

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

Matt Maguire

Comment - 10/23/2022 10:19 PM : (No Vote)

As a neighbor to the fairgrounds now going on 35 years, I can say without equivocation that the fair board are both lousy neighbors and poor managers of the property.

I recommend the council not renew their lease, that you work from the Option 1a plan to develop a master plan for the property, and that you take this once-in-50-years golden opportunity to create a vision and implement a plan for the parcel that truly serves the Petaluma community – all of it.

Although there is a tremendous amount of emotional attachment to the fair itself, and for some, the stock car races, for those who live near the fairgrounds, the impacts are significant. My wife and I have had literally hundreds of afternoons and evenings ruined by the harsh ear-splitting scream of the races that make the peaceful enjoyment of our yard and home impossible. They are so loud sometimes that we cannot be heard without screaming. How would you like it if someone parked in front of your house for five or six hours, and honked their horn for several minutes at a time, over and over again, for all those hours? That's about what it's like on many race days and nights. That deprives us of the ability to be outdoors (and some nights even indoors) enjoying our yard, deck or patio. We can't have company over, we can't listen to our music, we can't relax. Very aggravating.

The fair board has never once reached out to my neighborhood to see if they could mitigate the impacts of the races, concerts, or the fair. During fair week, we have willingly put up with the flood of cars that make parking near our house really difficult, the junk food tossed in the street, the broken bottles, the drunken yelling of late fair patrons, the trash. At least it's a few days and then it's over. But the races inflict misery for weeks and weeks, and despite complaints to the fair manager and fair board, there has been only limited response to neighborhood concerns. Recently, certain concert events have been louder than anything that has happened in the past. When questioned, the fair personnel seem to act like they have no control over amplified music volumes, or the Rip City Riders swarming through our neighborhood by the hundreds, running all the stop signs, and setting off car alarms.

The enjoyment of a few hundred race fans at the expense of thousands of residents is not a sustainable or fair situation. The races have been a blight on nearby neighborhoods for decades, and it's time for it to stop. Option 1a is a good place to start working on a constructive alternative.

I can see that maybe letting the 4DAA continue running the fair itself is within their capabilities, but the dilapidated condition of the facilities that they are responsible for show that are not up to much more than that. After all, they have had the use of the property for 50 years with essentially no rent, and most of the buildings are falling apart, not to mention the state of the utilities.

Now you have the opportunity to bring this centrally-located parcel to its highest and best use. The vision outlined in Option 1a is a good start. I would note that some portion of the parcel, a few acres at least, should be dedicated to affordable housing, since a significant cost of such housing is the land costs, and with the city owning the land, project budgets will go a lot farther here than elsewhere. As shown on the diagram, the housing could be arrayed along Payran St., adjacent to the existing residential neighborhood. It could also be broken up into smaller subsections and distributed around the larger parcel. But the fairgrounds location near transportation, utilities, markets and shopping, much of it in walking distance, makes it an ideal infill location.

The other important consideration for deciding what to do with this parcel is to recognize the potential for revenue generation for the city. At a minimum, if the council decides the 4DAA should continue managing the property in some capacity, the city should charge fair market rent to the 4DAA. I would argue that they should not be allowed to continue, based on their track record to date, except maybe to run the fair itself. Far better for the city to take back possession of the land, do a master plan to determine all the beneficial uses possible, figure out the footprint for those uses, and prioritize them in a development plan. But a master plan should fully consider what revenue generating potential exists: a partnership with a hotel? A new community center? An event center? City owned, or operated in a partnership? City owned but contracted out to an operator? There are many possible beneficial uses, but they're all predicated on the city being in possession and control of the land. Please take over the management and development of the fairgrounds now, so Petaluma can finally have a real gathering place with multiple constructive uses.

Thank you for your consideration.