

The Gravenstein Commons project is coming before the City Council for a third time.

- The first vote at the May 2, 2023 meeting was an impulsive act by the City Council members who supported the project with no real understanding of what the project entailed.
 - To be fair you were misled by the staff report and presentation at the time. The project was presented as SVdP driven with the city providing only jurisdictional support. The staff report indicated the city had no financial responsibility for the project.
 - Mr. Tibbits, who undoubtedly understood the Homekey requirements chose not to provide additional clarity for council consideration.
- The second time it came before the City Council you voted to withdraw from the project. Our new City Manager raised alarming concerns about the misunderstanding that the city has no financial responsibility for the project. He explained that the State has had issues with “non-profits” and only offers grant opportunities to local government entities. This information was available to you through a link on the May 2, 2023 staff report.
 - Page 8 of the Project Homekey Round 3 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) explains that only governments (city, county, city & county) are “eligible entities”. Eligible entities may choose to apply together with a nonprofit organization (coapplicant) such as SVdP.
- Although you voted to withdraw it seems likely that SVdP had already submitted the application for the city. I asked for a copy and was told the city did not have one.
- This is serious stuff. The Government has had bad experiences with many bad actors and is cracking down.
 - As our City Council you voted for this and the application was filed. You should feel some obligation to followup and understand what was included in that application.
 - The city needs to expect there will be scrutiny and questions and someone on staff better have good answers or the City Council and senior staff will join SAYs, DEMA, Sonoma County and others on the front page of the PD as subjects of a government investigation.

- On April 2, 2023, the city manager brought the Council many other issues not discussed at the May 2023 meeting. City Manager Schwartz has more experience with the homeless workings in the county and the state than anyone on the city staff so his perspective should be welcomed.
 - He explained that the Homekey agreement makes the city the lead on a project of this type, which requires a great deal of city staff time to provide oversight.
 - It is not sufficient to just hire a consultant. Someone has to manage the consultant as well as understand the issues to make informed decisions and when necessary informed advice to the Council.
 - Mr. Schwartz identified serious issues with SVdP's development and operational plans. He identified at least 6 key issues that the city needed to address before moving forward. During that meeting SVdP provided a lengthy argument, disagreeing with the analysis. We saw during that meeting how time intensive negotiations with SVdP were going to be.
- Prior to the vote at the April 2 meeting Councilmember Zollman correctly summarized the issues:
 - There are government entities more financially solid than us that could support this properly
 - We are already doing more for unsheltered than any other city in the County
 - The proposal for SVdP to hire consultant to negotiate with them on behalf of the city is a conflict of interest
 - He expressed concern about taking on more financial risk by asking "why would a city that is already in trouble get into a situation that incurs more risk".
- This issue is being raised (again) because Councilmember Mauer is concerned about the threat of litigation risk from SVdP. The April 2, 2023 staff report stated specifically that there is no litigation risk to withdrawing from the project. What has changed? Do we want to partner with someone who gets our cooperation by threatening to sue?
- The current staff report identifies developing encampments. This is an issue that needs to be addressed. Please discuss how moving forward with this initiative reduces the risk of encampments. SVdP has withdrawn the offer to maintain some RV spots.

Gravenstein Commons is a project better suited to sponsorship by the County or under the auspices of the Continuum of Care.

- Eligibility and rent subsidies for residents will be determined within the Continuum or the County.
- Prospective candidates for permanent supportive housing can and probably will come from somewhere in the County outside of Sebastopol.
- The county has a department fully staffed and qualified to manage a project like this.
- Note that under the NOFA guidelines the County is an eligible applicant for grants such as this one.

If as a City Council Member, you chose to vote yes on this then the responsibility for proper due diligence falls on you.

You should assure us you have:

- Reviewed the application SVdP submitted on behalf of the City of Sebastopol seeking the Home key grant. Certain that it is accurate and properly represents the city and the project.
- Reviewed the actual terms of the “Standard Agreement” available on the HCD website reassuring yourself and the citizens the city will meet all of those commitments with assistance from SVdP.
- Conducted interviews with the city staff in Santa Rosa that are overseeing the Gold Key Home key project with SVdP to understand what is involved in such a project. How has SVdP performed in the view of the city workers that lead the project?
- Visited the Gold Key site and interviewed residents to understand if SVdP is living up to their promises to make it right for those original residents that were subject to the PD article. Mr. Tibbits promised you they were doing things right. Are they? You only have to drive a few miles or pick up a phone to find out.
- Reviewed the final SVdP development proposal. Asked for any concerns that the city’s DRB or planning committee have with the proposal. My understanding is they have continued to review the project and there may be some outstanding issues. (Personally, I hope the EV charging stations promised in the May 2023 Staff report are still in the plan!)
- Done a site visit to understand the plan and the potential impact on the neighbors who have already suffered much from Horizon Shine. Get input from the neighbors on the proposal.

- Revisited the issues identified in the consultant report included in the April 2, 2023 staff report and successfully gotten information or specified actions to resolve those issues.
- Gotten qualified legal judgement on whether the city can simply contract away any potential liabilities created by not meeting terms of the “Standard Agreement”.

This city has a big heart but is 2 square miles with 7,000 residents. We have limited government services that can barely deliver safe water, sewer and repair a road or two. We have no social services available in the city. We don't have enough tax revenues to fund basic expenses.

My guess is none of you who vote yes will even do more than one of these tasks. It is a lot of work. That is what the City Manager was trying to tell you the last time you discussed this project. Someone has to do the work before you vote yes. Someone also has to do the work after you vote yes. If you vote no, then someone needs to manage the issues that creates as well.

A lesson can be learned from this. It is a lesson I have offered before. Stop voting for things you don't understand. Find a way given the restrictions of the Brown Act to fully vet complex projects before they come to City Council for a vote.