

Geyserville Planning Committee Minutes
Annual Town Meeting
April 24, 2018

David Luebke, who is the current president of the Geyserville Planning Committee, welcomed attendees and gave a brief overview of the agenda for the Town Meeting. David recounted the changes to the Geyserville Planning Committee over the last year. David stated that the Geyserville Planning Committee has worked hard to establish a reputation for being a serious and proactive group that can approach the planning, zoning and legal issues of the community in an informed and dedicated way. David pointed out that he has served on the GPC for 12 years and over the last year he has seen new rigor and increased dedication as the Geyserville Planning Committee prepares for a role in the new General Plan for Sonoma. The revised General Plan is slated for completion in 2020. David mentioned that the GPC has no funding mechanism. David reported that, members of the GPC have funded all the increased committee activity over the last year. The one exception has been a grant proposal funded by the Geyserville Community Foundation; David said that Hal Hinkle and Daisy Damskey would present more information about the grant later in the evening.

David invited Victoria Heiges, founder of the sculptor trail, to give a brief presentation about an upcoming art event. Victoria reported that the land donated by local citizen Bryce Jones would soon have a permanent 25-foot high statue of a horse. The unveiling of the horse is scheduled for May 20th and food, music and a ribbon cutting will mark the occasion. David thanked Victoria for her service to the community and asked Vice President Paul Connors to talk about the GPC accomplishments of the last year.

Paul said that it was exactly a year ago when the new committee members ran for office with an eye on increasing the professionalism and rigor of the Geyserville Planning Committee. He listed the committee accomplishments that included: a community planning survey, the first website, posted minutes and agendas, committee training and adherence to the Brown Act, dedication to increased communication with PRMD, meeting twice a month in public forums, crafting grant proposal and bringing other agencies for training and information. Supervisor James Gore met with committee members and worked to support the goals of the committee.

Paul said the focus of the next year would be to work on assuring that the committee is ready to contribute a Geyserville Specific Community plan to the the revised general plan. Paul focused on the fact that GPC is the venue for communication with the Board of Supervisors.

Hal Hinkle and Daisy Damskey gave a presentation of the GPC Community Survey that Paul, Hal and Daisy created and worked on, as a subcommittee, over that last year. The

Survey was designed and implemented by the GPC and was funded by the Geyserville Community Foundation. Hal reported that survey, with over 10% of the community responding, was designed to develop a baseline and provide guidance to the GPC. The baseline data indicated topics of community interest, direction for development and a scale for weighing priorities for the community. In the future the Survey will be a tool for creating a Geyserville Community Plan. Daisy distributed copies of the Community Survey results that were correlated by Survey Monkey. In addition, Daisy also recorded and reported raw data from the survey, using quotes from 23 surveys in order to give a voice to the pie charts and graphs distributed to the community. The survey showed that the community of Geyserville is a cohesive and pointed township. Big Box stores and chains were rejected overwhelmingly. As Daisy reported, any retail business that represents national interest outside of Sonoma County will be met with resistance. **Unique** was the stated as the top value for Geyserville residents and while 60% percent of the responders thought that Geyserville would benefit from a more active and developed downtown, no one wanted a quick stop, seven eleven or Starbucks. No Big Box stores, No housing tracks, No, Gas Stations (with the exception of “small station” limited to a pump or two as mentioned by 13% of responders) When people told the committee what they would like to see for the future they looked toward more restaurants, open storefronts, and grocery stores (“Dry Creek Store”) and parking. Towns that were mentioned for emulation for the development and growth of Geyserville included Occidental, Glen Ellen, Graton and Healdsburg. Followed by a 6% vote for NOT Healdsburg. When the survey asked for what features and characteristics “you think are valuable and important for Geyserville Going forward”, the community responded in chorus. 83% said, “preserve farm town feel” 68% said “bike, river and trail access”. Preserving the uniqueness of Geyserville was echoed in the desire of 61% of the responders to establish a “Historical district designation”. 42% wanted closer ties with Dry Creek and Alexander Valley. Access to the Russian River, parks and more recreational venues topped the list for future planning. Responders mentioned bicycle shops, water activities and sidewalks, trees and landscaping to pull it all together.

In the comment section the town showed a desire to have a more polished and neat environment, achieved by the completion and use of partly finished and empty buildings. The few concerns and complaints recorded were directed toward what were viewed as unsightly and non-maintained properties. Survey responders showed a great deal of concern for maintaining the feel and charm of a true farm community while being able to move into the future by making Geyserville a more accessible, and vital community for visitors and businesses.

The survey ended with a whopping 92% who felt that Geyserville should engage directly in the process of a Geyserville Specific Plan and make sure “that there is a Geyserville specific element that specifies how we want to see out community to develop and unfold between now and 2030”

David introduced a project designed and owned by Art and Tracy Torano. The project is a mixed use building designed to have two small apartments on top with three open storefronts on the bottom. Art Torano presented three drawings of the plans that included landscaping, parking, sidewalks and formal renderings of the building. Art stated that he wanted the town to have a chance to view the building prior to the monthly meeting of the GPC scheduled for May 22, 2018. Art told the group that he has presented the drawings twice before and now will see that the design plans are made public on the GPC website. The design of the building gave homage to various historical town buildings including the Odd fellows building and “Harry’s store” The building, on the corner of Geyserville Ave and 128 will have bike racks and solar energy. The building is built to follow the codes for green design and will use native trees and plants to soften the lines of the building and replace trees currently planted on his lot. Art and Tracy offered to stay for questions.

Reports from the Fire Department, Sheriffs Department and Water District provided updates for the town and explained goals for the future.

The fire department, Eric Padilla, the fire department representative focused on the recent work designed for fuel management, a chipping project and new seasonal inspection of properties within North County. The work of COPE, a citizen group to help the rural community of Geyserville to prepare for emergencies, was featured and an invitation to participate in a town wide training for COPE was made for May 6, 2018. The training will feature how to use a chain saw, what to do in terms of preparation for emergencies and a chance to become a volunteer. Contact Margie Hanselman for more details. The fire department was grateful for the community support offered during the Pocket fire.

The Sheriffs department, Captain Vernon, addressed the need for residents to lock their doors and to be aware that there have been a few break-in and scams. A rash of stolen cars has been fueled by the habit of leaving cars unlocked in the countryside, sometimes even with the keys in the car. The large area supervised by the sheriff and the low staffing ratio makes it challenging to respond to 911 calls as fast as the department would hope for in every incidence. The policy of sending two vs. one deputy when answering a call, one that may need back up or could be dangerous for only one individual, makes response time more challenging.

The California American Water Corporation, Margaret Digenova, provided an update on their improvements to services and equipment. Geyserville is part of the Sacramento Water District and the ability to be a part of the 12 districts surrounding Sacramento were predicted to keep water rates reasonable. Over the next year there will an investigation into water limitations and growth potential for Geyserville.

David introduced the North County Supervisor, James Gore and thanked him for the support and interest he has shown in Geyserville. Gore began his talk with a thank you to Art and Tracy Torano for “getting ahead of the game” and sharing their building plans with the community. Supervisor Gore said that being relentless is critical to success and needed for bringing about change, Gore promised to continue to be relentless in bringing his district to a higher level of cooperation and achievement. Gore and Supervisor Hopkins have worked together to provide \$300,000 for work regarding training for disaster prevention. The failure of County warning response during the October fires has been a wake up call for the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Gore has worked to bring about joint service agreements between the Geyserville Fire Department, the Cloverdale Fire Department and Knights Valley. Gore stressed his commitment to finding ways to prevent future disasters. PGE has been encouraged to put wires underground, create systems for black outs, and being able to turn off the grid when fire conditions represent a clear danger.

Gore, said that he was surprised and honored to be running unopposed in the next election and he was going to use his energy and resources to double his efforts in working for his district. The topic of Cannabis was addressed as a concern for community enforcement. Gore stated that the place for Cannabis cultivation was in the open, within a legal context and only in designated agricultural zones. He shared his concern about cultivation within neighborhoods and the danger of black market sales and robberies. Gore stated that no one in the county government wants to get rich off Cannabis Cultivation.

Supervisor Gore praised the Geyserville Planning Committee for the work done over the last year to build stronger venues for advocacy and in increasing communication with County government. Gore and Supervisor Lynda Hopkins are committed to giving small towns a bigger role in the General Plan, access to services and decision-making. Gore said the fire opened the conversation for more roads, bridges and protection for rural Sonoma County.

Gore expressed a hope and dedication to seeing that isolated areas like Palomino Lakes would receive funding for bridges and additional roads. Supervisor Gore said that he had been able to work with Paul Connors and Daisy Damskey in developing the Geyserville Community Survey questions and fully supported the work of the Geyserville Planning Committee. He stated that he would continue to work to find funding for both ongoing community planning and the targeted improvements identified in the survey. With over \$2m to be allocated for projects within the service area of the Geyserville School district. The possibilities for recreational opportunities, increased services and infrastructure are exciting and within reach. Supervisor Gore finished his presentation with a hope that communities within Northern Sonoma County would find more creative ways to collaborate and work together.

The last order of business was the election for 4 vacancies on the Geyserville Planning Committee. The five candidates presented for five minutes each. The two incumbents, Hal Hinkle and Ryan Petersen, talked about their desire to continue the work they have started and the honor of serving the community and continuing to giving back in crafting the Community Plan. Ryan said he represented the old school and Hal said then he was the part of the new Geyserville. Hal is currently restoring the old post office and apologized for the incompleteness. He said he is at fault but his wife, who is relocating from their part time home on the east coast, was taking over the site and it would soon be completed. Both of the incumbents were elected. Paul Pighi, who served for many years before leaving the Planning Committee, gave a brief statement that he represented the old Geyserville and wanted to serve his community again. The last two candidates Bryce Jones and Walter Keiser presented their commitment to engaging in the planning process and their history as community activists and planners. Walter stated that he was committed to being proactive and engaged with the county planning departments process. Both Bryce and Walter were elected and will be joining the committee in May.