

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Round Area Valley Municipal Advisory Council (RVAMAC)

Held Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Online by Zoom at URL

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3805437573?pwd=K2FCakdtNzhJMFU4cW0wQ1JNeiVIQT09>

The meeting was called to order by Presiding Officer Jessica Stull-Otto at 6:00 p.m.

1. The meeting was attended by the following persons:

Council members

Dane Downing, Jessica Stull-Otto, Laura Betts, Lew Chichester, Charles Sargenti, James Russ

Officials

John Haschak, 3rd District Supervisor, Matt Kendall, Mendocino County Sheriff

General Public

Pat Sobrero, Jessi Alvarado, Madeleine Shepherd, Mary Lou Mileck, Lindon Duke, Dwayne Texas, Jody Artman, Jenna Sebastian, Jennifer Stargill

2. Approval of Agenda – the Agenda was approved by consensus

3. This special meeting on town revitalization was held, as stated by the presiding officer Jessica Stull-Otto, in order to discuss and identify the hopes and dreams of the community and the tools and strategies to bring renewed life into our downtown. There were no matters brought to a vote during the meeting. A synopsis of the comments by the attendees follows:

Madeleine Shepherd – Anyone in the community has the capacity to affect the entire community due to the small size of the population. In the downtown area more buildings are needed, either publicly or privately owned, but an organization or fund is needed to pull in resources. Infrastructure includes roads, sewer, water, and buildings. Community care should also be included, such as community clean up or green projects such as community gardens.

Jessi Alvarado – Native art and language should also be included in rebuilding

Lindon Duke – Young people need to be heard from.

Madeleine Shepherd – On the job training for youth, emphasizing an intergenerational approach.

Dwayne Texas – a common place is needed to have desks and internet access and other office features. This could generate funds for the community. The Library Commons could be outfitted for this. A common space would allow for spontaneous interactions which can lead to productive exchanges of ideas.

Jessi Alvarado – Regarding trade schools, there could be internships with business owners or even something as simple as a 1-day “job shadow”.

Madeleine Shepherd – She is developing a primary resource list of volunteer help and equipment for clean up efforts which should be available in a couple weeks.

Lew Chichester – At the North Fork everyone regardless of cultural or generational differences felt welcome. The community needs to recreate such a space. More places and more events are needed similar to what the North Fork did for the community. Denny Lopiano estimates rebuilding would cost \$1 million. Fund raising may be necessary to create such a space because the cost is too much to be recovered by normal business practice such as renting or leasing.

Supervisor Haschak – John remarked that Madeleine Shepherd while owning the Paperback Café also was teaching kids the culinary arts. In Fort Bragg there is a shared workplace called the Little Red House.

Jessi Alvarado – supporting small businesses is key. Small business grants, help with business plans, etc. are ways to support small businesses.

Jessica Stull-Otto – Grants and services matching grants to businesses are needed.

Jessi Alvarado – Jessi believes there are enough parties in the community willing to put up \$1000 each to help startups. They would be allowed to vote for which startup gets the funds.

Madeleine Shepherd – a person named Emily teaching a business class at the college guided us in opening the Paperback. A list of what to do when opening a business was provided in the class. At the end all the material needed to write a business plan was available. This could be offered either through the college or high school.

Jody Artman – Jody wants to see small landscaping projects as easy and quick ways to improve the community in the near term. Kids should be involved in helping build these projects to instill a sense of ownership and responsibility for the projects. She is aware of a playground that was constructed using grant funds by the community which is a good thing for moms with little children to have available. The community needs community park space.

Pat Sobrero – wants to see public art murals painted by kids.

Jenna Sebastian – co-owner of the destroyed Art Center – wanted everyone to know they will be rebuilding the community art space.

Supervisor Haschak – mentioned a radio program on KZYX put on by West Development Company featuring the CEO of the California Association of Local Economic Development and Beacon Economics on the importance of collaboration, partnerships and investment to create long-lasting health and wealth in rural communities. The broadcast is available from the station archives.

Mary Lou Mileck – some parties attempting to start a business have faced insurmountable barriers in the local regulations affecting those businesses.

Supervisor Haschak – State codes are also involved.

James Russ – prospective businesses can't get past the permitting process. Can some things be relaxed? Is there anything that can be done at the county level? There are too many empty spaces in town.

Dane Downing – head of Building and Planning Brent Schultz wants specifics about perceived problems with the permitting process in order to know how to respond appropriately.

Lindon Duke – Building and Planning is broken. Over two years I couldn't get a permit to rebuild after my home was lost in a fire so I ended up buying another property.

Jessica Stull-Otto – county should have staff visits to Covelo on a regular basis to help with permitting problems.

Lew Chichester – a health department-approved commercial kitchen costs a minimum of \$50,000. All new buildings must have fire sprinkler fire suppression systems. In Covelo new buildings must have their own fire water source which makes it even more expensive to build, thus there should be city water mains serving the business area for that reason.

Dane Downing – the water district could serve as an umbrella organization for such an effort.

Jessi Alvarado – the town needs improved sidewalks, better street lighting, trash receptacles.

Jessica Stull-Otto – infrastructure improvement grants are available through MCOG (Mendocino Council of Governments). The school district or the tribe can apply for these.

Sheriff Kendall – viable industry is lacking in Round Valley. Logging and ranching has declined and the marijuana industry still operates to a large extent illegally, so not much money from that industry goes to the county. Rebuilding requires protection from arson so he is concerned about providing that protection. Supervisor Haschak is working on fixing the cannabis ordinance so it works and folks can enter the regulated market more easily. He estimates there is over one million marijuana plants in the Round Valley area. In California cannabis production exceeds legal consumption. This is a hurdle for economic development. The tribes, however, have resources, owning massive timber, rock, and gravel resources. We have to find a way to restore viable industry to Covelo.

James Russ – federal grants usually apply to trust land, which is exempt from state and county regulations. The tribe does have resources and is willing to come to the table with the MAC or whoever, ready and willing to do that.

Sheriff Kendall – the county has “problem solvers” rather than “problem finders” now in Building and Planning.

Jessi Alvarado – there are lots of black market operators who want to become legal.

Sheriff Kendall – embrace change or it is going to run you over.

Supervisor Haschak – the county has a \$2.2 million equity grant to help bring people into the cannabis program.

4. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION THE VIDEO OF THE MEETING ON ZOOM CAN BE VIEWED AT:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/tf5PJZfC2jLW5HhtjSQoUDJbrCT6a8g3Ae8qUlyUpem1JkctnNvWpLV1CQd1kj>

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