

Seb Times

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Laguna study meets council's approval

Councilwoman Gwen Anderson said the report of the Laguna Advisory Committee was one of those situations where everyone wins.

"It's so nice to see smiling faces out there for a change," Anderson said at city council last Tuesday.

Laguna Advisory Committee chairman Bob Sharp presented councilmembers with a 50-page report on the status and future preservation of Sebastopol's Laguna. In turn, each of the committee members received certificates of appreciation from the city.

Chairman Sharp requested that the council finance an additional number of reports to be distributed to environmental groups, libraries and the media.

Mayor Tom Miller assured the committee the funds would be there.

"You will have the council's full support," Miller said.

Supervisor Ernie Carpenter, on hand for the city council meeting, assured the committee that he would support them at the county level and congratulated Sebastopol's city council on taking the lead on preserving the Laguna.

A seven-page synopsis of the report was passed out to the media. Four major problems with the

Laguna were cited, including the filling in of the flood basin, loss of riparian vegetation, a widely varying water supply and that no government agency had taken full responsibility or authority. Many governmental agencies have taken an interest, but they had not acted in concert, the report stated.

General recommendations to improve the Laguna were that the city should urge the county to develop a laguna land use management plan, support a strong county riparian ordinance, enlist the Army of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency and other state agencies, and show city support of these agencies.

The report also suggested a city staff member be designated to insure that city employees were aware of the authority and responsibility of these other agencies and actively monitor the Laguna to detect problems such as pollution, illegal fill, loss of vegetation or other violations.

The report also detailed a list of 19 tasks to be carried out by various subcommittee's assigned by the city.

"I would like to work with the city of Sebastopol to get even broader support," Carpenter vowed.

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*Another issue not altogether separate from the sewage disposal problem is the local effort to preserve the Laguna de Santa Rosa, Northern California's second largest freshwater marsh system. A proposal aimed at achieving that end won enthusiastic support Tuesday night from a Sebastopol City Council that appreciates the need to maintain a long term buffer between Sebastopol and the out-of-control urban sprawl of Santa Rosa. Other appealing aspects of laguna preservation include the fact that its existence serves as a natural "flood control valve" for Russian River area residents who would face much greater flood threats each and every year were the laguna to disappear. Additionally, the creation of a permanent wildlife sanctuary so close to city limits would help not only the creatures within the habitat, but would generate some measure of tourist trade locally since nature lovers abound in Northern California. Two of the major threats currently confronting the laguna include the fact it's used as a sewage disposal pipeline to the Russian River and is gradually being filled from Santa Rosa developments on its eastern edge.

*Funding is currently being sought to help preserve the laguna and the City Council is to be applauded in its support of that effort.

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