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Sherlock Homes case solved in town council

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Puns abounded and tempers flared as the Windsor Town Council discussed the future of a seven house subdivision for Sherlock Homes.

Long-time Windsor residents Bob and Kay Sherlock brought the project forward in 2018 after the General Plan had been approved. The piece of land, located at 260 Arata Lane, has been owned by the Sherlocks for 40 years.

After the project had been brought forward and approved by the planning commission earlier this year, Councilmember Sam Salmon approached the town to see if the project could be required to put in a road through the Sherlock property, into an adjoining piece of property owned by the town.

That property, known as the Manchester Property, was zoned gateway commercial in the most recent General Plan, but Salmon proposed changing the zoning and turning it into a tiny homes development, and requiring the Sherlocks to put in a road.

In response, the city planner Kim Jordan put together a presentation that offered a series of three options. Option one would keep the current Sherlock project exactly as it is. Option two would create a permanent easement for potential future development into a throughway if the tiny homes project ever went through, and option three would require them to build the throughway as part of the development of the property.

The Sherlocks had come forward during public comment at a previous meeting to express their irritation at Salmon and his interference, and to make it clear they weren't interested in making any alterations, and their feelings clearly hadn't cooled.

"I put this subdivision together about a year ago, spent a lot of time and expense on it, and I'm not ready to go back to the drawing board. If I were to do this, it would be Sam's project, I'm just not going to entertain looking into that," said Bob Sherlock. "I did all my homework when I put this together and we wouldn't be here talking with you if I'd been told you were going to have a road going through me. This is a lot of time and expense just for Sam's pet project here."

Bob Sherlock also expressed concern about recently discovering that a roundabout may be placed near the property and he wondered aloud how much of his property was going to be taken by the town for that project; he also stated that he dropped the number of houses in the project from eight to seven so that he would have extra land to lose to the potential roundabout.

"Even doing seven lots, I don't even have to knock out an oak tree, it works perfectly," Bob Sherlock said. "I sat down with an architect and it conforms to everything the town wants ... The other thing is, Sam, you don't even remember, when the town had to take that (Manchester) property it had two houses on there and you people tore them down. You said, 'The town's not in the rental business,' but now you are, huh? Don't make me pay for your pet projects. It's not even up for discussion, if you decide to put road through me, I'm out of there."

But the most fiery rhetoric came from Bob Sherlock's wife Kay, who visibly vibrated with frustration.

"We are reasonable people. We wanted to do this 20 years ago, but they took our property because they needed to put Los Amigos somewhere different. At that point, we had to rearrange our property that you took from us by eminent domain and you left us a bunch of trouble," she said. "Now, when the General Plan was brought forward last year, and normally I stay out of

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Larkfield rebuild weighs sewer vs septic



Photo Heather Bailey

NEIGHBORS IN NEED — Gena Jacob, Sheri Jacob, Beverly Nystrom, Vanessa Goodall and her three children Aarielle, Amia and Asher, from left, stand on the front porch of the Jacobs' recently completed home. They are part of a group of neighbors in the Larkfield Estates neighborhood that are eager to get sewer hookups, but are struggling with the out-of-pocket costs.

Homeowners eager to move to sewer, but price point is daunting

By Heather Bailey
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In the wake of the 2017 fires, as homeowners in the Larkfield Estates neighborhood found themselves contemplating the rebuild process, the idea of moving from their individual septic systems to a sewer connection became a conversation.

In the time since then, there's been a lot of discussion and negotiation, and many of the homeowners do want to move forward, but a steep price tag — which will not be covered by insurance — has continued to prove a challenging hurdle to overcome.

Most of the houses in the neighborhood were built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when

individual septic systems would have been the normal choice. Sheri and Gena Jacob's home was built in 1972, and while they'd lived with its septic system for 20 years, they tried to see the devastation of the fires as the possibility for improvement.

"When we learned that our neighborhood was completely devastated, everyone started coming together, trying to figure out who was going to rebuild and what infrastructure needed to be put in place. So, we were thinking individually and then as a neighborhood, then for our community, 'How are we going to put all this back for our community?'" said Gena Jacob. "Our septic systems was obviously one of those topics that came up. We never thought there would be an opportunity for this neighborhood to have a sewer option. Individually, it's just pretty expensive to do. But, some of our neighbors started contacting the Sonoma County Water Agency, asking them if there was even a possibility and they said let us look into it. Then they

started getting more people interested and contacting them and that's how the ball started rolling."

Initial conversations were rocky, as some neighbors balked at the idea of the switch being mandatory, while others found the costs, which would not be covered by insurance, were just too far out of reach.

In time, the county came to offer and financing package to homeowners, and made participation in the hook up optional. (See sidebar.) However, challenges still exist.

For homeowners like the Jacobs, according to Gena, they have had to pay for the construction of a sewer lateral on the property, then will be expected to pay the county somewhere between \$50,000 and \$65,000 for the lines to be laid throughout the neighborhood. Then, the county charges an additional \$12,000 connection fee for attaching the sewer lateral from the home to the new infrastructure.

None of these items can be covered by insurance, since they didn't exist pre-fire, and for people like the

Jacobs whose home has been completed enough to be livable, they still had to install a septic system, because the sewer won't be ready until 2020.

While there are concerns about cost, most neighbors seem happy with the idea of sewer. For one thing it frees up the use of the property, allowing the construction of things like sheds, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and pools, when setbacks from leach lines are no longer a concern.

Beverly Nystrom, whose rebuild is still in the foundation phase, is adding an ADU to her property in anticipation of sewer, so that her daughter's family can move into the main house and help care for Nystrom, who will take up residence in the ADU.

"I never questioned the decision to connect with sewer because before the fire we had looked into putting a granny unit on the back for my husband and I and it was not a

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Sketch group travels and paints the county

Ready, Set, Sketch! group meets monthly at various locations across the county

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Once a month, a group of people travel from around the county and beyond to sit and admire their surroundings. Ready, Set, Sketch!, a local group that meets once a month to sketch areas around the county and beyond, is in its seventh year and has amassed over 100 members.

Most recently, the group set up in downtown Geyserville. Before that, they were in Duncan Mills.

"We meet all over the place," said Cloverdale resident Richard Sheppard, the founder of Ready, Set, Sketch! "It's primarily Sonoma County, but we've gone up to Hopland once and sometimes we go south of Sonoma County. I try and get interesting locations, some are just like downtown Geyserville, but we go to farms and sometimes people's estates that are interesting."

Sheppard is an artist by trade and has been sketching Sonoma County for 10 years. He teaches art classes, has two published books of sketches and at one time had a column where he told stories of county locations through his sketches. It was while writing the column that he decided

to create the sketch group.

"I was sketching and writing stories," he said. "I just thought it would be nice to have some of the people who were reading my stories about being out and sketching come and join me and participate."

What resulted is a community of artists who travel around the county and sketch together — some are locals, some come from the East Bay or San Francisco, some come every month while others pop in and out.

Overall, Sheppard estimates that between the group's Facebook page and mailing list, there are hundreds of people who get his meeting notices. However, only 12 to 24 show up per session.

Sheppard isn't concerned with the numbers, though. He wants to focus on the community, and the joy that he gets from sketching.

"I want to be out there and anyone else who wants to be out there is welcome to come," he said. "It's a great way to spend a Saturday."

The group meets on the second Saturday of every month at a location of Sheppard's choosing. He tends to look for places that lend themselves to multiple focal points, he said. He wants those in attendance to have subjects to choose from — places where people can draw other people, buildings, scenery, you name it.

A few days before the second Saturday of the month he posts the details. Planning too far out,



Photo Zoë Strickland

NEW WORK — Group founder Richard Sheppard discusses a watercolor sketch he created during one of his outings with Ready, Set, Sketch!

especially in winter when there's a high chance that a location may be rained out, has been detrimental to meetings.

While creating art can be a solitary activity, Ready, Set, Sketch! finds a way to orient sketching in a way that taps into community.

"We meet and we chat for 10 to 15 minutes and then we disburse around whatever area I choose we're going to go," Sheppard said. "We sketch for three hours and then we come back and we spread out all of

our sketches and look at them. We talk about whatever we came across that may be interesting."

Though it's not required, Sheppard said that group members are encouraged to get lunch or patronize wherever they've been situated while drawing. It doesn't cost money to be in the group, he said, but he does want to support local businesses.

While the community aspect of

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