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By James Feenan at 2:38 pm, Apr 08, 2024

From: [Liam Crowley](#)
To: [James Feenan](#); [Jessie Waldman](#)
Subject: FW: Public Comment: Item 3c., Discussion and Possible Action regarding amendment of MHRB Bylaws.
Date: Monday, April 8, 2024 2:34:23 PM

Hi Jim & Jessie,
I received the below email regarding tonight's MHRB meeting.

Thank you,
Liam Crowley
Planner
County of Mendocino
Planning & Building Services
Phone: (707)-234-6650
crowleyl@mendocinocounty.gov

From: Christina Aranguren <admin@mendomatters.org>
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 2:28 PM
To: Liam Crowley <crowleyl@mendocinocounty.gov>
Subject: Fw: Public Comment: Item 3c., Discussion and Possible Action regarding amendment of MHRB Bylaws.

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Crowley;

Our comments, below, were submitted on April 7, 2024 for tonight's MHRB meeting, but have not been posted to date.

If you can see that they are posted as soon as possible, it would be much appreciated.

Thank you,

Christina Aranguren
Chair, MendoMatters

From: Christina Aranguren
Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2024 9:22 AM
To: pbscommissions@mendocinocounty.gov <pbscommissions@mendocinocounty.gov>
Cc: bos@mendocinocounty.gov <bos@mendocinocounty.gov>; info.calshpo@parks.ca.gov <info.calshpo@parks.ca.gov>; NorthCoast@coastal.ca.gov <NorthCoast@coastal.ca.gov>

Subject: Public Comment: Item 3c., Discussion and Possible Action regarding amendment of MHRB Bylaws.

Mendocino Historic Review Board
Department of Planning & Building Services
County of Mendocino

Re: Discussion and Possible Action regarding amendment of MHRB Bylaws.

April 7, 2024

Board members Roth, Kappler, Saunders, Madrigal, & Lopez;

MendoMatters is concerned with proposals the Department of Planning and Building Services, at the direction of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, are currently proposing which would amend Mendocino Historic Review Board ("MHRB") Rules and Bylaws.

Let's be honest. Resource management aside, many of the proposals in consideration will impact not only Board members but town residents, since public participation will be minimized. Public input in MHRB decisions is a long-held, respected tradition whose seeds we hope will remain intact and alive after many decades of service to the community.

We have questions and concerns with regard to:

Request #1: Staff's new, balanced approach to regulating.

Among our questions is how Staff will determine that individual applications for development will or will not impact the town's "harmony" or "character" so that historic standards can be "relaxed" to accommodate them. Any decisions would be subjective. If this becomes something which is determined by the number of supporters each application generates, then each has the potential to become little more than a popularity contest. If this were the case, then the commercial sector has a distinct advantage since it can engage employees for support and rally troops in its defense. The tent issue provides a most recent example.

This proposal is not only subjective, it's vague, ambiguous, and unless more fully fleshed-out, will be wide open to interpretation and controversy. We urge that you please not do this to the community; there is quite enough on our collective plate already.

That aside, modern building practices cannot be "balanced" with those historical; they can only be disguised. Romex wiring? Fiberglass insulation? Security systems? Modular homes? EV charging stations? Solar roof shingles? All can be successfully integrated and can be sensible, valuable alternatives for a historic district such as Mendocino's, where the unspoken norm has long been "out of sight, out of mind".

Request #2: Meeting time modifications.

With all due respect to resource management and staff schedules, meeting times should align with those of the MHRB Board members - the community's volunteers - who provide an invaluable, uncompensated public service. This is true as well as for the personal schedules of

members of the public they are appointed to represent. A 2 p.m. meeting time is neither sensible or balanced as it effectively eliminates most working people. It also makes volunteering for the MHRB Board impractical or impossible for many capable, interested residents who may be considering a position on the Board.

Request #3: Eliminating public site visits.

That site visits can be performed by individual MHRB Board members is something that may be welcomed by applicants, many of whom might jump at the chance of personally meeting, greeting, and attempting to persuade decision-makers. In government, this is considered ex parte communication and is not permitted.

Another concern is whether staff has determined how members of the public will access private properties for site visits "should they desire"?

Request #4: Changing the venue.

As the Mendocino Community Center is not available for meetings, Staff may want to investigate alternative locations within the community, if not for practical reasons, then environmental ones (i.e., walking to the venue instead of driving to it: one big reason why many residents choose to reside in the village).

St. Anthony's Church hall is one alternative. Their office number is: #707-937-2406; ask for Kathy.

Request #5: Eliminating minutes.

MendoMatters genuinely thanks and supports Planning & Building Services in the recording and posting of MHRB meetings, and desperately wishes the MCCSD would do similarly. We request that minute-taking be maintained. Recorded and archived video meetings are subject to removal pursuant to CA Government Code Section 54953.5(b): they may be erased or destroyed 30 days after the recording. Minutes cannot, and are protected under CA Government Code Section 34090. They are critical to recordkeeping and local history.

Request #6: Prep and guidance for MHRB members.

Board members may not be trained or experienced in state and county policy; neither are the skills a requirement for the position. This is the responsibility of county Staff and should remain as such to assist all Board members in making the best possible decisions they can for their community.

Given the copious tax revenue the town of Mendocino generates for the County, maintaining current policies and procedures seems balanced, sensible, and more than reasonable. We urge that the MHRB deny the above requests for the future protection of the historic resources of the Mendocino community. It may be many years before we're able to fully recognize the errors made by relaxing our historic standards. Removal from the National Register is real, and this town is incrementally inching towards it. Should management resources become the unfortunate focus instead, it just may be that management resources become what ultimately kills the goose that laid this County's golden egg.

As always, we thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Please place our comments into the administrative record and keep MendoMatters.org on the County's notification list for any/all matters pertaining to this issue.

Thank you kindly,

Christina Aranguren
Chair, MendoMatters
admin@mendomatters.org

cc: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, California Office of Historic Preservation,
California Coastal Commission.

bcc: MendoMatters members, Interested parties.