

MINUTES
MERCHANTS & TOWN HALL FORUM

Sponsored by: Sonora Chamber of Commerce
August 22, 2018

1. Attendees (approx. 16) were welcomed by Laurie Lehmann from the Sonora Chamber. Local government officials in attendance included Connie Williams (Sonora City Council Member), Jim Garaventa (Sonora Mayor), Tim Miller (Sonora City Administrator), Sherri Brennan (Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors), and Craig Pedro (Tuolumne County Administrator).
2. Attendees provided a quick self-introduction.
3. City Updates:
 - a. Santa in Courthouse Square
 - Sherri Brennan and Craig Pedro were in attendance as representatives from Tuolumne County to address concerns about moving Santa out of Courthouse Square.
 - Craig explained, while events of only 1 day in duration did not damage the lawn, Santa's Village with a length of several weeks, does significant damage. The County is willing to allow Santa to be set up in Courthouse Square, but replacing damaged sod would need to be paid for by a group other than the County which does not have the funds to cover the cost.
 - Sherri explained that the recently completed renovations to the Square cost over \$50k; she reiterated that the County did not have funds budgeted to replace significant damage done by events such as the one proposed.
 - It was suggested that Santa's house could be placed in the center section of the park to minimize damage. Craig explained that would not be possible since a flagpole is being installed in that spot in the next few months.
 - Tim Miller from the City of Sonora said that replacing sod in the area used by Santa would cost roughly \$3k-4.5k, however, in order for all sod to match, the grass in the entire Square may need to be replaced at a cost of up to \$10,000.
 - It was suggested that Linoberg St. might be a good area, even though it was not popular when the event was held there 2 years ago. While it could be held there this year, it would not be a long term solution since that section of Linoberg is planned to be closed and turned into a landscaped pedestrian walkway.
 - The Sonora City Council will be discussing the location of Santa as an upcoming meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Sonora Chamber agreed to get a few merchants together to discuss what can be done to address the issues that have been raised with holding the event in Coffill Park.

- b. Dog Stations
 - Tim reported that the City has received \$1,000 from TCVB, \$200 from the Land Trust and \$300 from the Sonora Chamber of Commerce to fund the dog stations. He expressed that the City is looking for suggestions on where the 10-15 dispensers will be located on or near Washington Street.
- c. Trash Cans
 - Tracy Hoyle from Sonora Used Books expressed concern that sometimes cans become full before being picked up and Waste Management wasn't picking up the neatly stacked trash sitting next to the full cans. **ACTION ITEM:** Tim said he was meeting with Waste Management on 8/22 and he would raise that issue.
 - Tim reported that the City has granted funds to purchase additional trash/recycling cans for Washington Street. Responding to prior complaints, the plan is to ensure trash and recycling cans are paired at each location so that depositors will be more inclined to use the correct can.

The challenge is finding the best location for each of these pairs (all between the fountain and the Red Church). The Sonora Chamber offered to get a small group of downtown merchants together to formulate a proposed plan that would have agreement from any impacted merchants. It was suggested that this group could also make recommendations on placement of dog waste stations. **ACTION ITEM:** Sonora Chamber to get a small merchant committee together.

- Tim also handed out a flyer about Business Recycling. State law requires all businesses that generate 4 or more cubic yards of waste weekly to recycle.

d. Probation Department Saturday morning clean-up

- Tim reported that the Probation Department is utilizing their public service program to provide a work crew every Saturday morning from approximately 8-8:30am to pick up trash on Washington Street. They do not have the ability to “wash” anything. This is in addition to the WATCH resources who clean on Wednesday (co-funded by City of Sonora and Sonora Chamber of Commerce). He also said that due to limited staffing and the low number of probationers in the program, because the courts are not heavily using this sentencing method, this is all the County can provide at this time. Several attendees commented that they have not seen this work crew on Saturday mornings and that they felt the trash issue was still a major problem. Nancy White from the Sonora Chamber suggested that they could put out feelers to see if local service organizations like Rotary, Lions, Elks, etc. would be interested in doing clean-up Saturdays on a rotating basis to address the situation. **ACTION ITEM:** Sonora Chamber to poll service organizations.

e. Jury parking on Washington Street

- There continues to be an issue with lack of parking on the Courthouse end of Washington Street due to Juror parking. It was confirmed that the parking instructions from the Court to Jurors advises them that their parking slip allows them to “park in restricted time zones of one hour or more, except the first floor of the City Parking Garage”. Further it states, “Please refrain from parking on Washington Street if at all possible”. This verbiage doesn’t prevent Jurors from parking on Washington. **ACTION ITEM:** Connie Williams offered to talk with the Jury Coordinator to see if they could add Washington Street to the restricted parking area.
- Additionally it was discussed that some business owners are still parking all day in the 3 hour spaces on Washington. Tim advised that Merchants should report these drivers to the Sonora PD. It was requested that a notification is sent to Washington Street merchants to remind them of the parking rules, but no decision was made on this letter. **ACTION ITEM:** open

4. OTHER DISCUSSIONS

- a. Most topics in this area were tabled until the next meeting because a number of attendees needed to leave.
- b. Laurie Lehman reported on the Sonora Green Business Program, which is being done under the auspices of the Sonora Energy Plan. Under the program, merchants would complete 5 energy/green tasks and they would then be a qualified Sonora Green Business. The merchant would receive a Sonora Green Business sticker, business would be recognized on the City website. Tasks the merchant would show proof of: Recycle cardboard program, RHA audit and LED lighting retrofit, TUD water wise toilet replacement, use non-toxic cleaning products for some of their cleaning tasks and get an HVAC service.
- c. Christian Zellet from RHA, presented the PG&E Energy Watch Program for businesses and explained how businesses can use the free audit and LED lighting retrofit program.

5. MERCHANTS ROUNDTABLE

- a. Greg Falken from WorkPlace Sonora invited attendees to their Last Friday Open House on 8/31, where folks can experience working their office from Free and then attend their Happy Hour. He also

- invited people to attend a webinar titled “Business After 5,” which will focus on the challenges of staying open late in a small town and offers real-world example of what works. They will also be doing class on “Using MailChimp” on Sept. 13. See their website workplacesonora.com for details.
- b. Howard White from SBDC announced that WorkPlace Sonora and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) are also hosting a Business Start-Up workshop on Tuesday 9/11, 5:30-7:30pm to help people learn the steps necessary to launch a new business in Tuolumne County. He will also be presenting a seminar in partnership with SBA/SBDC/SCORE on September 19 from 11:30-1:30 (Tuolumne County Chamber office) on the topic of obtaining guaranteed loans from the SBA.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30am

Distribution:

Sonora Downtown Merchants Facebook Page
Sonora Chamber website – <http://www.sonorachamber.org/town-hall-meetings.html>
Jim Garaventa, Mayor of Sonora
Matt Hawkins, Sonora City Council
Colette Such, Sonora City Council
Mark Plummer, Sonora City Council
Connie Williams, Sonora City Council
Tim Miller, City Administrator, City of Sonora
Bryan Adcox, Executive Director Sonora Chamber of Commerce
Katie Dunn, President Sonora Chamber of Commerce