

Midcoast Community Council

P.O. Box 64
Moss Beach, CA 94038

An elected Municipal Advisory Council of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Serving 12,000 Coastal Residents

November 26, 2001

Supervisor Rich Gordon
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

Dear Supervisor Gordon,

In our ongoing efforts to improve the quality of communication between the MCC, local residents and the County, we want to share the concerns of a number of our constituents regarding the efficiency of the County's public notification systems.

During our October 24 meeting, the Council took public comment on this issue and has developed a list of recommendations which we urge the County to seriously consider. There has been concern that matters of longstanding community interest are inadequately noticed in advance of their presentation before the Board of Supervisors. Residents feel that high profile projects warrant an extra effort on the part of County staff to ensure that interested parties and community members are given ample time to comment on issues and arrange their schedules to accommodate an appearance before the Board.

Of particular concern is the fact that the County has recently changed the newspaper in which it publishes its legally required meeting notices. The San Mateo County Times had been the newspaper of record for carrying these announcements. The Times is a daily paper, it is available at many locations throughout the Coastside and it offers home delivery service. The paper now publishing the County's notices is the Independent Newspaper Group, a collection of regionally-specific weekly papers which are available in only one location in Half Moon Bay in insufficient amounts. The Independent has no distribution sites in the MidCoast.

Questions have been raised about the "newspaper of record" designation, and whether or not the Independent group satisfies the requirements to be considered as the publication of record for the Coastside. When asked why the change had been made, one Council member was told that the County likes to spread its business around among the newspapers in the region and that County

Counsel had approved the new arrangement. While courtesy publishing of notices in the Half Moon Bay Review does at times occur, there is no legal requirement to do so.

Some residents have been disappointed in the Planning Department's failure to inform neighbors within the specified proximity of pending projects and tree removal applications. Changes in Departmental jurisdictions for the administration of these permits are not adequately communicated to the public.

While many concerns were raised, many constructive recommendations were also forthcoming. They include suggestions that the County:

1. Announce upcoming agenda items, well in advance of the Brown Act mandated guidelines.
2. Make available the County Manager's calendar of future agenda item scheduling to allow for its posting on the MCC website and at local Post Offices
3. Establish timelines for project reviews which include cut-off dates for inclusion on upcoming agendas.
4. Establish an email notification list which would send a URL announcement to list members to access specified information on the County website. The MCC would take the lead in compiling such a list and forwarding it to the County.
5. Implement advance notification procedures for projects designated as high profile by the MCC and the community. A list of such projects will be submitted to the County by the MCC.
6. Mark envelopes containing notifications with a stamp reading "Urgent" or "Project Notification Enclosed" to alert recipients of the importance of the contents.
7. Provide three copies of each Board of Supervisors' meeting Agenda to the MCC to allow for posting in all three MidCoast Post Offices.

We request that the County initiate a process to address these issues and evaluate the feasibility of the recommendations listed above. We look forward to your response and appreciate the opportunity to work cooperatively with you on behalf of our constituents. Thank you for your serious consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

Laura Stein, Chair
MidCoast Community Council