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Mietes & Bounds

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Growth control

If you thought the city's new General Plan limits future growth in Sebastopol, look at what is on the Council's agenda for 7 p.m. on Tuesday, July 12: a 14 page draft of new Growth Management law.

Anti-growth advocates are taking no chances that future and more enlightened City Council members will act to permit low and moderate income housing to be built in Sebastopol. The proposed Growth Management Program Ordinance has been cleverly written and, frankly, it will be difficult for the casual reader to identify the loopholes which will become the nooses around the necks of future home-builders in Sebastopol.

The purpose of the ordinance is clearly stated in the second paragraph: "This Ordinance establishes a Growth Management Program for the City of Sebastopol to implement the Sebastopol General Plan, Policies 1 & 2 of the Land Use Element which contain programs to maintain level of service standards and guidelines for City services and establishes a maximum number of new residential units. This will allow the City to manage and balance new residential growth so as not to exceed available resources including public infrastructure capacity, public services, and fiscal resources; and, to protect the character and quality of life for existing and future residents of Sebastopol."

To justify the need for the ordinance, the council finds that the present wastewater treatment capacity is limited, both by the expansion potential of the Santa Rosa-operated Llano Road sewage treatment plant and lack of city funds for "upgrading" the Healdsburg Avenue trunk main and the Green Valley sewer pump station. Both of these upgrades were included in the Sewer Bond issue approved by city voters in 1986. If the city really ran out of bond money, as claimed, it seems reasonable to ask why city redevelopment agency funds were not used to repair the line.

The fact is that additional sewer capacity is available to Sebastopol and has been turned down in the past as part of a deliberate effort to stop growth. That additional capacity, used intelligently, could serve in the long run to reduce the rates for homeowners in Sebastopol.

Our notorious traffic problem, resulting from being at the crossroads of two state highways, is being manipulated to stop growth. The proposed law imposes service-level requirements that can result in denial of building permits because of traffic originating *outside* of Sebastopol.

The ordinance gives lip-service to affordable housing by excluding low and moderate income housing from limitations in a given year, but subtracts the number of units from the total housing allocation allowance of 575 units through the year 2013. The irony is that only 11 of the Housing Opportunity Sites identified in the new General Plan are even marginally suitable for low and moderate income housing, and the lots are too small and too expensive for the economy-of-scale essential for a viable project.

The proposed law calls for a Growth Management Program, but presents a blueprint for no-growth that positively does not serve the social and economic needs of this community,