

Geyserville Planning Committee Monthly Meeting

Minutes of January 26, 2021 Meeting

The meeting of the Geyserville Planning Committee, held by Zoom, was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by President Daisy Damskey.

Members Present: Daisey Damskey, President, Paul Connors, Vice President and Treasurer, John Cash, Secretary, Walter Kieser, Steve Sachs, and Art Torano

1. Greeting and President's Update: President Damskey welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Review and Approval of November 23, 2020, GPC Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2020, meeting was made by Steve Sachs. Art Torano seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
3. Comments from the Public on Items not on the Agenda: While there were no comments from the public, Paul Connors questioned whether the Geyserville/Alexander Valley Municipal Advisory Committee (GAV/MAC) might be able to provide funds to the GPC to support communication and website. Walter Kieser replied that the GAV/MAC is charged with recommending funding for specific projects in the community related to capital improvements.
4. Correspondence and Member Communications: Walter Kieser reported that he had interacted with Jane Reilly in PRMD concerning zoning questions. He also reported that he had internal correspondence with Daisy Damskey and John Cash concerning possible non-profit entities that could receive funds on behalf of the GPC and other entities. John Cash reported that he had also discussed this subject with Daisy as well as with Carol Beattie, the Chair of Healdsburg Forever. Daisy Damskey said she had a number of conversations about non-profit status that will be covered in a subsequent agenda item.
5. Financial status and potential not-for-profit avenues for collections and generation of funds: President Damskey reported that she had talked with Vice President and Treasurer Connors and Secretary Cash about ways to provide charitable tax benefits to donors to the GPC. She had also discussed the idea with potential donors who said they wanted/expected deductions if they were to provide support. She said she had spoken with the Community Foundation of Sonoma County representatives as well as with United Way. They all want to help but there are issues.

John Cash reported on his conversations with the Chair of Healdsburg Forever. This Healdsburg-based community foundation has support for Geyserville in its charter and has provided numerous direct grants to fund educational programs in the community as well as public service grants to benefit both Healdsburg and Geyserville. Daisy Damskey wondered if they might serve as a pass-through organization for gifts made to the GPC. John Cash said he thought this was unlikely as it is outside of their charter. President Damskey reported that she had also spoken with Victoria Heiges, a Director of the Geyserville Community Foundation about using the GCF as a pass-through for gifts to the GPC. John Cash reported that he had recently been elected as a Director of the GCF.

Steve Sachs asked if we receive any funding from the County and Daisy Damskey replied that we have asked repeatedly for public funding but to no avail. She suggested writing to the GAV/MAC to see if they might provide funds. Steve emphasized that the County has a core responsibility to support the GPC.

There followed a discussion of whether the GPC should consider establishing/sponsoring its own 501 (c)3 organization to receive private gifts. Vice President Connors argued strongly that this should be the case and said we would not be able to “establish gravitas” until this happened. John Cash argued that creating another independent non-profit in the community would be difficult and potentially divisive.

Daisy Damskey said that we desperately need funding for community building and Art Torano reported that the website is in terrible shape. He has spoken with Jose Diaz who is willing to consider helping us update. Daisy asked Art to speak with Jose directly and to obtain an estimate for updating and maintaining the website.

John Cash then moved that President Damskey write to the Geyserville Community Foundation asking if they would be willing to receive funds on behalf of the GPC. He also moved that a letter be drafted to Supervisor Gore requesting County funding to support the Committee’s communications to the community. Walter Kieser seconded the motion. After discussion, President Damskey moved to amend the motion to ask for a review of progress with the GCF and with the County within a six-month period. If progress has not been made with the GCF and/or with the County, the Committee could then consider establishing a separate 501 (c)3 organization. Steve Sachs seconded the amendment.

Discussion on the motion, as amended, continued. Steve Sachs suggested going to the County for help with the website. He wondered if we might find someone at Sonoma State who would take this on as a pro bono student project. Art Torano suggested that we go back to Supervisor Gore once we have an actual budget for website improvement.

President Damskey brought the motion as amended to the floor. It passed with one dissension. John Cash agreed to draft a letter to the Geyserville Community Foundation.

6. AIA Center for Community Design: Vice President and Treasurer Paul Connor reminded the Committee of the American Institute of Architects Center for Community Design program, He said he had written to them but has received no response as yet. John Cash asked if either Walter Kieser or Steve Sachs had worked with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) or its foundation. Walter has worked with them. John reported that he had been involved in a major project for the ULI Foundation in the past and knows the current chairman. He agreed to write to them to see if they might have interest in the planning issues faced by small communities at the interface of urban growth and agriculture.
7. Potential Local Area Development designation for Geyserville: President Damskey said that she wants to investigate this possibility further. She is seeking a speaker on the subject for a future GPC meeting. She wants to find out what other Sonoma area plans might be underway and agreed to report back to the Committee at a future meeting

8. Update on Lighting District: Art Torano reported that he had conducted a review of the poor-quality lighting in Geyserville. He has looked at lights in other communities in the region and found lights in the northern section of Healdsburg that would work well in Geyserville. Walter Kieser said that he thinks there may be funding available for community lighting along with sidewalk improvements under the next set of requests of GAV/MAC.
9. Update on GAV/MAC Community Improvement Projects: Walter Kieser provided a status report on these projects.
 - a. Funding has been requested for the fire district for vegetation management. It was approved and \$100,000 has been transferred to Marshall Turbeville for this purpose.
 - b. An additional funding request has now been submitted to the County and the GAV/MAC is awaiting a decision. The request includes funding for the Jimtown fire station, the Alexander Valley School, a planning summit on the status of the Russian River through the Alexander Valley, an engineering study of the Alexander Valley bridge, the Geyserville Plaza, and a structural improvement study for Geyserville to include sidewalks, lighting, signage, and parking. If the latter is funded, it will be run by County agencies.

Bids have been submitted for the Geyserville Plaza engineering work. The project is to be developed in a community-based process and Walter estimates it will cost \$500,000-\$1 million to build. He announced that the Chamber of Commerce would serve in the role of managing ongoing maintenance and operation of the park.

The Geyserville Community Foundation will provide a community agency role to support GAV/MAC administrative costs. There has been significant resistance from the County bureaucrats to distributing this money, and Walter said it is difficult to find out who is responsible. He expressed concern that Supervisor Gore has not stood up to represent the interests of the community and that other MACs are having similar problems getting their funding. Daisy Damskey asked if there is a formula for allocating money by area but Walter said there is not.

10. Permit Sonoma Rezoning for Housing: Walter reported that a representative from the County will speak on this subject at the February meeting of the Geyserville Planning Committee.

Adjourn: John Cash moved that the meeting of the Geyserville Planning Committee be adjourned. Walter Kieser seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.