



City of Sebastopol
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UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF October 25, 2022

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The notice of the meeting was posted on October 20, 2022.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Oetinger called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and read a procedural statement.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Chair Oetinger, Vice Chair Fernandez, and Commissioners Burnes, Fritz, and Kelley
Absent:	None
Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director John Jay, Associate Planner

2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA: None.

3. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

June 14, 2022

Members of the Commission amended the minutes.

Commissioner Fritz moved to approve the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Burnes seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Oetinger, Vice Chair Fernandez and Commissioners Burnes, Fritz,
and Kelley

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. PUNCHDOWN ALCOHOL USE PERMIT

- i. The project is proposed to occupy a 1,065 square foot space to open a retail wine shop and tasting bar (the Punchdown Sebastopol) selling natural wines and food provisions. The project is located within The Barlow campus and is next to both Elsie Green at The Barlow and the Red Bird Bakery/Acre Pizza. The former use was The Nectary, which produced and sold beverage and food products as well as had consumption of these (non-alcoholic) goods onsite.

Associate Planner Jay presented the staff report.

Chair Oetinger asked for Planning Commission questions of staff.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

I had a question about the findings in Exhibit A, page 7. Do we need Finding #2, because Finding #3 and #4 kind of say what Finding #2 says; they reference sections of the zoning code that have to be followed. It seems like we might be able to get rid of that. Is that possible, staff? Is there a reason why Condition #2 has to be there?

John Jay, Associate Planner

I think we can get rid of it. It is kind of a layout of the specific code sections that the findings are referencing, and then it's a more in depth explanation of those code sections, but I'm fine either removing them or keeping them.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

It seems redundant to have it in there twice, but I was wondering if there was a technical reason why they need to be in there twice.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

For a general conditional use permit, Item #4 is the only finding for it. Alcohol use permits do have additional findings. It doesn't hurt. These are additional findings and we have had some recent alcohol permits that were a lot more contentious, and in that case these findings were used pretty specifically for those, so technically they should be used even though they may seem a little redundant.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

I'm not opposed; I think they should be in there. It's just that Item #2 just references the alcohol use permit conditions in A, and then B says the conditional use conditions, but then we say Item 3, this is the alcohol use permit conditions.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Thank you, I see. Yes, Item #2 is extraneous.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

The staff report references all of the various alcohol licenses that are in the City, and it says this alcohol license is going to be a Type 42, so is this going to be the only Type 42 license in the City? There are none currently on the list at the end of the report, which surprised me. That's the very last page. It has all the license types and it shows that there are 37 Type 41 licenses, but there is zero Type 42. I found that surprising.

John Jay, Associate Planner

That information was pulled from ABC's website for our jurisdiction, so I'm not sure if most people fall under the Type 41 category.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

Can you explain the difference between Type 41 and Type 42?

John Jay, Associate Planner

There is a difference between the two. Type 41 is geared towards a restaurant, and Type 42 is geared towards a bar/tavern.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

I'm just clarifying this in terms of the discussion of overconcentration of things and I'm trying to understand what the different types are.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We do have other bars in town. We have Old Main Street Saloon, we have Third Pig Bar, and Jasper's that are specifically bars, and they would generally have a Type 42 license.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

It even seems like Crooked Goat Brewing, and Golden State Cider Taproom, and the arcade bar that we just approved.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

I saw that you got City department comments. Were there any comments or records of any problems with that area, particularly with alcohol permits that had been a problem?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Nothing specific from the police or fire departments as far as complaints and stuff like that. There were no reports that were a part of this staff report from the police or fire department in regard to overconcentration, but like I said, it is one of the findings that we need to make, even though there haven't been any complaints about overconcentration or alcohol related incidents yet, but I think we should be proactive about it instead of reactive.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

I have a question similar to that. When I read that language the only thing that concerns me here is the discouragement of more desirable and needed commercial uses other than alcohol, and in this particular area it does seem to be what's happening; and it seems to be that most of these people are renters, they're not buying a property and doing something on their own, they're getting approval from the person who is renting to them for this purpose, so it's something to keep in mind as we make decisions. I don't know whether because that is the case it needs to be something that we look at when it's in The Barlow. I don't mind seeing it there, but is it appropriate to keep covering it every single time when we're not really looking at a traffic issue related to the sale? We have traffic issues, but it's not related to that. There aren't children on the way to school, there aren't shoppers that are being offended because of the liquor store, and we don't really have a lot of vandalism that The Barlow doesn't take care of, and it's not disturbing the peace. I think the real issue we're looking at here is it just the discouragement of other and needed commercial uses, so that's not something we can really decide if the owner in The Barlow is coming up with this. I don't know whether we can exclude The Barlow from this issue. Would staff agree that this is the main reason we're looking at this?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, I think it is generally related to the concentration, the number of uses in a single area. Is that becoming like a bar district? Is that what the City wants it to be? Is that going to cause disturbances? I'm not saying we're here yet or not, but we are starting to get to the point where ABC is requiring us to do letters because of the potential overconcentration, it's reached that threshold, so that's another metric and a reason we put this in here, and it may be that this is fine and the next three are fine, but the next after that, what level is that? Since it's one of our criteria, it is something that is part of the use permit. At some point Sonoma even put a moratorium on tasting rooms, but it was too late at that point, and so this is there to make sure that we're looking at this consciously through time and not having to backtrack and say whoa, we've gone too far.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

Thank you, I appreciate hearing about the ABC beginning to want to see a letter, because that tells me they're concerned too.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

When The Barlow was first there I remember at the time that there was allocation of businesses, it was actually manufacturing, and they could only have a certain percentage that were retail or other things, and I'm wondering if this is old information, if that's been reallocated? The owner of The Barlow came to us and wanted my business there, because we manufacture and sell retail, so we were a sweet spot for them that we've taken a manufacturing license but yet also sell retail, so is that still the truth that they have to meet that guideline of manufacturing versus retail versus everything else, or is that not on the table anymore?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, The Barlow was originally proposed as a manufacturing maker space where people would also be doing retail of the things that they were making, and some of the uses that are there now aren't quite along those lines. Golden State Cider is a tasting room, but their manufacturing is out of town but still local, and that required a use permit and so that required review. The component of it that is a little bit more restricted is the retail and the office. The Barlow had requested office be changed to be allowed, and Council specifically did not want office on the second floor, and part of that is there was enough office space in downtown and other areas of town. This is a commercial manufacturing district. The intent of the district to maintain that is not for it to be opened up to any commercial district; it's an industrial land use and it floods and has other issues. For the retail component of it there are some requirements in that the retail is permitted where the uses are 1,500 square feet or less, it's limited to a smaller square footage, and the use is located in an existing space that existed as retail in August 2018 when the code was adopted. So yes, existing industrial warehouse and manufacturing spaces are restricted from being converted into retail or other non-permitted uses.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

Just to clarify, their usage fits within the current logistics of what you can do at The Barlow, is that accurate?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, for this particular use. The past use was retail, The Nectary, so this is actually pretty similar to that, just with alcohol.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

So there were no restrictions on food or wine?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Correct, restaurants are an allowed use in that. This is not a restaurant, but restaurants are allowed in that, and so there have been a number of new restaurants that have opened up, some in former manufacturing or warehouse spaces, but those are permitted for those conversions under the current code. It's new retail space, and then obviously what this is is a tasting room/shop. Of course a there needs to be a conditional use permit for the tasting room and the retail portion of it.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

That's what I was wondering. Is it retail? It's a little tricky.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

It is a little tricky, and looking back it was a Tibetan goods retail store.

Chair Oetinger asked for further questions of staff. Seeing none, Chair Oetinger invited the applicant to speak.

The applicant gave a presentation and was available for questions.

Chair Oetinger asked for Planning Commission questions of the applicant.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

Does your other business in Oakland have similar hours to what you're proposing here?

D.C. Looney, Applicant

We're open to 9:00pm during the week and then 11:00pm on the weekends, but we are right by the Fox Theater, so there are shows, and we're in downtown Oakland, so it's a little bit more of a downtown vibe. When we moved up here we were intent on opening our business in Sebastopol, and The Barlow was our first choice. That's why we're at this level now. We felt it was the best fit for us, because they do have a lot of retail and lot of weekenders, and we already have a pretty good following up here. We have quite a few members of our wine club who live up here already.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

The reason I'm asking is you might want to match the Oakland hours. Say you're thinking down the road that you want to stay open a little bit later, it would be easier to get those hours approved now even though you might not be open that late, and then down the road if you decide to you don't have to come back and get more time.

D.C. Looney, Applicant

Yes, certainly. I don't think it would hurt.

Lisa Looney, Applicant

To be approved for later hours if we want to, sure. It's different up here than it is in downtown Oakland.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

I understand. I'm just saying you may always stay at those hours, but sometimes the sidewalks in Sebastopol don't roll up until 9:00 o'clock.

D.C. Looney, Applicant

If the City were to approve it, we're open to that.

Lisa Looney, Applicant

Like we could go up until 10:00 o'clock every night. We hadn't really considered it before.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

About staying open later, I believe in Sebastopol if you built it they will come. People are looking for things to do, and with the barcade, I can't remember anymore, but they were going to be open very late, so just a thought there. My question is that space is fairly small, so are you going to have tables inside or outside? How is the flow going to go, and how many people could you accommodate?

D.C. Looney, Applicant

We will have some tables inside. Here's the diagram. We'll have a little tasting bar. The retail shelves will be along the walls around the perimeter. This space is actually 1,300 square feet, and it wasn't the Nectary, it was the Buddhist retail place. We're in between the glass studio and across the street from the Redwood and the pizza place, so we're right there in the center of The Barlow, but there's a little bit more space than the Nectary had.

Lisa Looney, Applicant

We're allowed occupancy of up to 49 people, but we will probably have much less seats than that. It will be café-style seating. We are allowed to do a little bit of sidewalk seating in the walkway out in front. There will be a few small tables and a large communal table inside, mostly for hosting things like wine education classes.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

When you say you'll be serving food, when I looked on your website I didn't see any actual food that you made, I just saw food that you could buy, so is that something people can buy and open and eat there, or do you have an actual menu?

D.C. Looney, Applicant

We do have a menu, and we'll be providing food service. At the Punchdown in Oakland we have a full kitchen and we do make things in-house and provide full service there, which we'll provide here as well, so it's basically a restaurant but without having warm food or the full kitchen. A lot of our food product is the tinned fish conservas where we'll open it up and plate it and serve it with some bread, so there will be food served along with any of the tasting, and the tasting complements the retail shop. These wines are different and really special, so sometimes it better to taste the wine before buying it, so we're providing that to the community. Everything that we have on offer would be to provide the community with our culture that we've created, which is from traveling all around the world. We've studied wine and been to a lot of different types of places, and then we've created our own in Oakland and it's very successful there. It's kind of an adult way to have fun, drink a bottle of wine with cheese and charcuterie and little snacky and easy things, so our food program is actually serving food onsite.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

The words "natural wines" is becoming very popular, and I'm assuming that you're talking organic, no added sulfites, biodynamic raised, dry farming, all of those included. You said you were going to be using a lot of local wines, which we have quite a bit in this area just in Sonoma County, let alone up on Mendocino, so I'm particularly interested in if that's what natural means.

Lisa Looney, Applicant

Yes, you have it in a nutshell. It has to do with the farming, at least organic, biodynamics are great, no chemical use in the vineyards, and as far as the winemaking goes, no chemical additives, no manipulation with the wines, just grapes fermented. We can tolerate a very low level of sulfite addition, but we prefer wines that have none added. We have pretty strict criteria in general with the wines that we bring in, and we do have some really favorite local producers that we can't wait to help support and be a showcase for.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

I'm very glad to hear that. I've met the guy who did Coturri wines and know how difficult it is to do natural yeasts and all of that; it's a hit or miss.

Lisa Looney, Applicant

It's very risky. It's not safe necessarily to do financially for a lot of winemakers, and a lot of these really cool, young, talented winemakers who do this do not have a venue, they can't afford to have their own fancy tasting room in their own winery, so we can be a great place to showcase those wines. We can put the importance of Sonoma wine into the context of global wine really well.

Chair Oetinger asked for further Planning Commission questions of the applicants. Seeing none, Chair Oetinger opened public comment. Seeing none, Chair Oetinger closed public comment.

The Commission discussed the application as follows:

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

I hear the concerns about the possible overconcentration, but I don't know if the concern is that it's there now. I think there are advantages to having multiple places in one area. Shared food is one, for example, which is very important to offer, rather than places having to either have a kitchen or not have food, The Barlow has worked very well in sharing and supporting other local restaurants, so I think that's an advantage, as well as you could park in one place and go to a couple of different places without having to get back in your car and drive after you've been drinking. If the issue is just the concentration in one area but not necessarily the business, I don't know that it's going to be any less potentially problematic to have it open somewhere else that could be closer to residents or schools, so I support that this is a good area to have that; there are a lot of advantages. This is a very unique business, but the owners are not new to this; they have the experience, they've done it before, they know what's involved, and they're local and the kind of business we want to support. I hear the concerns, but I think that having places spread out throughout town isn't exactly better either. I would also support allowing the closing time to be up till 11:00 o'clock that they could slowly grow into, or decide not to and just keep it at 8:00p.m., and that way they could match other places there and they don't have to come back and use up the department's time to do that again. I'm confident with the fact that they've done this before and have the experience. I support this project; I think it's a good fit.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

I basically agree with everything Vice Chair Fernandez has stated and support the project. I'm totally okay with the later closing hours, which makes it easier because you won't have to come back if you do want a later closing time in the future. I'm also not concerned about the overconcentration. I agree this is a unique business, and most of the alcohol places in The Barlow have their own kind of take. The Barlow is a great community asset that draws people to Sebastopol, and we want to encourage that. The one thing I wanted to address,

because it's in the staff report, is whether or not we should increase the required parking from two to three spaces. I'm fine with two spaces, but if we have to go to three spaces that's okay with me too. There are plenty of parking spaces available in The Barlow's official parking count, and they also have the overflow that is not part of their official parking count, so I think the parking would be fine. I also want to express my desire to have standard conditions of approval that are more geared toward tenant improvements.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

I agree with my fellow commissioners and am pretty excited about having natural wines showcased, and it sounds like some good food. The parking issue, I don't know if it really makes a difference, but I'm fine with increasing it, because when you finally get to a total build-out those numbers are going to count, so I'm fine to leave it the way it was written by our staff.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

I agree with the other commissioners; I think it's a good usage. I'm not concerned about the consolidation. I think not having to get in your car is really great.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

I concur with other commissioners' opinions as well. I'm okay with an 11:00p.m. closing. I think we should stick with the staff report on the third parking spot, just so we know where we are when we get there.

Vice Chair Fernandez made a motion to approve an alcohol use permit for the Punchdown with operating hours modified to between 11:00a.m. and 11:00p.m., with staff's recommendation to increase parking to three spaces, and to strike Finding #2.

Commissioner Fritz seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Oetinger, Vice Chair Fernandez, and Commissioners Burnes, Fritz, and Kelley.

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

6. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

A. SEBASTOPOL LITTLE LEAGUE ANNUAL REPORT AND LEASE DISCUSSION

Director Svanstrom presented the staff report.

Sebastopol Little League President Mark Sanchietti gave a presentation and was available for questions.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

What is your criteria and processes if someone wants to use a field? What do you go through and what criteria do you look at for that?

Mark Sanchietti, Sebastopol Little League President

Right now we work with an adult softball league, so they utilize the field in the fall in the evening hours after work, and there are 27 teams, so we're talking 300-325 different participants within that league, a separate entity from Sebastopol Little League, however they're a big part and it helps us with our field maintenance. We will rent the field for

whatever, you don't need to play baseball, but the big concern is that it needs to be returned back in the same condition as prior to their event. Our process is we have a rental agreement and the renters have to provide proof of their own insurance. As far as a fee, we usually do so much an hour type of thing. This happens four or five times a year. The tricky part is in the spring with our added teams and two teams practicing there on weeknights, so the field is occupied with Little League activities and any field rentals have to fit the Little League's schedule.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

Are there times when it's just open and somebody can go in and sit on the grass? Usually there's activity going on, so it's not just going to be open to people?

Mark Sanchietti, Sebastopol Little League President

Right. It is locked, because we have dealt with vandalism. We've had homeless issues at both fields, and parents of Little League players are concerned about that. There are also maintenance issues. If the field were completely open we'd have added maintenance.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

We're looking at making some improvements to Ives Park and it would be important to have a Little League representative be part of that, because Little League is a big part of it and would probably have some good input as far as how people use it.

Mark Sanchietti, Sebastopol Little League President

Absolutely, I'm totally open to all that.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

Kari, on the top of page four it says, "This lease agreement shall commence on July 17, 2021 and terminates of December 31, 2025." Are there updates to this, or is this just the last one?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

This has been renewed annually at this point. Mark has been working on some draft language and a couple of other folks from the City have been asked to take it over, because we wanted to make sure we had the Commission's input on this. A lot of it is the same, like insurance provisions and whatnot. We originally were going to do an amendment, but it's such a simple lease so we decided to do a new lease and the stuff that needs to carry over we'll carry over. This lease was just renewed year after year, and so this is the latest lease there is.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

Could you go over the procedure to have the lease extended? How is the Planning Commission as Parks Communication involved? Does it go to City Council? How would all that work?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

City Council would ultimately approve it and any changes to the revisions of this, and so we'll be noting what those changes are. My hope is that you guys can provide input tonight. I don't know if it's so complicated that it needs to come back for another review. If there are any other comments you want me to try to work out with Mark, or if it's something you want to come back as a Commission to see the final lease, we can do that, but it's not required by any policy or document in the City. It could have actually gone right to Council, but I thought it would be great for you guys to have some input and discussion on this, and I knew you would want that.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

You stated that it was very difficult to rent the field for anything besides games because of the potential damage to the grass and that you guys pay for the maintenance, but I'm hearing you say now that you do lease it for other public venues. That was one of our concerns in the past, having that space be just for the Little League and how often is it being utilized, and that it's not being utilized for a larger community. Is it still accurate that it is something that you can't really rent out for other venues because of the detriment to the condition of the field?

Mark Sanchiatti, Sebastopol Little League President

Definitely the use is very dependent on that, and that's part of that rental agreement. What can be concerning is if somebody goes out there with equipment to construct something and they rut out the outfield and break the irrigation and then the Little League is at a financial loss, not a gain, by allowing that. We work really hard to maintain the field and keep it at that level.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

My walkaway understanding was that any parties or events where there are people on the field is not appropriate, and that most all uses that came to you would not be appropriate for that field, so it seems like it is just for sports. So just to be clear, is there legitimately any use because of the condition of the field and the money you pay and everything you just said?

Mark Sanchiatti, Sebastopol Little League President

Someone has to provide insurance, etc., and they would be renting it from us. I can think of a thousand examples of good and bad uses, and it would depend on the time of the year. If it's the middle of the winter and it's wet, we stay off of it too. I think to answer your question, we're open to trying to be better communicators with utilizing the field to more people in the public, but part of that is that we have a set calendar of our activities and we also have the right activities and going through that whole rental agreement process.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

I'm wondering if financially the effects of COVID and being shut down for a period and coming back, has it been difficult for the Little League, or are you finding that your finances are balancing well?

Mark Sanchiatti, Sebastopol Little League President

We are at better numbers today than we were pre-COVID. In 2019 we had 309 children, and we had 368 last year, so we are in a stronger position financially. Baseball is somewhat safer because of distance between player and being outdoors, so that provided comfort for parents. I thought we were going to have ups and downs, and having our fall numbers up like they are right now is really strong support going into next spring. The 11 to 12 year old age group and downward have been really good numbers.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

Kari, you have my input about the lease commitment.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think we can specify the Little League has asked for a 25-year lease, which since it's a ball field and it's been this way for the last 15-20 years, unless the Planning Commission has an issue with that term, the City Council currently has a way to terminate that. If the Little League is putting in substantial investment, obviously the City has no intent of terminating

the lease at this point since they're maintaining the ball fields, it's a good relationship, and the City is definitely supportive of the Little League. But should something happen, what would that look like? I think probably the biggest issue is understanding how to frame that in a lease.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

Yes, it's hard to imagine that the City would need that facility or that space for something else other than ball fields just politically, but environmentally that's part of our parks system, it's space that's being used for an activity, which we need. I don't know what other issues there would be, unless Little League defaulted or couldn't maintain, in which case you could end the lease.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That's the only thing Mark and I could come up with, if they somehow weren't maintaining the insurance or things like that were happening.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

Even if it's like something critical like homeless or a bomb shelter, I just can't think of what it would be that you would want to eliminate that structure. I know other people wanted to put the creek through it.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We have clear direction from Council at this point. There's an adopted strategy moving forward; that was also one of the options the Planning Commission had recommended, so in my mind that's settled, it's now adopted. The other thing I would note is that we will be redoing the main trail within the park, and we're using State grant funds for that; that will require a deed restriction that the park remain a park for probably about the same amount of time, so it's not like we're going to suddenly develop housing or something like that.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

I just wanted to offer my support. I don't know if the Council wants a recommendation from us on the lease terms, but I think that totally makes sense and I understand why they would need that. If they're going to make those kinds of improvements at their own expense I think they should be given the opportunity to do that, and if they need the time, I agree, what else are we going to do with that space at this point? Like Kari said, the Little League has used it for the past 25 years. I'm just curious, the lease has been from the beginning of 2000 or 2001, so were you using it prior to then without a lease? What's the history prior to this lease arrangement?

Mark Sanchietti, Sebastopol Little League President

That was before me and Polley Field was at Ives Park. I'm trying to think of the exact date. My father played there in 1958 in the second year of Little League, and that's when the field was created. I believe the Polley family in their trust left that to Sebastopol Little League.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

And you just use that field and the two over by the community center? Those are all the fields you use in town for the Little League?

Mark Sanchietti, Sebastopol Little League President

Yes, we do specifically, however with our numbers having grown what we do is we go to, say, Park Side School, for the lower divisions, and the other school would be Summit Ridge Middle School. Last year we turned up at Gravenstein Elementary School and Hill Crest Middle School, because we had so many teams we couldn't get enough fields. Polley Field is

really critical because we can get multiple practices there. We go to the schools and have an agreement with them for the lower divisions, and then as the kids continue to grow we have the older divisions at Polley Field and we reference Clahan Park down there.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

Could you comment on the diversity of the individuals that use the park, what efforts might be made or allowed for kids or adults from different economic backgrounds to be able to participate?

Mark Sanchiatti, Sebastopol Little League President

If financially that is an issue, we offer scholarships, and there is never a child that gets turned away. Boys and/or girls can both play Sebastopol Little League baseball. That's very important to our board and we're very supportive of that.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

When you put out information, whether about Little League signups or anything like that, do you provide that in other languages?

Mark Sanchiatti, Sebastopol Little League President

Yes, we do. English and Spanish.

Chair Oetinger thanked Mr. Sanchiatti for his presentation.

B. LEVEL OF SERVICE REPORT

Associate Planner Jay and Director Svanstrom presented the Level of Service Report.

Chair Oetinger asked for Planning Commission questions of staff.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

What is your viewpoint on how the City is keeping up with maintenance of existing stuff and projects? I know oftentimes it's a tough situation because of lack of personnel and funding.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

There is a perennial issue with government funding in that while there is a lot of money in grants, it is generally always for making something new: making a new park; expanding services; or building a new roadway, highway, or bike path, but there is rarely money for maintenance of your existing facilities. You have something that's fairly new and you can maintain it for a number of years, but things do wear out. We've seen that with Ives Park where the pathways are all worn out and need to be replaced. From a parks perspective the City could be using more of the Measure M dollars, which can be used for maintenance, although it can't substitute in existing dollars; we are required to maintain the same staffing and whatnot, so we can use those for new things. Some of that money is being used for brand new projects like the restroom at Burbank, but when we don't have a big project to do some of those dollars will go towards more maintenance, like additional pathway length in Ives Park, which we know is going to take more than one round of funding to get that done. I know that Public Works has struggled, although not so much the City facility side of things, such as City Hall and the fire house, which are in decent shape and are getting the required maintenance, and the City has upgraded the solar and is maintaining that well. Unfortunately there's been a lot of vandalism lately and they have a hard time keeping up with graffiti removal, illegal dumping, trash from homeless encampments, etc.

Evert Fernandez, Vice Chair

I've always feel like when new projects come we talk about conditions of approval, but there should be a subject line of what will future maintenance require as part of the discussion and it should be included.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We added that to the Planning Commission Work Plan regarding the life costs to projects.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

I remember a time when we didn't know whether our sewage going to the Santa Rosa regional pump station was rainwater seeping into the pipes or it was extra low because the sewage was leaking out of the pipes, so are we now pretty sure the sewage pipes are not leaking, or do we suspect that that's going on still?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That's a question better directed to Public Works, however I do know that there is an issue with historic sewer laterals, which is the connection between your house and the main pipe in the road. A lot of those were built from clay in the past and so they crack. As properties are redeveloped we usually require the pipes to be scoped with a camera to see if there are cracks, and the City has set up is a revolving loan fund to assist homeowners who need to do that. As the City ages that is one of the bigger issues, and I think in Sebastopol the sewer laterals are actually maintained by the City, which is huge and that is very unusual for a city; usually it's the homeowner.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

I had a personal experience with this. We had a lateral pipe break and we had to replace it. I live in an older neighborhood and I would expect there are many conditions where there are cracks or holes, because they are clay pipes and they are either leaking out or leaking in. It probably happens a lot and people probably don't know that it's happening until it becomes a problem. I appreciate all the information. It's very interesting to get an annual overall picture of where things stand with the various infrastructures, and as a Planning Commission to look back on last few years on the number and types of applications and see what the trends are.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

It's good to have it all in one place, so when you need look for that information it's all there and pretty current.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

Yes, I do refer to this throughout the year for various reasons.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

I know we sell some water, and it was reported at the City Council meeting that our water selling has dropped. Why would that be in a drought? And do we track what usage it's for, such as residential, commercial, or agriculture?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Before this year I don't believe we tracked that. It could have been agriculture and water at construction sites to keep the dust down. I believe in early 2021 the City Council had an item where they looked at water sales and they limited them to potable water for household use or livestock only, so you could not use water to irrigate fields or use on construction sites, to fill swimming pools, etc., and that probably accounts for the lower rate of water sales. The City isn't hitting the 25% water use reduction, because Sebastopol's residents

already use a low amount of water, and people began growing part of their food at home during COVID and that has continued, and so there's more water use.

Kathy Oetinger, Chair

Do you think part of that could be people working from home and students attending classes from home?

John Jay, Associate Planner

I would say overall people are at home and may water the garden whereas they may not be able to do it if they are at work outside the home, so the trends of working from home and home gardening have increased Sebastopol's water consumption a bit more, but it's not a bad thing overall if done in moderation.

Paul Fritz, Commissioner

Do you know what kind of uptick there has been in the BayREN water fixture replacement program? Have people been doing that?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I can get you stats for that. I know there have been a number of single-family residents mainly who have done that, but it has been harder to engage landlords, and that's a large chunk of people.

Chair Oetinger asked for further Planning Commission questions of staff. Seeing none, Chair Oetinger moved to the next item.

C. PLANNING COMMISSION TRAINING

Director Svanstrom provided a Planning Commission training video regarding planning and zoning law.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Ives Park Subcommittee, Chair Oetinger

She has sent her notes to Director Svanstrom following the Libby Park visit.

8. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Svanstrom and Associate Planner Jay provided updates.

The Commission asked questions of Director Svanstrom.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Oetinger adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 8, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.