



**Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council  
Minutes**

**Regular Meeting**

**November 09, 2023 05:30 PM**

**Fife Creek Commons Community Room - 16376 5th Street, Guerneville, CA 95446**

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/lrrmac>

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at by Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative Mike Nicholls.

Due to Chair Marques de la Plata's inability to attend and Vice Chair Nahmanson's absence as well, Councilmember Nicholls chaired this meeting.

**A. Pledge of Allegiance**

Lead by Forestville Representative Vesta Copestakes

**B. Roll Call**

Present: Guerneville Representative Joe Rogoff, Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative Cynthia Strecker, Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative Mike Nicholls, Hacienda Representative Vicki Clewes, Forestville Representative Vesta Copestakes, Forestville Alternate Lucy Hardcastle, Guerneville Alternate Kathy Dahl, Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Alternate Greg Hennig

Absent: Chair - Rio Nido Representative Pip Marquez de la Plata, Vice Chair - Forestville Representative Lisa Nahmanson, Guerneville Representative Nic Pereira, Pocket Canyon & Greater So Guerneville Representative Betsy Van Dyke

Staff Present: Debbie Ramirez

**2. Approval of Agenda, Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata** Forestville Representative Vesta Copestakes motioned to approve. A second was made by Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Alternate Greg Hennig.

The motion passed with the following vote:

8 In Favor    0 Opposed  
   Abstained       Absent

**3. Statement of Conflict of Interest**

there were none

**4. Consent Agenda**

**A. September 14, 2023 Minutes**

Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative Cynthia Strecker motioned to approve. A second was made by Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Alternate Greg Hennig.

The motion passed with the following vote:

8 In Favor    0 Opposed  
   Abstained       Absent

**5. Council Member Comment: On matters not listed on the agenda**

Vesta Copestakes raised the idea of the Municipal Advisory Council establishing a liaison with local Chambers of Commerce to collaborate on initiatives like the Adopt-a-Road program. She noted that Chambers of Commerce, with their substantial membership, are well-suited for such programs and could facilitate volunteer efforts. Copestakes questioned whether this falls within the MAC's jurisdiction and suggested that the MAC proactively reach out to Chambers of Commerce and other local organizations to

garner more volunteers for adopting roads in Sonoma County. She proposed that the MAC consider adding this topic to their agenda.

Mike Nicholls informed about the cancellation of the upcoming Board of Zoning Adjustments meeting, which was scheduled to discuss a use permit for a mobile food truck on a 5.84-acre property, known as the SWest Property. The food truck would operate daily from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in a designated parking area, without any new structures or storage facilities. Waste disposal would be managed through shared commercial bins, with a small garbage unit at the food truck, staffed by the truck owner. Nicholls urged the public to submit their comments to the planning agency email provided. He also shared that Sonoma Clean Power would be discontinuing their assistance program for Solar and Battery Backup System applications from November 30th. The program will continue, but applicants will need to coordinate directly with their installers and PG&E.

Vicki Clewes brought up the Forestville Planning Association's "Hometown Heroes" program, which allows people to nominate local individuals who contribute positively to the community. Clewes nominated Vesta Copestakes for her contributions and encouraged others to participate in recognizing community heroes. She highlighted the importance of acknowledging those who help others in the community. Lucy Hardcastle was also mentioned as a Hometown Hero.

## **6. County Report**

Supervisor Hopkins reported on several issues and initiatives. The governance study report will soon be posted on the website in both Spanish and English. An upcoming community meeting on November 29th at the Monte Rio Community Center will discuss the Russian River Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) and its impact on Lower Russian River residents. The results of the Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council elections were announced, with Spencer R. Scott representing Guerneville, and Lonnie Lazar and Thai Hilton representing Forestville. The first regular River MAC meeting is scheduled for January 18th [subsequently changed to January 11]. Planning is underway for member training in January. The Board of Supervisors is expanding staff at the Agricultural and Open Space Preservation District to assist homeowners with defensible space compliance and community brace projects. Supervisor Hopkins expressed concern over increasing rates and non-renewals of homeowners insurance in West County and mentioned coordination with the Russian River Chamber of Commerce and state representatives to address this issue.

During the Councilmember Q&A, Lucy Hardcastle thanked Supervisor Hopkins for providing bike racks in Forestville. Vesta Copestakes inquired about funding for Riverkeeper and trash cleanup, specifically regarding the reinstatement of the clean team for homeless camps. Mike Nicholls thanked the Board for additional funding for vegetation management and inquired about the SOO Adapts program for wildfire risk reduction.

In the public comment section, Elena, a resident of Guerneville, expressed concerns about the rezoning affecting short-term rentals and the impact on her property. She faced a fine for listing her property on Airbnb and requested reconsideration of the rezoning decision. Supervisor Hopkins acknowledged Elena's concerns and informed her that the next opportunity to discuss vacation rental policies would be during the general plan update, starting in December with community-based meetings.

## **7. Presentation on Firewise Communities Program**

Roberta MacIntyre discussed the Firewise USA program and its benefits for communities in her report. Fire Safe Sonoma, active for over 25 years, focuses on education and outreach related to wildland fire safety and risk reduction. The Firewise program, created by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), is primarily educational and encourages communities to become firewise for various benefits, including potential insurance discounts and grant funding opportunities. The process to become Firewise involves organizing a team, planning, which includes a community wildfire risk assessment and a multi-year action plan, doing the identified work, and reporting progress. A significant aspect of Firewise is community engagement and commitment, requiring an equivalent of one hour of time invested per household in the community annually.

Councilmember questions focused on issues like the impact of vacation homes on Firewise criteria, handling problematic properties, funding for cleaning up dangerous areas like ravines, the re-certification period for Firewise communities, and how county property adjacent to private property is handled. Responses highlighted that not every home in a Firewise community needs to meet the criteria, problematic properties don't negate Firewise certification for the entire community but might affect individual insurance discounts, and funding for cleaning up areas like ravines can be sought through action plans and grants.

Public comments included a community member sharing a positive experience with Firewise, emphasizing its benefits in community building and fire safety. Another community member explained

the process of notifying insurance companies about Firewise certification and the sense of security it brings.

## **8. Public Comments**

## **9. Committee Reports**

- A. Community Clean Up Ad Hoc, Report from Chair Lisa Nahmanson delivered by Vicki Clewes The Community Clean Up Ad Hoc committee debriefed on their involvement in the Pride weekend, including a cleanup of the parade route and Johnson's Beach, which was noted to be exceptionally clean. The committee is working with Russian River Keepers on unhoused camp cleanups before the rainy season. They are also addressing the challenges of the Adopt-a-Road program, particularly in areas where roads have not been adopted. A cleanup event is planned for November 16th along a section of River Road from Rio Nido to downtown Guerneville. The committee is exploring ways to increase awareness of the Adopt-a-Road program and encourage local businesses and entities to participate in road adoption and cleanup efforts.

B. Communications Ad Hoc

The Communications Committee continued to attend and table at various events, including Russian River Pride, a healthcare event at Guerneville School, and town halls. Discussions are now focusing on next steps and plans for the upcoming year. Priorities include increasing publicity through media, reaching out more effectively to the Spanish-speaking community, and reviewing the responsibilities of the Municipal Advisory Council (MAC). The committee, currently an ad hoc group with a one-year lifespan, is considering developing another ad hoc committee with a robust list of objectives for the next year. Suggestions include renaming the committee to something like "Community Relations Engagement" to continue their work.

## **10. Adjournment**

On a motion from Joe Rogoff, Acting Chair Nicholls adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM.