

Glen Ellen Town Meeting Minutes  
Dunbar Elementary School  
Monday, November 7, 2016 – 7 p.m.

Meeting organizers: Leslie Vaughn, Jim Shere  
Minutes respectfully submitted by Tracy Salcedo

Leslie Vaughn advised that today's "meet and greet" is essentially a repeat of the October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin and District Director Pat Gilardi in attendance at the Glen Ellen Community Church's Mayflower Hall.

Leslie and Jim Shere share in the recognition that community-based change is important. These meetings provide a forum for residents, landowners, business owners, and organizations to express "what Glen Ellen wants" as a community, and to find a way to more effectively assert local control on Glen Ellen-centric issues. Because the town's demographics are changing, there is a need to talk regardless of opposing views and to find a way to "protect what we've got and move forward."

The goal is to develop a coherent community voice out of a consensus out of conversations over the following months. They spoke of the need to create daylong workshops where people with the same concerns can meet collectively to discuss a specific topic in groups created with breakout sessions to optimize time spent together. Important points to remember are that "passion is OK," and "all issues have merit."

Jim presented a historic view of activism in Glen Ellen:

- 1839: Vallejo built a sawmill that is still standing here at the confluence of Asbury and Sonoma Creeks.
- 1858: Charles Stuart established Glen Ellen Ranch, named after his wife Ellen.
- 1872: The Glen Ellen Post Office was established on Dunbar Road; Stuart changed the name of his ranch to Glen Oaks to avoid confusion.
- 1880s: Railroads came. Thousands of tourists visited Glen Ellen every weekend. Problems dealing with the influx ensued, prompting the need for community planning.
- 1901: Sonoma County supervisors established the Glen Ellen Township, whose borders ranged from the town of Sonoma to the City of Santa Rosa.
- 1904: Glen Ellen Improvement Club established to assert some local control. The town got fences and a constable. The Improvement Club's name was eventually changed to Glen Ellen Women's Club because women were the driving force. The Women's Club lasted until 1986.
- 1986: Glen Ellen Association was established, with longtime resident Sylvia Crawford an organizer.

- 1990: George Ellman, another longtime resident, writes “A Glen Ellen Town Plan” which before the end of the year is accepted as “Glen Ellen: Development and Design Guidelines” by the County of Sonoma.
- 2002: Over 200 people took part in town discussions on a stormy, rainy night. Jim Berkland’s Estate provided the historical notes he took of that meeting.
- Present: Given demographic and developmental changes, Glen Ellen needs to find a way to become self-governing.

Jim outlined the social structure of the town as he sees it, with the caveat that defining Glen Ellen may encompass more than these communities:

- Altruistic workers of SDC
- Artists, writers, and musicians
- Agriculturalists, including small farmers, vineyardists and equestrians
- Hospitality (wineries, restaurants, markets, hotels and vacation rentals)
- Old-timers (people who’ve been here a long time; some can’t afford to stay)
- Newcomers (people moving in who want to preserve the Glen Ellen they see now)

A variety of community-based organizations exist, including:

- Glen Ellen Firefighters Association
- Glen Ellen Community Church
- Glen Ellen Historical Society
- Glen Ellen Fair Association
- Various service organizations, including the Lions and Rotary Clubs
- The Dunbar PTO

There was discussion of the changing demographics in terms of population versus housing:

- 55% of Glen Ellen’s homes are now occupied, now versus 88% earlier per census
- The population was 992 in the 2000 census
- The population was 784 in the 2010 census

Leslie recapped the issues that were identified at the Oct. 21 meeting:

- Establishing a benchmark for residents versus visitors
- Establishing Glen Ellen’s boundaries
- Developing an updated new vision statement
- Securing and reviewing the county’s PMRD revision of Glen Ellen plan
- Liaison with the Sonoma County Community Advisory Commission
- Checking out the Springs Community Alliance as a possible model for a Glen Ellen self-governance group
- Exploring the idea of imposing taxes to get things done locally
- Curbing the number of events
- Enforcing noise limits
- Enforcing “rules” in general
- Traffic

- Drones
- Wildlife & Community Separators

Leslie would specifically like to see a Disaster Preparedness Plan for the community and has already contacted the Fire Department regarding this.

Local resident and Firefighter Lisa Hardy encouraged the community to attend the Glen Ellen Fire Department's meeting, Tuesday 11/8 at 7pm in the Main Bay of the Fire House, and described the situation:

- Due to housing costs, GEFD has lost volunteers; there are now 10 to 12, down from a high of 30
- Kenwood FD is "in the same boat."
- A proposal on the table is to consolidate with Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District
- Of concern: Will Glen Ellen FD be lost if it joins with Valley of the Moon? What happens to the volunteers that this department was based on?

Jim pointed out that Glen Ellen might be using its bank as well, due to declining numbers, noting that by losing the community banks "we would be losing a lot more than money."

Those in attendance were asked for topics that they'd like to see addressed locally. These included:

- Understanding what Glen Ellen's tax base is. Is Glen Ellen a gainer or a loser when it comes to tax expenditures? What dollar amounts does Glen Ellen export from real estate taxes? Is there leverage with the county in those numbers? "How do we capture the money?"
- The "mess" that has been made of the Triangle.
- Pedestrian friendly rights-of-way to address the dangers of walking along Arnold Drive through town and along Warm Springs Road.
- Enforcing speed limits on Dunbar Road (and in general)
- Establishing a walking/running/cycling path along Warm Springs Road from Glen Ellen to Kenwood
- Addressing the fact that Glen Ellen is "underrepresented politically" at the county level
- Ensuring that wineries and event center growth is supported by infrastructure and that such growth serves the community (of specific concern is a proposal for a winery/event center at the top of Sonoma Mountain Road)
- Establishment of a microbrewery in downtown Glen Ellen. Discussion ensued with the Glen Ellen residents proposing the brewery and those in attendance. The upshot: Talking over details/visions can lead to understanding and constructive development.
- Strategies for getting "the county to listen" and to "educate ourselves about how government works"
- Affordable housing
- Development of the SDC

- Postal service changes: Getting to know the new postmaster; fragility of the local post office due to the drop in population
- Development downtown: From Talisman's wine tasting room and Opalesce's jewelry shop, to Marshall's Garage, on Arnold and Carquinez, there are plans to construct apartments over commercial space. Property owners were on hand to discuss their proposal to convert the property from 5 residences to 7, with street level commercial space and 40 parking sites off the street. Developers are working with planners right now; will present to the community.
- Impact of changing demographics at Dunbar: Volunteer help and generous donations have dropped off, prompting a need for enhance community involvement
- Glen Ellen Village Fair: Need for community volunteers

Jim and Leslie reiterated that this is a grassroots movement, and donations of any amount to help cover or defer the rental of meeting space, provide for copies and other administrative supplies as needed would be appreciated.

There was also discussion of the best ways to communicate as a community: email, snail mail, and social media. Index cards collected at meetings provide Leslie and Jim the means to stay in contact with the community that has been present at these meetings.

Next Meeting: December 5, on the 1st Monday of month, at Dunbar School's Multipurpose Room. In light of the New Year's holiday, has yet January meeting to be determined.

Adjourn.