

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

2 Provide Direction To City Staff On A Successor Agreement With The Fourth District Agricultural Association (DAA) For Continuation Of The Annual Sonoma Marin Fair On Site, For Master Planning Of Additional Sustainable, Compatible Property Uses And For The Future Use And Management Of The City's Fairgrounds Property [and Resolution Adopting Guiding Principles Regarding The Future of The City Fairgrounds Property](#) – REVISED 10/21/2022

Name

Anna Dietrich

Comment - 10/24/2022 03:40 PM : (Against)

While my direct community involvement is spent on the Old Adobe school board, leading both Girl Scouts for my daughter and Cub Scouts for my son (which is where I am instead of being at the meeting tonight), and serving on the Petaluma Airport Commission, I have been monitoring the activity surrounding the Fairgrounds with great interest. The Fairgrounds and the spirit that it embodies is central to much of what I love about Petaluma and I, like many others in our wonderful community, are nervous about its future.

It seems extremely premature to vote to accept the staff recommendations as they stand. Not only does it send the message that the community engagement efforts are not being fully considered – how can they be when they are being presented on the same night that the recommendations are being made? – but the recommendation document itself is incomplete. Assuming the responsibility for managing the Fairgrounds directly would be a large undertaking for the City. The full financial impact of that undertaking is not known at this time. While the staff report does indicate that the Fairgrounds are currently financially stable with income and expenditures aligned, it states very clearly that “the terms of the successor agreement between the DAA and the City will determine the financial impacts, positive or negative, to the City,” and that those impacts are not known at this time. It seems premature to approve taking an action for which not even preliminary numbers are available. The staff report also does not provide the transparency and stability that one would expect for current tenants. Do they get right of first refusal on renewals? Do they get a cap on any increases in rent? There are many questions.

My request to the Council is that both the community engagement report and the staff report are received tonight with gratitude but that no action tonight as suggested in the staff report is taken. Rather, further study – with detailed financial forecasts informed by MOUs with the current tenants – be undertaken. While I fully appreciate that the pace of local government is not fast, we do still have time to come to an informed decision. Let's not move forward in haste and lose any good will that may have been built with the community. This feels like an effort to push something through prior to the Nov 8th elections.

Please take a step back, work to build trust, and make a financially sound and informed decision, not a rash one that you then have to justify and live with the consequences. That decision may very well end up being in line with the staff recommendations, but without due process and consideration we'll never know.

Respectfully and with gratitude for your service to our town,
Anna Dietrich