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## Infighting over Laguna infilling

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The conflicts inherent in Sebastopol's new municipal concern for the Laguna de Santa Rosa flared up Tuesday evening, as two business owners accused the city of deliberately stalling their Morris Street building proposals while the council debates the recommendations of the city's Laguna Advisory Committee.

"I never saw anything drag along so slow in my life," complained Tom Barlow, who is pressing for action on his bid to create a site for Key Auto Body to build a new facility at the north end of his Morris Street lot.

Barlow found an ally in councilman Bill Roventini, who charged that city staff members were acting on the assumption that the committee's policy ideas would be adopted. "Do you administer policy on the probability it will be adopted?" he demanded.

City planning consultant Bruce Aspinall said the Laguna report had to be considered as environmental information, but explained, "There is a big difference between implementing policy and evaluating information." Aspinall and city attorney Larry McLaughlin insisted that the Barlow/Key project was moving through the process normally, but the process was complicated by the involvement of the Army Corps of Engineers, which also claims jurisdiction over the Laguna.

"Business is not usual," responded architect Bob Anderson, accusing the city of "moving to bankrupt" property owners along Morris Street. Land owners there have been assessed fees for major street improvements intended to support new industrial development along Morris Street, which lies close to the west bank of the Laguna's main channel. But because of the low elevations of those properties, substantial amounts of fill are needed to raise the building sites above the flood level, which conflicts with the anti-fill recommendations of the Laguna Advisory Committee.

Committee member Helen Libeu said she was "astonished that no-net-fill is going to bankrupt some of our leading citizens," and demanded to know if the applicants had obtained all the other permits they needed to proceed with their construction.

After an exhaustive review of the status of the applications, the council appeared satisfied that they were being handled properly. "I don't see how it would be humanly possible for the city to move any faster," concluded Mayor Pro Tem Anne Magnie.

The council is due to continue its review of the Laguna Report and the planning committee's recommendations at a special meeting May 23.

—BRUCE ROBINSON