

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Approved MINUTE ORDER

Public Hearing: Presentation of Draft Final Gualala Community Action Plan

Monday, November 6, 2006

Gualala Community Center

The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) meets as the Board of Directors of:

Mendocino Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and

Mendocino County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE)

1. Call to Order / Roll Call . The meeting was called to order at 1:46 p.m. with Directors Willis (PAC), Jorgensen, Dahlhoff, Wagenet, and Colfax, present; Vice Chair Jorgensen presiding. Chair Wharff was excused by prior arrangement to attend to her election duties. Absent: Directors Gjerde and McCowen.

Staff present: Phil Dow, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director for Administration; and Loretta Ellard, Assistant Executive Director. Guests: Keith Gurnee, RRM Design Group.

7. Public Hearing: Presentation of Draft Final Gualala Community Action Plan

- a. Staff Report. Dow gave an overview and explained the purpose of this plan as well as its limitations, noting that not all issues of concern to the community have been resolved during this process, which must conclude soon with expiration of the grant contract. There are numerous ways of addressing issues such as traffic safety, congestion, parking, bikeways, and pedestrian improvements. The plan identifies actions that can be taken to move the community toward some broad transportation goals agreed by consensus, leaving flexibility of options. MCOG will continue to work on further studies and more specific plans, and identification of funds to complete desired improvements. He introduced Keith Gurnee, Principal, RRM Design Group.
- b. Presentation by Consultant - RRM Design Group. Mr. Gurnee made introductory comments and followed with a PowerPoint presentation of the draft final plan. He emphasized that this is a conceptual document that identifies priorities. Further work is needed to create a downtown design plan and a parking and circulation plan.

Director Colfax asked Mr. Gurnee what amendment was being considered for the adopted Gualala Town Plan that was prepared by County of Mendocino planning staff. Mr. Gurnee described a design option that would reduce the width of "Main Street" Highway 1 right-of-way, as a potential amendment to consider.
- c. Public Hearing. Vice Chair Jorgensen opened the public hearing. Dow reported briefly on the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Group meetings.

Sid Waterman, resident of Gualala 27 years: A business and property owner, his main concern is with bike lane proposals and cyclists that interfere with traffic.

Robert Juengling, resident of Gualala, Citizens Advisory Committee: A lifelong bicyclist, he advocated for bikeway and pedestrian improvements that are compatible with the streetscape.

Ray Edlund, resident of Gualala 28 years: A former senior planner at Caltrans, he stated that cyclists will not leave the highway to use a bike lane detour unless built to the same standards as the road; cyclists need a safe lane of travel.

Mary Mobert, resident of Gualala 30 years: She advocated for pedestrian improvements and expressed concerns about safety in speeding traffic; the plan does not include enough traffic calming measures.

Marshall Sayegh, resident of Gualala, Citizens Advisory Committee: He thanked MCOG for making the long trip to Gualala and thanked RRM, “the right people for the job.” He was pleased that the “charette” format of the first meeting was highly productive. However, the charette format was not sustained throughout the process, affecting the final product; the charette approach is a good way to resolve differences. He expressed support for the adopted Gualala Town Plan, noting it provides for a streetscape “exception” and town boundaries, and distributed copies of a map indicating boundaries. He requested that the Community Action Plan include the “residential reserve” concept and some flexibility.

Robert Sundstrom, resident of Gualala 50 years, Citizens Advisory Committee: As business owner having raised a family here, he noted the traffic congestion problems caused by seasonal tourism and approved of the streetscape plan.

John Bower, resident of Gualala 58 years, Citizens Advisory Committee: Born and raised here, he and his family participated in much of the town’s development. He was pleased with RRM’s presentation and appreciated that countywide leaders are turning their attention on making improvements to the Gualala community. Issues of concern include Highway 1 right-of-way ownership, how that will benefit the community, and past and future loss of parking that could damage the town economy. He supports reinsertion of “residential reserve” mapping as an option for removing some traffic problems from Highway 1, and long-term planning to mitigate the highway traffic and accommodate a potential school site.

Jerry Lucey, resident of Gualala 35 years (part time), Citizens Advisory Committee: A local fisherman, he agreed this effort is timely. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements are a priority over eventual road extensions. More water resources will be needed before more residential development can occur. He urged MCOG to act quickly to help implement this plan.

Dibby (Martha) Tyler, resident of The Sea Ranch 8 years, Citizens Advisory Committee: A retired planner by profession, Gualala is her community for shopping and services. She called for flexibility in the plan, to design more for pedestrians than for traffic speed. She has visited other sites for comparison and believes that Gualala can do better than to adopt the standard streetscape plan seen elsewhere.

Bill McCarthy, Gualala Municipal Advisory Council, Citizens Advisory Committee, and Technical Advisory Group: He thanked all for attending and RRM for all their efforts. He agreed with MCOG that bringing back RRM as consultant for the next planning grant makes sense. The Gualala community has a lot of spirit and needs plenty of time to define consensus on the issues, up to five years of planning before construction of improvements begins. It could mean a change to the town plan. He recommended staying with the process,

perhaps with the community meeting on its own in addition to the planning grant process. The result will be unique to Gualala.

Francine Temple, resident of Gualala: Onstreet parking creates a hazard by reducing line of sight. She does not support a change to the town plan. A delay of this process for the purpose of reaching agreement on a road extension to the residential reserve would be outside the scope of this transportation plan, which should be focused on pedestrian safety.

Dean Wolf, resident of The Sea Ranch: He is recently retired here after 35 years of planning experience from Alaska to San Diego and in other states, and has served as president of San Mateo's downtown association, so is familiar with business concerns. He supports this timely planning effort, and he emphasized the importance of listening to longtime residents. "Gualala Community Action Plan" is somewhat misleading as a title, so he suggests narrowing the focus to traffic circulation and transportation. An important issue is pedestrian safety. An unresolved issue is whether to have a continuous left-turn lane, which would result in permanent loss of parking, or to install left turn pockets selectively. Acceptance of this plan ought to be qualified until parking issues are resolved.

Mary Sue Ittner, resident of Gualala, Citizens Advisory Committee: She worked on the Gualala Town Plan for several years and is Project Manager for Gualala Bluff Trail. She is concerned about onstreet parking that makes it difficult to see oncoming traffic when turning onto Highway 1. She advocated for offstreet parking with safe pedestrian ways so that people could more easily walk from parking to their destinations.

Henry Alden, resident of Gualala, Gualala Redwoods: He agreed that the first charette was the most productive and asked for a return to issues that were raised there.

Jo Rouse, resident of Gualala 19 years: She suggested a local transit service such that people could park in a common area and take a jitney to run errands, as a sustainable way of dealing with the parking issue.

Vice Chair Jorgensen closed the public hearing.

- d. Board Action – Acceptance of Gualala Community Action Plan. Staff handed out copies of MCOG's grant application for a second phase of funds for this planning project. Dow explained the intent and purpose of a second phase is to further define details such as left-turn pockets, how to accommodate bicycles, and other issues identified. The effort to date has been largely conceptual and much work remains to be done.

Director Colfax stated the public input today was helpful and that he would like to see other local communities in the district make similar planning efforts. Parking issues are a central issue here. He advised against reopening the town plan and recommended working closely with the Board of Supervisors, the County planning department, and the community to resolve problems. The "precautionary principle" recently adopted by the Supervisors is an appropriate way to proceed in this effort. He also commented on the difficulty of getting to Gualala from other parts of the county.

Director Wagenet described similar planning efforts in his supervisorial district and his focus on transportation issues. Laytonville has received a Community Based Transportation Planning grant from Caltrans for traffic calming and downtown revitalization,

a high priority project there. His home town of Willits also has been planning for a more walkable community and making improvements. He reported on the long-awaited ribbon-cutting ceremony MCOG members attended earlier in the day for Point Arena's bikeway project. He noted Caltrans and MCOG are responsive to bicycle and pedestrian needs, and he advised against reopening the town plan. He encouraged the Gualala community in their own planning efforts. He supported occasional travel to other communities for meetings, despite the difficulties, so that not all decisions are made in the county seat.

Director Dahlhoff mentioned potential problems with reopening the town plan, if the Coastal Commission did not approve an amendment. She discussed the issue of a left-turn lane versus onstreet parking, with a likely result of the same overall paved street width. The results of this community action plan will be an improvement over the status quo. Pedestrian safety is a top priority. She wished the community luck in winning the next grant to continue this work.

Vice Chair Jorgensen, a Willits resident, echoed Director Wagenet's comments that Willits has improved its downtown area and goals can be accomplished. She supported the Gualala Community Action Plan in its present form and expressed appreciation and encouragement for the community's involvement.

Dow stated options for Board action: 1) accept the plan as presented, 2) accept it now conditional on certain amendments, or 3) delay acceptance to the December meeting. Dow clarified that the requested action is to "accept" rather than "adopt" the plan. He then asked Mr. Gurnee to briefly address concerns expressed today.

Mr. Gurnee stated that:

- Bike lanes are consistent with GMAC's town plan and mostly likely funding is available from Caltrans and California Coastal Conservancy grants. A requirement is consistency with the coastal plan and California Coastal Trail plans.
- Parking should stay in the plan as shown in the revised hearing draft version. Loss of parking can be addressed when a solution is found to replace lost parking, and needs to be resolved before any streetscaping is constructed.
- Traffic calming features will be addressed in the next phase, when detailed design work can be done.
- The active charette process that people liked about first phase will be repeated.
- Additional work is needed, particularly around the center left-turn lane issue, and he recommends minimizing the amount of center lane pavement.

He thanked all for their participation and MCOG for coming to Gualala.

Colfax commented that the consultant has heard concerns, there is a proposal for future funding to refine the plan, this is a good first step and the document presented today merits acceptance without modification. Director Wagenet commented on the knowledge base of retired professionals in the community, that their expertise is being put to work to good use locally. Dow noted that this plan will be presented also to the County of Mendocino Board of Supervisors.

Upon motion by Colfax, second by Wagenet, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (5 Ayes – Willis/PAC, Dahlhoff, Wagenet, Colfax, and Jorgensen; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 3 Absent - Gjerde, McCowen, and Wharff): IT IS ORDERED that the Gualala Community Action Plan is accepted as the final version, with the inclusion of all public and Board comments from today's hearing.

8. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee - Reconvene as RTPA - Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Dahlhoff, second by Colfax, and carried unanimously (*4 Ayes; 0 Noes; 3 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

10. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Submitted: PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Administrator