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City of Sebastopol

CITY HALL
7120 BODEGA AVENUE
SEBASTOPOL, CALIFORNIA 95472
(707) 823-7863

THOMAS F. MILLER, MAYOR

COUNCILMEN
GWEN A. ANDERSON
ANNE MAGNIE
HOWARD A. REESER
WILLIAM L. ROVENTINI

CITY MANAGER
MELVIN K. DAVIS

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Melvin K. Davis, City Manager
FROM: Paul L. Schoch, City Engineer *PLS*
SUBJECT: Development Applications vs "Laguna Report"
DATE: 5 February, 1988

I have reviewed your draft memorandum to the City Council and agree with your reporting of the events to date. However, it gives the City Council no specific technical direction from staff. I suggest that in addition to what you have written, a possible direction might be as follows:

In providing the City Staff with a policy direction, the City Council may wish to allow filling below 76 feet in areas where the Laguna has already been filled and commitments made and prohibit the filling of the Laguna where it is in its natural state and there has been no prior development.

City Staff favors the continued filling of Morris Street properties because of the following:

1. Prior commitments to property owners along Morris Street in the form of an adopted policy by the City Council regarding development (Morris Street Study).
2. The formation of an assessment district between property owners and City to improve Morris Street and add utilities for the express purpose of development.
3. The City has committed to property owners along Morris Street to allow filling to protect properties from floods. Over 50% of the lands along Morris Street have already been approved for filling and it is now under way.
5. The City of Sebastopol has filled this area for a sewer lift station, and public park.

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Melvin K. Davis City Manager
Page 2
5 February, 1988

6. The properties along Morris Street, except for those which have been designated as Wetlands, have already been filled and therefore environmentally have already been removed as a riparian corridor.

7. It is not feasible to import excavated material below 76 feet and fill on Morris Street since material which would have to be brought in which comes from the Laguna below 76 feet would therefore create more environmental damage in the excavated area than would be gained by the "no net fill".

The staff is of the opinion that the Sonoma County Water Agency requirement for a "No net fill" is best applied where a property is located both above and below the 76 foot elevation and by careful grading of the property below 76 feet, material can be brought upland to provide flood-free structures. Importing fill from areas below 76 foot elevation could create damage to the natural environment which could create unsightly scars in the Laguna and create erosion and/or other environmental damage.

For the above reasons, City staff believes that the "Line should be drawn" at and along Morris Street to allow for the continued filling to provide usable industrial lands to the City based upon prior long-term commitments.

The issue regarding filling in the Laguna area where no previous fill, development, or commitment has been made is a completely different matter. City staff concurs with the Laguna Advisory Committee report in that no development should occur below the 76 foot elevation. No development would mean no filling, or removal of material below 76 feet to fill lands which are now lower than 76 feet. This would preserve the natural configuration of the Laguna without destruction of the environment due to cut and fill and encroachment into the Laguna area. It would also provide a clear vista and unblemished Laguna area.