency. The CALGreen standards are part of Title 24, which is the statewide requirement for building energy efficiency. Tier 1 is currently optional statewide (it is more stringent than the base-level CALGreen Standards). Tier 2 is also optional statewide, and is more robust than Tier 1.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? By requiring Tier 1 standards for all new construction, the City is making a strong statement and implementing an effective sustainability tool. It is strongly recommended that the City adopt an “off-the-shelf” green building code, rather than crafting one from scratch. Using a pre-developed green code saves significant time and money, and provides for uniformity for the development community. If the City were to select a more robust green building code, such as CALGreen Tier 2, additional energy efficiency in new buildings would be achieved, however, the price of construction would increase, which could put the City at a competitive disadvantage when trying to attract new commercial, industrial, residential, or low-income housing development.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Community Health and Wellness Element addresses public health at a broad level in order to support a healthy community through increasing access to necessary services, considering public health in land use decisions, and encouraging provision of healthy foods. This element establishes a framework of goals, objectives, policies, and actions for developing conditions that will improve the health and well-being of Sebastopol residents, and addresses community health topics that have not been specifically addressed in other General Plan elements. Many of the most effective tools aimed at promoting community health are addressed throughout other elements of the General Plan. For example: the Circulation Element includes goals and policies on creating a multi-modal transportation system that promotes walkability, bicycle use, and alternatives to single-passenger vehicle use; and the Conservation and Open Space Element lays out goals and policies to improve the amount of, access to, and quality of parks and open spaces in and around Sebastopol, addresses key aspects of environmental health, including clean water, clean air, and the protection of natural resources.

Question to Consider: Are there additional community health-related topics that are not addressed in this element, or other General Plan elements, which should be included and addressed?

Issue to Consider: The issue of cannabis (medical or otherwise) is not currently addressed in the General Plan. The General Plan's silence on this issue indicates tacit deferral to the City's existing Medical Cannabis Dispensaries Use Permit Criteria and Procedures (Municipal Code Chapter 17.140). Not addressing cannabis in the General Plan does not preclude the City from making revisions to the Medical Cannabis Ordinance, or adopting cannabis-related ordinances in the future (such as a potential local ordinance should recreational cannabis use be approved by California voters sometime in the future), but given the existing and evolving regulations pertaining to this issue, it may be appropriate to include some policy statements in the General Plan.

Question to Consider: Should additional policies be added regarding medical cannabis, including the range of uses outlined in recent State law? Should consideration be given to policies regarding potential legalization of recreational cannabis?

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Much like the Community Health and Wellness Element, the Community Character Element seeks to capture and highlight policies and actions that are not found elsewhere in the General Plan. Community Character is largely shaped by the built environment, which is primarily addressed in the Land Use Element. Other aspects of community character and livability are addressed in elements such as noise and conservation/open space.

Issue to Consider: The Community Character Element includes Action CC-2a, which calls for periodic updates to the Downtown Plan in order to provide for public gathering spaces and to ensure quality design of the built environment. Action CC-2c requires consideration of in-lieu parking fees to fund the construction of a Downtown parking garage. Action CC-1b calls for the update of urban design guidelines to include design standards and goals for key districts, areas, or types of development throughout the community, including, but not limited to, the Downtown, Gravenstein Highway (north and south), as well as single family and multifamily types of development. Design guidelines should include provisions that enhance and support the unique qualities of areas, as well as supporting the character of residential neighborhoods.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? Are there other key issues related to community character that are not adequately addressed throughout this element, or other elements of the General Plan?