

Sonoma Valley Interfaith Ministerial Association

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Wednesday, April 24, 2019

First Congregational Church of Sonoma

Present: Pam Nadeen - Church of Scientology, Donna Thomas, Kathryn Stark, Wakoh Shannon Hick-ey - Hospice by the Bay, Curran Reichert, Rich Gantenbein, Larry Frakes, Jacey Pickens-Jones, Emily Pickens-Jones, Marshall White - Hospice by the Bay, Manette Fairmont.

Guest: Sonoma Mayor, Amy Harrington

Welcome and Call to Order - Donna opened reading a segment from a lecture titled "Route to Infinity". We reflect on sparks of life and our creativeness that connects us to all living things.

Steve opens the topic of new leadership for the group. After 3 years as SVIMA president he suggests we consider someone new to keep things healthy. Peadar has accepted the role of town ambassador. We need to choose a president and vice president. After no volunteers, Steve offered to remain and Curran has accepted the vice presidency. We'll revisit next year.

Checking In With Non Profits -

- F.I.S.H. - nothing new to report. Please visit their website for ongoing needs and to volunteer.
- City Council - The mayor is here today.
- S.O.S. - Please consider attending the Mother's Day Brunch as this is the main fundraiser for SOS.
- SVU School District - Emily will now be our contact for the district, reports to come.
- Sustainable Sonoma - Jacey would like more time at the next meeting to discuss this.

Upcoming Events -

- **Mother's Day Lunch to support SOS** - this is the main fundraiser for SOS. Wear some of your brightest and finest to enter a competition for Best Aloha Attire. This year's celebration of mothers promises to be bright and cheery. Special entertainment will be provided by Sonoma's Hula Mai, which offers classes in various Hawaiian dance styles. The lunch will be held from noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 4, at Burlingame Hall, 252 West Spain Street. Lunch will be provided by Cochon Volant and the BBQ Smokehouse. Individual tickets are \$50. RSVP by April 26th. 707-939-6777
- **Memorial Day Celebration**, Monday, May 27th, 11:00am at Veteran's Memorial Park Cemetery, 126 1st St. West, Sonoma. Reverend Peadar Dalton and the SVIMA members will share the invocation/benediction during this community memorial celebration. Please reach out to Peadar (415) 328-5057 if you can participate.
- **Fourth of July**, discussion on our participation in the parade to let the community know we exist. Possible theme, "Unity in the Midst of Diversity". Members are interested, discussion to be continued at the May meeting.

Information to Share -

- Jim Thomas is taking the reigns of the Thursday radio hour as the new host. Please reach out to him at 707-529-9562 if you would like to help out or be a guest on the show.
- If you are unable to cover your Tuesday radio show spot please look at our member list on the website to find a replacement, if you can't find a replacement please let the radio show know as soon as possible. Also, if you forget and miss your spot please call Bob and/or the radio station as soon as you remember to apologize. Thanks!

Guest - Mayor Amy Harrington

-Mayor Harrington has served on the City Council since 2016 and was voted as mayor this past year. Her primary concern with council meetings is the way they are structured. She wants there to be a better way for the public to participate. Currently the each member of the public is allowed three minutes to talk and the council is not allowed to respond, which seems awkward for both sides. She is hoping to find a better way for the community to participate in meetings, which in turn encourages more community members to attend meetings, thus, bringing issues to the forefront that need to be discussed.

-Once every quarter the council has an Agenda Setting meeting where they discuss items that will be addressed during that quarter. This is the best meeting to come to so you can comment on any items on the upcoming agenda. The City Council normally meets at 6:00 p.m., on the first and third Monday of each month. Meetings are held in Council Chambers at 177 First Street West, Sonoma California. If you would like to receive reminders for the council meetings you can sign up [here](#).

-The first topic for City Council to tackle is sensible marijuana legislation and the cannabis dispensary issue. The previous measure to go before voters in November of 2020 allows for "unlimited" dispensary placement. City Council feels that having "unlimited" is a bad idea. "Unlimited" means that as long as they meet State requirements, anyone can open a dispensary anywhere and there would be no limit on the number of them allowed in the city. They fear most voters won't read the details of the wording and miss this language looking only to approve allowing dispensaries in town.

-The current city ordinance does not allow any dispensaries. The council has put together a new ordinance proposal to allow one storefront dispensary and one delivery only dispensary. Under the new plan applications for dispensary businesses will be collected, a sub-group will sort through applications and pull any that don't meet qualifications and the rest will go to a review process by the council. They will implement a fee cost recovery program, develop and conduct application review, scoring, merit-based ranking, interviews and selection process assuming a limited number of businesses to be allowed; and develop a commercial cannabis tax measure for the November 2020 election.

-The second topic for City Council to tackle is the increase of minimum wage. Mayor Harrington was a union organizer for labor workers. She grew up in poverty stricken neighborhoods and feels a deep sense of what it means to live in poverty. She recognizes that housing is an issue due in part to low wages. Minimum wage across the state will go up but she doesn't feel that Sonoma should be compared to many other California cities who might be able to survive on the state wage. Sonoma is much more expensive and should have a wage that coincides with the city's cost of living. She want to raise the minimum wage and have it start January 2020.

-The third topic to tackle is affordable housing. The Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) was increased this year by 2% with an additional 1% increase that will go to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to be used as the council feels is needed. Sub-Committees that include Rachel Hundley and Logan Harvey will decide what the most needed areas are based on community discussions and review of the Town Hall Meetings (see [here](#) for more information). They will partner with F.I.S.H. and other groups who are already supporting building of affordable housing, down payment assistance, rent assistance, etc.

-Curran suggested they look into the homelessness issue and reach out to Kathy King and SOS when looking at housing planning. Wakoh suggested “coffee talks” around town where the public can discuss topics if they aren’t able to attend or are uncomfortable at council meetings.

-Rich brought the topic of the fires and the disorganization of how an emergency such as this was handled by the city. He feels the discussion and future planning was swept under the rug. Mayor Harrington replied that City Hall wants to keep the discussion within it’s walls until they have made a plan. She disagrees and thinks it’s best to bring the topic to the community and supporting organizations in order to help learn from the weak areas and mistakes, which can only lead to a better plan. The public needs to regularly come to council meetings and demand that this topic be continually addressed with discussions outside City Hall.

-Other things to note: the City Council would like to invite kids to come do the Pledge of Allegiance at the meetings; once a month they will hold “Celebrate Sonoma” segment where they honor a member of the public (must be a Sonoma Valley resident) who makes Sonoma a better place to live. Everyday people who do good deeds or support Sonoma in some other way will receive a certificate and be honored at a meeting. Please notify the City Council if you know of anyone.

-Mayor Harrington asks that we inform our communities about the importance of attending council meetings and the Housing Town Hall meetings.

Things to consider -

- No Guests in May to catch up on loose ends. We will invite Sandy Piotter back in June. No meeting in July for a Summer break.
- We should invite someone from La Luz and Vintage House to be a guest. The mayor would like to return in the Fall for another update.
- Bring your annual SVIMA membership dues of \$20 in May.
- Continue our discussion on the 4th of July and Sustainable Sonoma at the May meeting.

Our next meeting is Wednesday, May 22nd, 12:15pm sharp - Please send a representative if you are unable to attend.

Meeting Adjourned - 1:30pm