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By James Feenan at 3:27 pm, Apr 16, 2024

April 16, 2024
Mendocino County Planning Commission
501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah CA 95482

Dear Planning Commission,

After review and discussion of the proposed plans for the new Albion Little River Fire Protection District facility at 33900 West St. in Albion--use permit application U_2023-0002 / B_2023-0001--we, as the members of the Albion Mutual Water Company (AMWC) board and as residents and property owners in the village of Albion would like to address the following concerns with the project.

The ALRFPD is currently and has been for many years a customer of the water district, under the same terms as all the other property owners within the water district. Currently, each customer is allowed 6000 gallons per month with a surcharge for overage, but our board is currently re-evaluating our generous provisions for water allotments and considering reducing the amount from 6000 gallons per month to 5000 gallons as well as increasing the overage fees for usage beyond those allotments.

The ALRFPD Use Permit application cites the AMWC as its sole source of water (item #19) for the proposed new facility. The water board is concerned that there is no staff or coastal commission analysis of future water use by the proposed facility. Has or will the ALRFPD explore alternative sources of water? Where will the fire station get water for the tanker trucks?

While the water board currently has an "understanding" with the fire department that they can tap the district's water for overage in the case of fire emergencies, there is no agreement in place should there be a substantial increase in the overall use of water for purposes of construction, maintenance, routine use by staff, for ongoing firefighting and any other potential water uses by the proposed facility. The AMWC would like to see some numbers on that.

With guidance from our water master, we, as a board representing the community, maintain, test, monitor, and regulate the use of water for the 28 customers within the AMWC jurisdiction. We must comply with the regulations mandated by the State of California and report to them regularly regarding water quality and water levels of the two wells located on the south side of Albion Ridge Road a few hundred feet east, and uphill from the proposed fire station site.

Ours is a gravity fed system that has served us well since its inception in the 70s but small water companies throughout California are beginning to see increased involvement and requirements from the State of California. The AMWC is facing a likely requirement that we upgrade our water lines to increase capacity to meet state requirements. This will require considerable funding and planning for future water use in our community. Without analysis and data regarding the fire department's future water use, it leaves our board with many questions unanswered.

We all support the idea of a new fire station, but we feel that planning for future water needs together as a community is the best solution for solving challenges that lie ahead. We respectfully request that the planning commission continue the use permit application until we are provided with analysis and data of the ALRFPD proposed water usage for this facility.

Sincerely,

Mark Gauché, President, AMWC Board
Alex de Grassi, Vice President, AMWC Board
John Johansen, Secretary, AMWC Board
Tony Gatchalian, Treasurer, AMWC Board
Tom Reilly, Member AMWC, AMWC Board