

Comments on Agenda Item 5b, Mendocino County Board of Supervisors meeting of September 22, 2020

To the Board of Supervisors in consideration of the Receiving and Filing of the Wildfire Vulnerability Assessment and Public Outreach Plan for Mendocino County; Adoption of the Emergency Evacuation Plan as Annex A to the Existing County Emergency Operations Plan:

Let me start by thanking all of the Supervisors for your service in these trying times.

My own service has spanned these last four decades, and working with each of you has been often a pleasure with maybe a few bumps in the road. I especially wish to thank outgoing Supervisors Carre Brown and John McCowen for your decades of public service.

Climate destabilization is now the challenge we must engage over the long view while dealing with short-term impacts to the health and safety of our citizens. Reports such as those you are reviewing today must create real responses if governance is to be measured by actual solutions to the matters at hand.

Many of you have heard me talk of the importance of taking action based on the moment in time, given the available information informing our decisions.

This series of reports instructs us. So have recent experiences helped to prepare you to insert this Mendocino County Emergency Evacuation Plan within the County's Emergency Operations Plan; let's make it a call to action!

These comments include two proposals to create forward motion after you move to adopt and file these reports, so that together real solutions can be formulated.

As a Brooktrails Township Community Services District (CSD) Director, first let me thank all those many individuals--State, County and local staff--working in difficult conditions to safely evacuate, minimize fire losses and protect personal property while fighting fire and patrolling our community during the Oak Fire. The whole of Mendocino County appreciates your ongoing service protecting our many local communities.

Ongoing large wildfires are the backdrop as you consider both today's agenda items and tomorrow's actions to make real progress for all of Mendocino County.

The recent fires mandating evacuation events, and then the repopulation of large areas of our county, make us all veterans of climate change impacts, even as the coronavirus challenges every action plan and smoke chokes our citizens night and day.

I have two proposals to follow today's action on a subsequent agenda.

1) As my first action request: a county change of direction is possible by a simple majority vote to overturn an existing impediment to progress.

Results of the public survey undertaken as part of this planning effort are telling, in the recognition of the importance of constructing second access roadways, including for the Sherwood Road Corridor communities (per staff report pg. 3). No Sherwood Corridor citizens are listed as respondents in this survey, so the top ranking for a Brooktrails second access came from your constituents throughout Mendocino County.

The staff report (pg.10) recognizes the considerable preliminary studies completed for a full-service secondary roadway to Highway 101 for the Brooktrails-Sherwood Corridor.

In the documents before you today, our County Transportation Director states that years ago the Supervisors gave direction to him that requires Brooktrails Township to take on the responsibility to find funding to perform the needed environmental review, design and cost estimates, including identifying full construction funding prior to any future Board of Supervisors action on the project.

However, Brooktrails Township CSD has no authorized "transportation power," that is no allowable tax dollar spending authority. The County is the lead agency to perform this needed project. The District cannot comply with this policy hurdle that created a "poison pill" or Catch 22 to any forward project action.

These studies before you today are a further call to action. The Brooktrails Township Board has authorized me to request a future Mendocino County Board of Supervisors agenda item to rescind and overturn the current offending directive and restart the Brooktrails-Sherwood Corridor Second Access Road Project.

In 1985 I helped present many hundreds of signatures that first formally petitioned before a prior Board of Supervisors to create the second access project for our community safety. This current request is waiting until various emergency conditions abate and your calendar and staff preparation can be accommodated.

2) My second proposed solution for forward progress on the Fire Vulnerability Assessment and Evacuation Plan has been a years-long project in support of our local fire service providers and the two countywide Mendocino Fire Associations.

The studies before you today make many recommendations for various agencies and department staff act as the Fire Warden/Chief Officer for the County Fire/EMS responsibilities, by activating the fire service power available to County Service Area #3.

I believe the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors meets the economic requirements to so adopt by your budgeting State Proposition 172 sales tax revenues and the Campground County TOT tax revenue for local fire service purposes (to be confirmed by staff legal counsels during the Mendocino LAFCO's Municipal Service Review of Service Area 3). Working with the Mendocino County Association of Fire Chiefs and the OES Management Office to create appropriate job descriptions, in consultation with the Fire Safe Council and Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, many fire service and prevention program activities may be appropriately coordinated to benefit local program delivery.

Both of these action proposals are long-term advocacy efforts, and I forward them in respect for the hard work you all do in public service to promote the health and safety of our common interests.

Yours,

Tony Orth

9.21.2020