

Torture  
Victim gets  
\$21 million

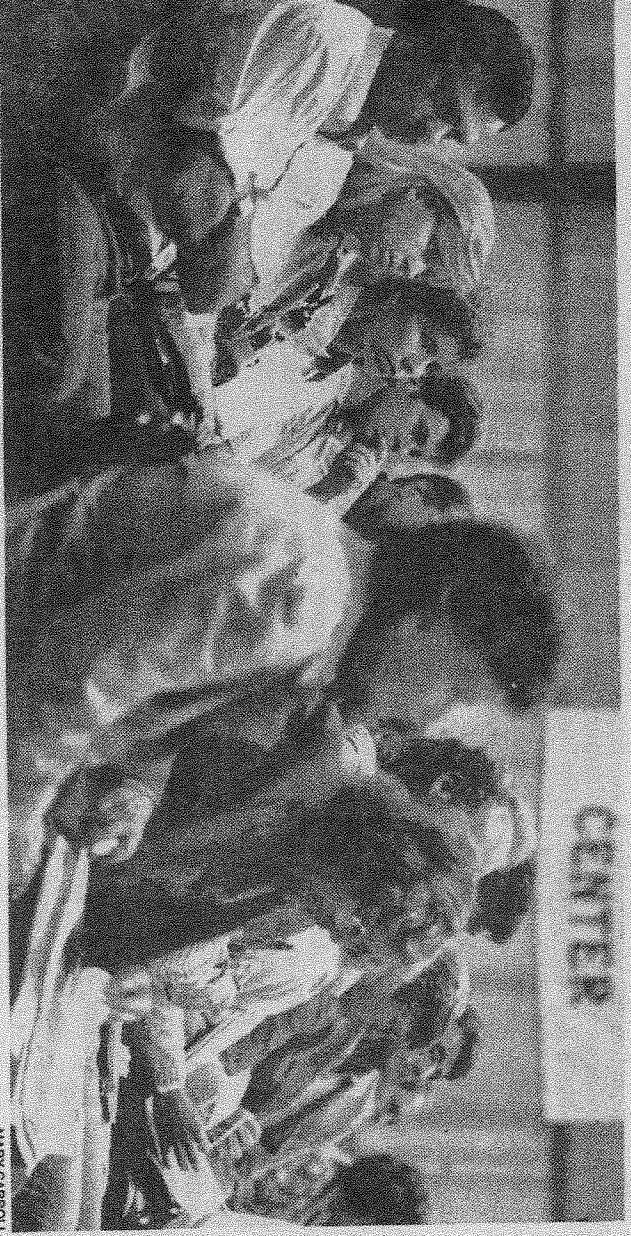
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# EMPIRE NEWS

Santa Rosa, California, Tuesday, April 26, 1988

# Laguna raises divided testimony

CENTER



MARY CARROLL

Monday's Sebastopol City Council meeting drew large crowd for hearing on Laguna

## Emotional responses to issue

By ELLEN KLINEMAN  
Staff Writer

The Sebastopol City Council Monday faced a divided crowd of 100 people at a hearing on a protection plan for the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

While some outlined the economic hardships on laguna-front property owners posed by restrictions on development in the flood plain, others stressed the dire need for preserving what's left of the endangered waterway.

Council members were still hearing testimony at 10 p.m. and had not indicated whether they would make a decision immediately after the hearing or would postpone action to another evening.

The hearing was the culmination of a year of work by the Laguna Advisory Committee and followed several Planning Commission ses-

sions.

Committee members Monday praised the council for creating the committee in the first place, which they hoped would inspire Sonoma County, Santa Rosa and other agencies to take measures to protect the waterway that runs from Cotati to the Russian River.

"The laguna is a priceless resource . . . we're looking for moral leadership to protect it," said committee spokesman Richard Nichols.

Many subsequent speakers strongly backed the committee's recommendation that no development occur in the natural areas of the flood plain in order to preserve rare plants and wildlife habitat. They also urged that fill be allowed only in already urbanized areas.

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The biggest flap erupted over what to do in areas that already are developed.

The committee wants to maintain all the laguna's flood control capacity by requiring that any fill placed in the laguna basin come from another portion of the laguna.

"If you put a bucket of sand in here, you're putting a bucket of water in Guerneville," said Nichols. But property owners talked about the difficulty of going through the process of looking for fill in the environmentally sensitive laguna when they want to do property repairs or new buildings.

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