

What is going on with SvDP and Gravenstein Commons?

The agenda for the May 6 meeting is pretty thin and the council is already cancelling summer meetings, yet many complex issues abound. Of particular concern to the public and hopefully the City Council is the status of the Homekey grant and the Gravenstein Commons Project. An update on the Elderberry Commons project from the county seems in order. That could include a more detailed discussion of the issues reported recently by the Police Chief with the county representatives on hand to help address issues early before they get out of control.

Gravenstein Commons

Against the City Manager's recommendation, the recent past city council voted that the city go forward with the project. To address the staff capacity issue, the city council agreed to let SvDP recommend a consultant and pay the consulting costs. Public concerns were raised about the obvious conflict of interest.

It has been almost a year and there have been no reports on the grant. Was it awarded? Where is the money? What is the status of the project? The city is responsible for meeting all grant requirements. These requirements were known by Mr. Schwartz but never reviewed publicly by the current city council.

Don Schwartz mentioned in passing that the opportunity to get certain rent subsidies might be threatened by State and County budget issues causing SvDP to rethink their strategy for populating the site when completed.

Who is the consultant now reporting to? What has the consultant done. What decisions/recommendations has the consultant made on behalf of the city? How has SvDP's plan changed? Who is reviewing and approving recommendations by the consultant being made on behalf of the city to SvDP?

The city hired a different consultant to review the initial proposal. That consultant report suggested the proposed building costs were significantly underestimated. Assuming the plan is complete, were the cost estimates realistic or is more money going to be required?

The original consultant pointed out that projects like this bring problems to the neighborhood and the city. No surprise, Park Village has created issues for years. Clearly, in spite of assurances from our past mayor, Horizon Shine created many problems and costs for police and public works services while it was in operation. Elderberry Commons has been closed for a long period so the many reports of issues have been forgotten. It was interesting that our new police chief reported early priorities that included addressing issues at the newly repopulated facility.

Actions Requested:

1. Agendize a report from the consultant and SvDP, as soon as possible, so this council is aware of all the issues that have come up and need to be addressed as the project moves forward.
2. Agendize a report from the county and the police chief on the current status of Elderberry Commons and the issues that are costing the city money to address. What is the plan to manage these issues now and going forward when Gravenstein Commons is complete, and we have two Homekey projects. This is more per capita than any other city in the County, probably the state.
3. Seek reimbursement from the county for costs associated with this county owned facility that does not pay TOT or property taxes to the city for required services.
4. Clarify who is going to be responsible for decisions by the city going forward until a new City Manager is in place.