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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SONOMA WEST NOV. 22, 2001

Laguna master plan

EDITOR: We are responding to several inaccuracies and accusations in the recent news report about the Laguna Implementation Committee meeting about the skateboard park, and the guest commentary by Ritchie Partington.

The suggestion in the banner headline "Laguna committee slams hope for skateboard park" is just not true. The committee was very clear that a skateboard park is inappropriate for the Laguna site for many reasons, among them being flooding, displacement of native plantings and the cumulative impacts of allowing more active recreation next to a wildlife reserve. The notion that this kills off the skateboard park is an unfair depiction. It does toss the matter of a skateboard park for West County skaters back to the Board of Supervisors, who can OK the Ragle Park site. Recently, local soccer interests stated that the inclusion of a skatepark would not materially affect the soccer activity at Ragle.

The suggestion by Partington that the committee is against skateboarding, and by inference teenagers, is inaccurate and inflammatory. Members of the committee clearly stated the opinion that skateboarding is a legitimate sport and offered to be involved in solving the location issue. (The problem at the Cotati skatepark would suggest that formal supervision of the skateboard park be required, just as soccer and Ives pool uses are.) We also stated that the city of Sebastopol should not once again be burdened with supplying the recreational needs of the entire West County. The Sebastopol Community Center, the swimming pool at Ives Park, the Sebastopol Center for the Arts are all facilities sited in Sebastopol which service families who live in town and out. County funding and responsibilities for these activities have been scanty.

Finally, we hope Partington does not represent the majority of skateboarders and their parents (any skateboarding parents out there?) when he says most kids don't care where the park is located. The Laguna de Santa Rosa wetlands, of which the Laguna Park is a part, is the second largest freshwater wetlands in Northern California. The Laguna Master Plan, created by consensus and over time participated in by many people, is a guide to protect the Laguna forever. We're sure that skateboarders and their parents care about its value today and as a legacy for all time.

**Richard Nichols and Helen Shane,
Laguna Wetlands Preserve
Implementation Committee members**