

**Planning and Zoning Committee of the MidCoast Community Council**

PO. Box 64, Moss Beach, CA 94038

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FAX: 3 Pages

To: **Mr. Dean Petersen**  
Environmental Health Department  
San Mateo County Planning and Building Division  
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cc: Supervisor Rich Gordon  
MidCoast Community Council

re: Issues, comments and questions concerning proposed well ordinance and well monitoring and regulation

Dean:

Thank you for your time on the phone today. As I mentioned, we have the well issues on the agenda for our next MidCoast Community Council meeting on Wednesday, September 13, 2000.

Wells, well drilling, and the associated issues of water quality, resource protection, and accelerated, higher-density development have become topics of high interest in our communities lately. As the new sewer plant has come on-line, it seems there are well drilling rigs everywhere, especially in the Montara-Moss Beach area where the moratorium on water utility service connections continues. There is understandable concern about the immediate and long-range effects that this many wells will have on water quality, reliability, and natural resources.

At its last two meetings, 8/16/00 & 9/6/00) the Planning and Zoning committee of the MidCoast Community Council reviewed the proposed new well ordinance, the associated proposal for the CDP exemption for test wells, and the preliminary well monitoring data supplied by your department. We've assembled the following comments and questions which we hope you can address when you attend the Council meeting. Some may require detailed response, some may just need a pointer to the appropriate document, some are suggestions. I've tried to group them into two main categories - more questions may arise from interested parties before the meeting, and I will pass those along to you as I collect them.

**Proposed Well Ordinance.**

- There is no specific mention in the ordinance for testing of the water *quality*, aside from the definition of "Potable water" in 4.68.020 (j) and the mention of testing requirements "upon the request of the County Health Officer" in 4.68.260. Assuming potable water would need to be demonstrated for certification, how is this handled and regulated? Further questions about continued monitoring are in the next section.

- What is the process and associations between wells and building permits? Some wells are being drilled and capped, with no specific building plans submitted. What is the difference between "test wells" and just "wells", as far as the permit process goes? The Planning & Zoning Committee has been referred applications for test wells on parcels, and also for just a single well, where no previous one had been drilled - what is the difference and why would one owner go one way or the other?
- The existence of multiple non-conforming and substandard parcels in many areas throughout the MidCoast presents the possibility of multiple wells that would be unable to meet the specified setback requirements from each other, property lines, and sewer lines and easements. How would the policies and regulations for variances be constructed to protect the general health and safety of dense well groupings?
- Are there specific regulations on setbacks from protected resources (riparian areas, wetlands, creeks, endangered species habitat, etc.) and who is responsible for the regulation?
- The references to permits for the abandonment of wells appears "struck out" through the draft - and there is no section to deal with abandoning wells. How will this be handled and monitored? refer to 4.68.100 as example
- Where does the water go that is pumped from "cathodic protection wells?" How is this dispersal regulated? *None is pumped*
- Would the ordinance apply to "dry wells" that are used to retain and disperse storm runoff by injection or absorption into the ground? refer to 4.68.020 (n) *No*
- Are domestic water sources from surface flows (creeks) permitted in this area and how are they regulated? *Dry wells are illegal*  
*Water rights issue*
- This ordinance appears to relate only to the unincorporated MidCoast ( see 4.46.230) Are there separate ordinance for other areas (South Coast, Skyline, etc.) and what is the compatibility or difference with regulations in the other areas or with regulations in neighboring Half Moon Bay? *applies to all unincorp. SM Co.* *after 4/16/87*
- There are numerous references to "requirements as determined by the County Health Officer" and similar language, indicating there will be a number of policies and regulations associated with this ordinance. 4.68.410 lists several of them, but there would seem to be more. What will those be, how will they be developed, and is there a way to indicate (or mandate) their development within the ordinance? Why would they be issued as policy and not as part of the ordinance? This was specifically raised in relation to how a well is to be drilled in relation to existing trees, but would apply to many other areas as well. *Ord. - broader - state law*

**Monitoring and Regulation**

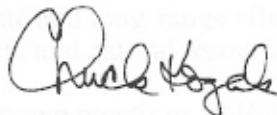
- From the data supplied from your office, it would appear that the number of wells in the Montara-Moss Beach area has exceeded the scope of the earlier Kleinfelder Report (Montara-Moss Beach Water Well EIR) of 1989. Have the monitoring programs from this report been followed, and what programs (for both quantity and quality) are proposed for existing and future wells? *Policy - Special cir. not included in Ord. - more flexible*
- There was apparently a similar report done for the El Granada area, which we have not yet obtained a copy of to study. What were the conclusions and recommendations?

- Planning and Zoning Committee of the MidCoast Community Council  
1000 Highway 1, Suite 100, Montara, CA 94037
- If the output of an existing well drops below acceptable levels, runs dry, experiences a loss of water quality or becomes contaminated, what is the process to protect the health and safety of the well owners and the surrounding area?
  - It has been reported that a number of wells in the Miramar area of Half Moon Bay (at the north end of the city, west of Highway 1) had been shut down for health and safety reasons. Do the problems that were associated with these wells have any bearing on the wells being proposed in the Unincorporated Miramar area?
  - The list of wells supplied by your office appears to have number of existing ones missing. Members of the community with wells, or familiar with the wells in their area, noted many omissions, sometimes their own which they know to be permitted and certified. What further effort is being done to update this data base?
  - Representatives of local special districts have reported some confusion and frustration in the ascertaining the location of existing wells, and have expressed interest in a coordinated effort to better document wells and utility line placement and easements.

Thank you again for your time on this matter, and I appreciate your coming to our meeting to address these issues. If this all seems a bit too much to handle at once, we might be able to extend this through two meetings, if that works with the time schedule for the ordinance. I haven't even addressed the issues and questions regarding the CDP exemption on test wells until I get some further information from the Planning Department.

If you have any questions on any of this, please don't hesitate to give me call.

Sincerely,



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