



Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council

Minutes

Regular Meeting

May 08, 2025 05:30 PM

West County Services Center, 16390 Main Street, Guerneville

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 pm by Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata.

The meeting recording is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Lidj1y_MFg

A. Announcement from Spanish Interpreter: The Spanish language interpreter will provide information about how to access the interpretation channel via Zoom or obtain a headset if attending in-person.

B. Roll Call

Present: Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata, Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Tony Goodwin, Guerneville Representative: Joe Rogoff, Guerneville Representative: Spencer R. Scott, Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke, Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative: Patty Thayer, Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton, Non-Voting Student Representative: Faye Zamora, Hacienda Alternate Brian Andriola, Forestville Alternate Cari Hernandez

Absent: Vice Chair & Hacienda Representative: Vicki Clewes, Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar

Staff Present: Debbie Ramirez, Field Representative; Lupe Catalan, Bilingual Field Representative; Tracy Lyons, Chief of Staff (attending remotely)

2. Approval of the Agenda

Due to a scheduling conflict requiring Supervisor Hopkins to leave the meeting early, Joe Rogoff moved to approve the agenda moving the County Update from item #7 to item #4. Thai Hilton seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Guerneville Representative: Joe Rogoff motioned to approve. Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton seconded the motion.

Guerneville Representative: Joe Rogoff motioned to approve. Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following vote:

9 In Favor 0 Opposed

 Abstained Absent Recused

3. Statement of Conflict of Interest

There were no statements of conflict of interest.

4. County Update

A. Proposed Russian River Sanitation Sewer Capacity Charge and Rate Increases

On May 13 the Board of Supervisors will be reviewing and taking action on new capacity charge rates. The item is scheduled to begin at 10:05 AM at Board Chambers, 575 Administration Drive in Santa Rosa.

Capacity charges are one-time fees assessed on new construction or reassessed parcels to help offset the costs of sewer infrastructure, ensuring those expenses are fairly shared among all users of the sewer system. The capacity charges study is separate from customer sewer rates.

The proposed rate per ESD (Equivalent Single Family Dwelling) in the Russian River CSD is \$15,589, while the current rate is \$5,969.

More information and FAQ's about the sewer capacity charges can be found online at:
<https://www.sonomawater.org/capacity-charges>.

Additionally, Russian River **rates** are proposed to increase 8.5% to an annual rate of \$2,486 for Fiscal Year 2025-26. The sanitation rate relief program will continue to be available to qualifying residential customers and non-profits that provide housing to low-income renters.

Sanitation Rate Increases: Relief programs available for residential and nonprofit customers; not currently available for commercial.

Supervisor Hopkins voiced opposition to the capacity fee increase and expressed concerns about the Board of Supervisors simultaneously serving on sanitation and water agency boards

Vacation Beach Summer Crossing:

Permits secured; construction set to begin June 16, 2025. Crossing expected to open by June 20, barring weather delays.

Vacation Beach Dam: Owned by Russian River Recreation & Park District.

Possible delays due to state inspection and engineering reviews.

George's Hideaway Project:

Groundbreaking held earlier that day (5/8); Design incorporates historic elements; Burbank Housing will hold a naming contest for the new facility.

Summerhome Park Road Retaining Wall:

\$1.5M in PG&E funds secured. Awaiting project timeline; updates pending from county infrastructure staff.

Law Enforcement & Facilities: Sheriff's Office prioritizing replacement of the Guerneville substation (105 years old); Commended Sheriff Engram's community outreach and support for the new narcotics and parks units; encouraged community input during upcoming June budget hearings.

B. Review draft of magnet to be produced and used for outreach purposes

The draft magnet design was distributed and there were no comments.

5. Consent Agenda

A. March 13, 2025 Minutes

Guerneville Representative: Spencer R. Scott motioned to approve. Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following vote:

 9 **In Favor** 0 **Opposed**
 Abstained **Absent** **Recused**

B. April 10, 2025 Minutes

Guerneville Representative: Spencer R. Scott motioned to approve. Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following vote:

 9 **In Favor** 0 **Opposed**
 Abstained **Absent** **Recused**

6. Councilmember Comment

Joe Rogoff shared that the Guerneville Plaza project is still in process. Betsy Van Dyke added that there will be a series of focus groups as was done with the park design process.

Brian Andriola shared that there will be a Community Emergency Preparedness conference on May 10 from 10-1 at the Odd Fellows Park, 15500 Riverside Dr. There are 50 people already registered to attend. Firewise and COPE are participating.

7. Public Comment on Matters not listed on the Agenda

Robin commented via Zoom, expressing deep concern about escalating safety issues in downtown Guerneville, including open drug activity, repeated assaults, and public health hazards near her business. She described multiple incidents involving violence, theft attempts, and public disturbances, and noted that many residents no longer report issues due to a perceived lack of response. She urged increased law enforcement visibility and stronger intervention to address the situation.

8. Sheriff's Office Update from Sheriff Eddie Engram

Narcotics Unit Update

Reinstated November 2024 after being disbanded in 2017.

Funded by reallocating jail contract savings (Solano County).

Staffing: 4 deputies + 1 sergeant.

Budget ask: \$2 million/year for permanent funding.

Results (Nov 2024–March 2025):

78 arrests

Seizures: 68.5 lbs meth, 13.12 lbs fentanyl, 4.12 lbs cocaine, 10,000 lbs psilocybin, \$135,000 cash, 62 firearms

Estimated street value: \$2.1M

Focus: Distributors and dealers, not end-users.

Public Participation Discussion:

Sheriff encouraged residents to report concerns and advocate for continued funding with Board of Supervisors.

Anonymous tips can be submitted via the Silent Witness tool on the Sheriff's website.

Reports should be made via dispatch (707-565-2121) rather than substation to ensure proper tracking.

Community Concerns:

Business owners reported:

Increased drug activity downtown

Instances of overdoses, assaults, and defecation near businesses

Lack of consistent enforcement presence

Sheriff responded:

Sheriff Engram acknowledged community frustrations about reporting and expressed a willingness to improve communication. He committed to following up with the Guerneville substation.

Regional Parks Unit Update

Launched in 2025 due to enforcement issues along Joe Rodota Trail.

Staffing: 1 sergeant + 4 deputies.

Deputies patrol all county parks; focus includes trailheads, parking lots, and problem areas.

Vehicles marked as "Parks Sheriff."

Parks unit does not respond to general 911 calls—dedicated to park system enforcement.

9. Formation of Ad Hoc Committee to Ensure Community Voice and Context in District Formation Outreach

An ad hoc was formed to support the initial community engagement phase of the District Formation Advisory Services effort approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 25, 2025. The ad hoc committee will consist of Vicki Clewes (Hacienda Rep), Patty Thayer (Monte Rio / Villa Grand Rep), Cari Hernandez (Forestville Alternate) and Betsy Van Dyke (South Guerneville / Pocket Canyon Rep) and will work with the 5th District Supervisor's Office, County Administrator's Office staff, and RSG Consultants to help tailor engagement strategies to the diverse needs of Lower Russian River communities. This ad hoc will dissolve at the end of the two-month engagement phase.

Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton motioned to approve. Forestville Alternate Cari Hernandez seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following vote:

 9 In Favor 0 Opposed

 Abstained Absent Recused

10. Consideration of Hearing Request and / or Formation of an Ad Hoc Committee to review UPE24-0077, 6615 Front Street, Forestville

Based on the following information received from the applicant and distributed during the meeting, the MAC did not choose to form an ad hoc to review this application.

1) As discussed in the use permit, we have a parking agreement in place with the Forestville Planning Association to utilize the parking lot at The Oaks Park across the street from our restaurant. I believe some concerns may have been raised about the effectiveness of that agreement during peak times (Friday & Saturday 5pm – 8pm) primarily due to the Forestville Farmers Market. I did want to point out the Forestville Farmers Market has now moved back to its original day of Tuesday nights, which are not particularly busy nights for the restaurant. I'm hoping that helps mitigate some concerns.

2) In addition to the Oaks Park parking agreement, we're also working on a second parking agreement with the Forestville Methodist Church, located a block away at Center & Covey. We believe this will provide a good deal of extra parking (20+ spaces) and will be helpful to address any remaining parking concerns. The church has very different hours from our restaurant so the crossover of parking demand will be minimal. We hope to have this agreement completed in the coming days. I will keep you updated.

3) In addition to the parking agreements, we're increasing our bike parking area to 20 spaces and offering complimentary non-alcoholic beverages to customers who arrive on bicycles. We are huge supporters of bikes at the restaurant and have a very active biking customer base. We're also working on a discount program for patrons arriving via public transport.

4) One final thought I would like to share. While the use permit adds outdoor dining in our backyard, in practical terms it doesn't add significant additional customer traffic. When the weather is nice everyone prefers to sit outside. When it's too hot or too cold everyone sits inside. Rarely are both areas in demand.

11. Community Engagement Discussion

Upcoming events were discussed, with Lonnie and Cari confirmed to participate at the May 13 Forestville Farmers' Market and Vicki, Betsy, Patty, Lonnie, and Cari confirmed for Rio Fest on June 21.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 7:10 PM