

Conservation Committee
May 23rd, 2018
Louden Nelson
6:30 - 8:30

- 1) Welcome
- 2) Announcements
 - Gavin Newsom event upcoming May 29
 - PG&E failed to adhere to a request from the city regarding asking about how much money it would cost to reroute pipes
 - A concern that there was some people within the city who want a sidewalk - on Washington Street - instead of the trees
 - Each tree is supposed to be evaluated and that hasn't happened
 - Gillian plans to appeal
- 3) Additions/Deletions to agenda
- 4) Bird Safety Design update (Jane)
 - Got response from Clara Stanger - time to set up a meeting
- 5) Streambed Alteration Agreement (Jane)
 - Got response from Mark Dettle - they are working on some changes in the agreement and will consider integrating some of the information and would like to set up a meeting.
 - The changes the city is proposing would reduce their costs and their goals are different than ours
 - A suggestion to ask Fish and Wildlife, or a more local fishery person, for a meeting as well
 - They do have some new regulations from Fish and Wildlife and they are working to integrate those
 - They may have to chip and remove the cuttings - which may not actually help with biological stability
- 6) Rail Contract - Gillian
 - Due to be signed on 14th; no executive committee meeting this month
 - Freight would not have a limit; would be a "common carrier" line
 - Uses would be for Big Creek Lumber, soybean oil, glycerin, some propane, etc.
 - A concern about the rail car storage piece - it appears to be left over from a previous contract and perhaps should be deleted
 - "Common Carrier" - that anyone can run a train on the line and deliver it to any place; there aren't restrictions of movement of who can use the line; kinda like cars on a freeway
 - Is a typical language for short line contracts
 - 10 year contract; with a hinge point regarding the unified corridor
 - "Rail Banking" - presumably allows easements to stay in place - however Supreme Court has since said that property rights supercede this
 - Cannot rail bank a corridor that hasn't been abandoned

- A note that there is not a lot of freight expected to be on the rail line
- A concern about toxic materials may be transported
 - A note that there would have to be a functioning plant locally that would process whatever materials would be coming in - since we don't have such facilities then it is unlikely toxic materials would be transported
 - Agriculture chemicals would have a market and may be transported
 - A note that if those chemicals are transported by truck accidents are more likely
- A right to build facilities for storage - maybe at the old Wrigley plant
- A question about why passenger rail isn't discussed when the current debate is really about passenger rail
- A note that the market would control the amount of freight intrinsically rather than limits on the contract
- A thought that perhaps the storage facilities piece regarding the Wrigley plant may also be a leftover from a previous contract
 - Maybe can have this piece (which may involve an inspection area) deleted
- Phase 2 - have to present a plan for passengers - for excursion trains like the Christmas trains; sunset dinner trains
- CTC has accepted that excursion trains will hold as a placeholder for real passenger transit to be developed
- Tressels - have speed requirements like no more than 10 - 15 miles an hour for certain ones as they are not currently built for more than that
 - They will be rebuilt if there is real passenger rail service
- A concern that this could spur development near the rail line for materials transit and passenger rail would be less important
- A question about a proposal to exempt lands adjacent to rail lines to be exempt from CEQA
- No real information about how the environment - namely vegetation - will be treated
- A comment that it would be good to see a business plan
- Some property is already bought or in the process of purchasing property, so it seems as though the company is counting on this contract
 - A belief that the business plan was shared with the RTC in closed session
- A transloading facility is planned for Watsonville - to put freight from trucks onto the trains
- No signage or fencing required by rail company
- The easement is tied to rail - the easement will go away if the rail goes away
 - If abandon the rail line, then land may go back to previous property owners
- 69% of rail line is easement; 31% is fee-simple (RTC owns the land)
- In San Jose - light rail with no fence; it works well. Is there a way to do the rail/trail without fence?
 - A concern that the freight would require fencing

- Fencing proposed may be different along different lengths of the track as rail is developed; wildlife corridors in some areas and not others? A concern
- Prop 116 funds require that the line remain active
- Potential letter issues:
 - Vegetation on contract - treated well, no herbicides
 - Wildlife under crossings or other crossings should be developed
 - When used they need to be developed; if it is unused wildlife deaths don't occur
 - No storage of cars on rail line
 - Delete inspection pit/ construction of buildings on Wrigley
 - If there would be fencing, then wildlife fragmentation would be an issue - a question about the trail/rail issue.....
 - Materials transported may not be environmentally responsible - biofuels and ag chemicals
- We would like a draft letter written with transportation committee - Erica will forward notes to Rick and Jack as well
 - A time limit - write draft by 31st
 - Aim for a goal of the 5th to have the letter fully written and a vote ready on so it can be included in packet; 7th delivered to RTC

7) Group direction: including, not limited to, below potential ideas

- Dark Skies
 - May be good to communicate with Take Back Santa Cruz - educate them about safety
 - Sports fields/ parks seem to be biggest lights; they may be in opposition
 - And car dealerships/driving range/ UCSC lights that shine onto Pogonip
 - Gillian will ask - what role could Sierra Club play
 - Have events group put on something
 - Gillian and Erica will
- Limiting vineyard expansion (Patricia)
 - People in valley are concerned - vegetation is disappearing because water is being used; and pesticides
 - Valley women's club may be working on this as well
 - Patricia will contact VWC and ask how we can support
- Balloon ban (Patricia)
- Preventing waste - a how to about using reusable containers at bulk sections in grocery stores (Erica)
- A thought that we would maybe it would be good to work on large scale plastic use issues - how to re- educate people to not use plastic in general
- Urban greenspaces
 - Urban tree canopy
 - Parks
 - Vegetation throughout town

- A thought that observing plans may be higher level
- A need to be aware of who the staff is and how to work with them
- Are there policy level issues we should be involved in
 - No heritage tree ordinance in the county coastal zone

Leslie O'Malley - works at a recycling facility - has some resources regarding and may be a good person to contact regarding this

- She emphasized clam shells
- Patricia will contact her and will ask about networking with her

Because China will no longer take plastics, may be a good time to take on the plastics

Some criteria

- what other organizations are doing work we can't emulate - they have resources
- Which would encourage us to work with other organizations
- What excites us
- Deliverable

8) Next meeting date June 27