

Mayor John Seybert
Vice Mayor Ian Bain

Council Members
Alicia Aguirre
Janet Borgens
Jeff Gee
Diane Howard
Shelly Masur



City Hall
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063
Voice (650) 780-7220
Fax (650) 261-9102
mail@redwoodcity.org
www.redwoodcity.org

March 15, 2016

Betty T. Yee
Chair, State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100 South
Sacramento, CA 95825-8202

RE: Request for Support of Legislation Related to Docktown Marina in Redwood City, CA

Dear Chair Yee:

This letter is to request that the State Lands Commission support legislation regarding Docktown Marina in Redwood City, as more specifically outlined below.

Docktown Marina, which sits on granted lands in Redwood City, has been the home to “live-aboard” watercrafts for over 50 years. The City took over management of Docktown Marina in 2013 when its private operator gave notice to terminate the permit under which it operated. Since taking over operations, the City has been in constant communication with State Lands Commission staff to determine whether residential use was allowed on granted lands.

In January of this year, the State Lands Commission advised the City through an informal opinion by the Attorney General’s Office that residential uses at Docktown Marina are inconsistent with the State Lands Grant issued to the City. The informal opinion opined that private residential use is inconsistent with the Public Trust Doctrine. Also in January of this year, the City settled litigation with a citizens group wherein the City agreed that absent a superseding public change in Commission policies related to Docktown or superseding action by the Legislature to allow residential use in Docktown, the City would take formal action by December 31, 2016 to adopt a Docktown Plan which is consistent with the informal opinion of the Attorney General’s Office. Given the Commission’s formal position on residential use along with the City’s settlement of litigation related to Docktown, the City is seeking assistance from the Commission to support legislation that would allow residential uses to remain at Docktown for a limited period.

This proposed legislation, as more specifically outlined below, would balance the hardship of requiring near-term relocation of all tenants with the public need for greater recreational access to the area. It is important to note that the City is already in the process of planning for greater recreational access to Docktown Marina. Docktown Marina is part of a larger area of the City, which is described in the City's General Plan as the "Redwood Creek/Harbor Center" Area. The area immediately adjacent to the public trust lands is designated as "Public Space". Therefore, the General Plan requires future improvements facilitate public access and open space along the waterline. The City is currently contemplating including in future planning documents substantial improvements to the public shore of granted lands, including the Docktown area, to facilitate increased public access and amenities.

The City understands that private residential uses are inconsistent with the policies of the State Lands Commission. However, over the decades Docktown has evolved into a community of Redwood City residents with homes that are naturally affordable. Affordable homes in the Bay Area are extremely limited, leaving Docktown residents with few relocation options. Given the practical challenges of housing affordability, and the lack of Bay Area marina space, relocating Docktown residents within a short timeframe presents a very difficult challenge. As such, the City seeks time to come into compliance.

In recognition of the hardship of relocating residents, along with the City's commitment to increase public access to the area, the City of Redwood City is requesting that the State Lands Commission support a legislative solution. It is our desire to put forward legislation that can both address public trust concerns while acknowledging and helping to avoid the rapid displacement of a naturally affordable community.

Fortunately, there exists precedent supported by the State Lands Commission and the State Legislature to allow an extended period within which to relocate residents such as those residing at Docktown. The attached statute, adopted by the Legislature and supported by the State Lands Commission in 1981, allowed the "DeAnza Point" Mobile Home Park to stay on granted lands for an extended period of 32 years (1981-2003). The statute was adopted in an attempt to balance the hardship of relocating tenants on the one hand with the current public needs for expanded recreational use on the other. It is our desire to achieve a similar resolution to the issues confronting Docktown.

Proposal

The City of Redwood City is requesting that the State Lands Commission support legislation which would allow Docktown to remain on granted lands for a period of 15 years so long as the following conditions were met:

- The City would prohibit new tenants, new live-aboard watercrafts and transfer of existing watercraft at Docktown.
- The City would mandate that all live-aboard watercrafts be owner occupied or City owned, and no subleases would be allowed.

- The City would report to the State Lands Commission on a regular basis on the status of Docktown and public access improvements in the area.

While the City is very supportive of this proposed legislation, it is also important to note that there are environmental and legal restrictions which could hamper the City's ability to provide public or residential uses at Docktown. The City is currently conducting environmental analysis in the Redwood Creek area and may adjust its direction and/or policies dependent upon the results of that analysis. Furthermore, the City does not own the land adjacent to Docktown. Marina access to facilities and in general is accomplished via a month-to-month license with private land owners. As a result, any multi-year plan for the marina use must account for the possibility that the City could not guarantee private residential access to Docktown Marina.

In closing, we thank you for considering this request. We believe this proposal will allow the area to be improved for the benefit of all California residents, while allowing a fair and reasonable amount of time for existing residents to transition to new homes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John D. Seybert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John D. Seybert
Mayor
City of Redwood City

C: City Council, City of Redwood City
Senator Jerry Hill
Assembly Member Kevin Mullin