

Notes from 8/16/23 MAC Listening Session

Key challenges:

1. Infrastructure
 - a. Garbage collection (Graton, Occidental)
 - b. Sidewalks (Graton, Penngrove, Moorland, Mark West)
 - c. Roads
 - i. Road repairs (Graton, Occidental, Sonoma Valley, Upper Mark West Watershed/Eastern Sonoma County, Fitch Mtn, Penngrove)
 - ii. Tourism parking and traffic impacts (Bodega, N. Sonoma Valley)
 - iii. Traffic
 1. Speeding (Mark West, Petaluma Hill, Moorland)
 2. Coordination with CHP and need for proactive enforcement (Sonoma Valley, Fitch Mtn, Mark West)
 3. Mitigation: if they can't reduce traffic, need to direct traffic with stoplights (Penngrove)
 4. Lack of parking (Penngrove)
 - d. No community meeting space (Graton, Springs, N. Sonoma Valley, Mark West, Fitch Mtn)
 - e. Need public restrooms (Occidental)
 - f. Emergency evacuation routes (N. Sonoma Valley)
 - g. Water
 - i. Sewer (Sonoma Valley, Penngrove)
 - ii. Septic regulations (Fitch)
 - iii. Water supply/conservation (Alexander Valley)
 - h. Communication
 - i. Lack of information on local government actions in the community (Graton, Mark West)
 - ii. Need broadband (Sea Ranch, Occidental, Upper Mark West Watershed/Eastern Sonoma County)
 - iii. Emergency communication/radios (Knights/Franz Valley)
 - i. Parks:
 - i. Suggestion for park that allows access to river (Geyserville Bridge)
 - ii. Need resources to manage tourism impacts for river access on Redwood drive (Fitch Mtn)
 - iii. Need a local park (Mark West)
2. Financial Resources/Capacity
 - a. Grant writing support and grant capacity (Occidental, Mark West, Graton)
 - b. Interested in return to source funding for unincorporated areas (Geyserville/Alexander Valley, N. Sonoma Valley, Fitch Mtn)
3. Health/Human Services
 - o Challenges accessing health/human services (Springs), for example covid vaccines (Sea Ranch); Healthcare and general outreach of services to Latinx community (Geyserville/Alexander Valley)
 - a. Need senior services (N. Sonoma Valley)

4. Housing
 - a. Lack of housing availability including affordable workforce housing (Sea Ranch, Bodega, Graton, Springs, N. Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Valley, Penngrove)
 - b. Need to make it easier to build ADUs (Graton, N. Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Valley)
5. Fire risk
 - a. Need vegetation management (Upper Mark West Watershed/Eastern Sonoma County, Mark West, Penngrove); fire breaks (Mark West)
 - b. Home owner insurance cancellations and rate changes (Upper Mark West Watershed/Eastern Sonoma County)
 - c. Fire protection (Geyserville/Alexander Valley, Fitch Mtn)
6. Other
 - a. Flood risk (Penngrove)
 - b. Need a noise ordinance/enforcement (Petaluma Hill, Moorland, Mark West)
 - c. Animal control enforcement (Petaluma Hill)
 - d. Loss of jobs from close of crab and salmon season/fishing collapse (Bodega)
 - e. Marina financial model not currently working (Bodega)
 - f. Graffiti (Moorland)
 - g. Homelessness (Moorland)
 - h. Creek restoration (Mark West)

District 5:

- Jennifer Butler, Graton Community Services District Board
 - Feels like they lack services that incorporated areas have including garbage, sidewalks, road repair (ex. Of road not being redone in 30+ years). They are looking for services to allow them to accommodate the tourism that they do have and start to get commerce in their area.
 - No meeting space. Place for residents to gather and enjoy each other.
 - Change currently requires grassroots movement. Would like help in getting ideas and projects off the ground, not fully reliant on people that may have full-time jobs, may not have language and education that help enhance the community. Wants County to help with this.
 - Wants money for enhancements and developments in their area.
 - Wants a town council.
 - Challenges with hearing about what is happening in Graton.
- Marti Campbell, Coast MAC, (immediate past Chair) The Sea Ranch
 - Sea Ranch is a fairly densely populated area. Quasi government structure with 2,300 member home owners association and a board of directors. This kind of functions like a city council. Annapolis is more sparsely populated and spread over a large area (no town center).
 - Challenging time finding a person in Annapolis willing to lead an organizing effort for that community. One need she sees for Annapolis is broadband. Annapolis wasn't included in list in recent BOS broadband community.
 - They have a variety of cross county special districts and non-profits that are cross county with addresses in Mendocino county. Marti doesn't think there is enough visibility for

Sonoma County grants for social services and medical services even though over half of the services that these cross-county agencies provide are in Sonoma County. Ex. Challenges getting covid vaccines from Sonoma County in Sea Ranch/Coast.

- From chat: We have a similar problem with housing availability. Big issue for the tourist-serving businesses, as well as for Redwood Coast Medical Services. Marti Campbell
- Brian Leubitz, Coast MAC, (Chair) Bodega Bay
 - Bodega Bay is focused both on tourism and fishing. Tourism is still very popular. Concerns related to parking and traffic impacts from tourism.
 - Challenges with housing for service workers – difficult for businesses to hire workers (partially a result of vacation rentals, limited housing, cost of housing). Lack of development and no new places for people to live.
 - Fallout of fishing collapse. Closing of crab season and then the salmon season. Many workers/unemployed fishermen. Many fishermen left the community. Others needed to find new jobs (often manual labor). No fishing work anymore.
 - Marina is meant to run as a business, but fishing fleet at Bodega pay has had more difficulty getting people to pay. They've talked about getting a special service district for the Marina to make the finances work.
- Melinda Hershon, Occidental Community Action Planning Committee
 - Relatively small downtown area. They do have a CSD that does a great job of fire services but isn't tightly connected to county. They also have an active community council to try to figure out what the future might look like in Occidental. They worked with community to identify 9 initiatives for the community.
 - They have a lack of services. They don't have a MAC. Services like garbage and public restrooms, road work, road repairs, sidewalk repairs, lack of broadband.
 - They have a community center as a gathering place (used for tennis, pickleball, indoor sports), but it's quite run down. There is confusion about who owns what and what needs to be done to remodel this space. They haven't made progress in this area (eye sore), opportunity to improve community gathering.
 - They need to understand from the county how to make sure that they are connected to the county's services. They need help with grant writing. They need help running projects and help understanding services that are available.
- Max Wilmarth, Director at Graton CSD
 - Graton CSD has a new board that is very energized with helping the town. They realized that they aren't just limited to managing the sewer plant which is what CSD was originally formed for 20 years ago.
 - Main issues include lack of places to live. Suggests building ADUs on properties zoned for ½ acres as solution. Suggests County to help streamline the permitting process.
 - Needs longer term sewer plan that connects up the communities. Ex. Connecting Occidental to Graton (Graton sewer has extra capacity). Thinks communities should be hooked up to sewer system in Sebastopol.
 - Wants community space in Graton – no community center. The Board is interested in a town square. They've made progress in moving this project along. They will likely soon be asking the County for help to move this forward.

- Could use help identifying grants and helping people like him with full-time job to tap these sources of funds. Recently realized about Open Space district grant for town square but missed the window.

District 1:

- Joe Hardeman, Springs MAC, Vice Chair
 - Springs lowest income portion of the Valley, also thriving on tourism, but no housing for people. Affordable housing is a huge need. School district enrollment has dropped. Fires pushed a lot of people out that were unable to return given housing prices.
 - Very siloed from the county. Not a lot of social services available. Knows more services coming soon.
 - People want a gathering place as well
- Arthur Dawson, North Sonoma Valley MAC, Vice Chair
 - Housing is a priority, agrees with encouraging more ADUs (some way to create a program like SCEIP program with loans available to create ADUs)
 - Gathering place/community center is needed
 - Impact of tourism increasing.
 - Roads: increasing traffic. Concerns about additional units anticipated (SDC?) and resulting transit issues. Public transit, evacuation routes need to be identified. Would like the County to be proactive about this.
 - Interested in preserving community character
 - Senior services are important
 - From chat: -I agree with Walter's idea of 'returning funds to source'
- Tim Freeman, Sonoma Valley CAC, Chair
 - Traffic coordination would be helpful at County level. When certain areas are shut down, someone needs to coordinate with Caltrans.
 - Concern with the amount of development in pipeline for the Valley over the next decade. Congestion.
 - Road repair
 - Issue of affordable housing
 - Challenges of developing on land that is not connected to sewer
 - Agrees with call for ADUs. Providing funds or low cost grants for these projects.
- Lynn Garric:
 - From chat: I represent the Upper Mark West Watershed in Eastern Sonoma County (north of Rincon Valley; east of Larkfield and to the Napa county line). We identify as a 12,000 acre watershed of steep terrain. Homes and structures are surrounded by wildland fuels. CalFire identifies the watershed as very high fire risk. There are approx 300-400 residents (prior to the Tubbs and Glass Fires we had approx 700 residents). Although sparsely populated we have a tight social bond. Four major needs:
 - Upper Mark West Watershed continued: 1) Vegetation Management. We've benefitted from county grants, but there is much more to do. 2) Road Conditions. Some of the Tubbs Fire road degradation has been improved (thank you), but the Glass Fire area, primarily St. Helena Road is still in poor condition. Post-debris cleanup, construction and commute traffic from Napa and Lake Counties make this worse. 3) Cell and Internet service is a safety concern and also a hardship on families whose children need internet for school. 4) Home Owners Insurance. We are experiencing H.O. Insurance

cancellations, inadequate insurance through the Fair Plan, and would like county support and influence on H.O. Insurance rates. Thank you.

D4

- Walter Keiser, Geyserville Alexander Valley Municipal Advisory Council
 - Water supply and water conservation
 - Recreation – tourism at the river, but lacks access. Idea that a Regional Park at Geyserville bridge or nearby to provide access to river
 - Fire protection
 - Healthcare and general outreach of services to Latinx community
 - Basic infrastructure
 - Suggestion: recurring funding source for these NGOs. Budget unit/return to source policy on taxes for these local jurisdictions that is stable and dependable.
 - Opportunity in general plan to look at land use policy
- Keith Lesnick, Knights/Franz Valley
 - About 300 housing units
 - Emergency communications – using radios for emergency communication. Would like to see this countywide. They went for 6 months without landlines working.
- Karen Fies, Mark West Area Citizens Advisory Council
 - About 9,000 residents
 - Infrastructure: they are getting some road work and sidewalks, which is wonderful
 - Need meeting space, parks and community centers
 - Communication is important to them – especially challenging with large population in their area
 - Law enforcement: traffic and speeding concerns
 - Support with vegetation management, could use fire breaks; creek restoration/erosion assistance is needed
 - Sent via email:
 - Communication and outreach to our community: How do people know about the work of the MAC? Or of the County? How do we gather input from a wider group of people?
 - Infrastructure: We need sidewalks and bridges. Thankfully, our area is getting some much needed road repaving from the PG&E funds and we're even getting some never-before sidewalks along Mark West Springs Road from Old Redwood Hwy to Riebli Elementary School - so thankful for this!
 - Amenities: We need a community park and community center. We have an application for a park acquisition in the Ag & Open Space Matching Grant program, which will come before the BOS on Tuesday. This is wonderful, but we're fighting to get full funding because our little area cannot do anymore "bake sales" to raise the additional dollars needed to purchase the lot. I could talk for hours about grant funding (capacity and fiscal agents), so let me know if you'd like to discuss this further.

- Services: We need more law enforcement. I know that the CHP (like all law enforcement) is stretched thin, but we have speeding and noise issues that need attention. Other services include vegetation management, creek restoration, and fire breaks, to name a few.
- Heather Pilatic, Fitch Mountain
 - ~345 households
 - Their organization has been around for 40 years
 - Likes idea of identifying a pot of money that is return to source that these communities can access
 - Very focused on fire; they have an active COPE group, happy about recent fire district annexation
 - Septic is a big challenge. Concerned that they are not currently engaged in mapping/planning process. Anticipate that septic changes will hit them hard and gentrify their community
 - Roads are another pain point for them. They have quarterly meetings with SoCoPI.
 - They have a good relationship with Regional Parks; they have one little parks and a public access point to river on Redwood Drive. They get a lot of impact there but don't have resources. Would like resources there.
 - They get slammed on hot holiday weekends – people parking in the middle of their roads. They need resources. Safety issues. CHP isn't actually ticketing and providing proactive enforcement.
 - Supports funding for a gathering place, they need a gathering place as a community.

D2

- Lyndi Brown, Chair, Penngrove Cares
 - Concerns with traffic, sewer, and water
 - Looking forward to findings and next steps with Penngrove traffic study
 - Looking into whether they need a CSD
 - They support their Penngrove area specific plan from 1984.
 - They've had a lawsuit with Rohnert Park re: takeover of 180 acres. Ruling was that Penngrove is unique area and not to be annexed (Lyndi agrees with this)
 - Requested be put into category 3 of housing plan.
 - Interest in someone at County having master plan perspective to carry out all the plans already in place.
 - Traffic: if they can't reduce traffic, need to direct traffic with stoplights
- Emma Mann, Penngrove Downtown Association (and owner of Silk Cauldron)
 - Business still down after covid, need collective action to support businesses. They meet every month to share resources/concerns. Working with Supervisor Rabbitt's office on some of their issues. Ex. Flood study done by the Water Agency. Most of Downtown Penngrove is in the floodplain.
 - They would benefit by a CSD or a MAC.
 - There's a mobile home park, which doesn't have anyone advocating for them. They are in the flood plain.
 - Traffic is a concern.

- Virtually no parking. Someone bought a lot that will provide ~60 parking spots for business visitors.
- Vegetation management – clear opening by the park.
- Affordable housing is an issue. 9 of the properties identified in housing element are in Penngrove (lots of feelings on both sides of the issue)
- Infrastructure challenges – no sidewalks in areas children are going/coming to school.
- Working with permitting dept to get signage for businesses
- Challenges with no room outside for trash
- Interested in grant funding to support businesses

D3:

- Betsy Bueno, Petaluma Hill / Hunter lane area
 - She reached out to neighbors to poll them on their concerns.
 - Roads is one of biggest complaints. Country lanes of main Petaluma Hill rd. Concerns about speed coming off of Petaluma Hill rd. Lots of kids and people riding horses on one lane road. People want assistance to slow traffic, possibly getting speed bumps. Challenges navigating government agencies to move forward with this.
 - Code enforcement concerns – noise complaint ordinance. They want a noise complaint ordinance. Issues with live bands amplified music and parking on roads. When they reach out to Sheriff, they're told that there's nothing they can do.
 - Animal control enforcement concerns; policies such like seizing animals needs to be updated, animal burial (no current ordinance),
- Alicia Carroll, Moorland Neighborhood Resident
 - Small community (1.2 miles)
 - 2014 they started an action team that resulted in establishing the Andy Lopez unity park. This has become their community gathering area. Partnership with Regional Parks and Land Paths nonprofit.
 - Half of neighborhood is very residential with city water and sewer; half has wells but are on city sewer
 - Graffiti issues (particularly by park), also homeless issues (CHP is helping with this)
 - On South side the biggest issue they face is traffic. They are the frontage road to 101. In the middle of industrial warehouses and car dealers/mechanics. Lots of fast traffic from people testing cars.
 - South half doesn't have side walks so no safe route to school.
 - Noise issue is a concern. Parties with live bands and amplified music. Would like to see a noise ordinance.
 - Large Hispanic community.

Supervisor Gorin:

- Recognize similarities they've heard.
- Noise ordinance is an important issue in her district.
- Everyone mentioned traffic, traffic, traffic. Speeding through the communities. Challenges with connecting with CHP in a meaningful way (also a challenge in Sonoma Valley). Consistent theme.

- Heartened to hear about all the communities coming together. Hearing the need for community gathering places. She's going to give this some thought.
- Likes idea of having a pool of county funding to help people connect with grant writing and projects that they want to see move forward in their communities.
- Interested in coming together to share successes too

Supervisor Hopkins:

- Same issues (law enforcement, traffic, lack of infrastructure, tourism impact without revenue, lack of decision making power/local control)
- Looking for common solutions in terms of funding, and recognizing the solutions will need to be specific for each community.