

Caspar Community News

May 14, 2017



Time for the Next Big Challenge?

Google earth

**Join the Conversation
Community Meeting
to reach consensus on
Caspar's Water Security
Sunday May 28th 4pm
potluck afterwards 5pm**

by Michael Potts with help from Rochelle, Judy, and Sienna

Recently I was asked to explain Caspar's ongoing success as a living community. The question came from a friend who lives in a neighboring town, an "honorary Casparado," conservation partner, and long-time resident whose town has been troubled by dissension, lock-outs, and even violence.

She embarrassed me by citing our successes: formation of a working Board; successful purchase of the Headlands and creation of a State Reserve (not a "canvas ghetto," said she); acquisition and successful operation of a Community Center that serves the whole Coast; fundraising, design, and construction of the finest public kitchen in the County. I could only nod my head with pride: we Casparados have indeed achieved several little miracles here.

Then she whacked me up 'longside the head with this: **"Isn't it time to undertake something BIG again?"**

Huh? Shouldn't we be content to serve the best Sunday breakfast, offer the happiest open mic evening, keep the garden growing and the solar energy system humming, while a group works diligently to get us robust in the face of emergencies big and small?

"Aw, c'mon, don't be naive," she teased. "It's those challenges that made your little village so strong. Without exercise, don't you know that muscle turns to fat?"

Road 409 Doings

New at the Caspar Website

UPCOMING EVENTS

Insurmountable Opportunity?

Her prodding reminded me that the whole "modern history" of what might be called "the Caspar Movement" was set in motion when our company

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The view from the top of Parcel E on a stormy day

Next Big Challenge *continues*

town's company sold its holdings to a wealthy development-minded Landowner. Clear back in 1991 Caspar native Stuart Tregoning sounded the alarm, and we started meeting together to conceive a shared vision of how we who lived here could shape the change to come. At first, voices were raised to say "NO CHANGE" (and, thankfully, a few voices stick to this refrain) ...and in our hearts, I think we all agree. Change is uncomfortable. All around us we see communities being overwhelmed by unwelcome, unanticipated, unmanaged change. Two of our dearest newcomers abandoned their previous community, Cambria, when developers usurped the town's water system and subverted the town's "slow growth" strategy. **With 75% of the best buildable village land in the hands of an absentee Landowner, who can be sure a similar fate isn't in little Caspar's future?**

The best strategy we could come to consensus on was "We want Caspar to remain just like it is ...only more so!" Compared to other communities, we have seen little development, and despite ups and downs in the real estate market, stable and affirmative valuations. The Landowner whose hands are on the development throttle has proven to be reasonable when the important challenges, like the Headlands and Community Center purchases, came along.

Yet there are more shoes to drop, and despite our carefully conceived Hundred Year Plan, an orderly, comfortable future for Caspar is not assured ...not as long as so much of the developable land is out of our control. Clearly, here on the coast between two thirsty, thriving towns, our seemingly abundant water and open land appear to offer attractive possibilities. The capitalist prejudice is that "land must pay its way," but in our hearts, we Casparados know that's antithetical to our mission, "to preserve and protect the quality of all life in Caspar." We feel blessed to live in a place where nature and people live in balance and harmony.

Behind the scenes, our Community Center's water supply is insecure. The Cattle Company water system's infrastructure suffers from deferred maintenance to the extent that it must be over-chlorinated at the well-head to be "safe" (by mid-20th Century standards) to drink at our tap. A broken pipe and failed valve cast a shadow over our 2015 CasparFest. Our Center, along with a dozen other water-users in Caspar, depends on this fragile system. Half a dozen more property owners would love to connect to an upgraded water system, and most of us would benefit from a sensibly managed water system. Luckily, the Company's wells do not produce water that's pure enough to transport to Mendocino's thirsty restaurants, hotels, and B&Bs, because when it was tapped to the tune of 50,000 gallons a day, downhill wells went dry. Advisors inform us that the continuing legality of the current system is questionable. Water, we are coming to learn, is a commons. All around the planet, it is acknowledged as the next major battleground.

Many of us, the Landowner included, are in our seventies. An unspoken consensus at 2015's most recent Neighborhood Gatherings: everything's great right now; why do anything? At that time, more than a few wells in Caspar were dry, and now, with more than 50 inches of rain since July ... *What Me Worry?*

***"The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining."* - John Kennedy**

We are at a crossroads, and need to make another decision about which way we want our town to grow. At the behest of Caspar's Board and a few dedicated residents, I have spent the last year researching the straightest path to owning our future. The vision so carefully developed in the 1990s holds true: some sacred space must be preserved undeveloped in perpetuity; the State agrees that the open space between our Center and the highway is "highly scenic" and protected. Other bits of the Caspar Cattle Company holdings are, especially right now, wetland and precious to all manner of endangered life. **(Frogs are Casparados too.)** The Company also holds four rental houses long occupied by

continues →

Next Big Challenge concludes

their current residents, and yet treated to the same deferred maintenance that eventually – soon – will transform them into uninhabitable wrecks. And there's the failing water system.

Our recent 100-year rainy season aside, there are inevitably reasons to ignore this challenge. The Company's tenants are uneasy with the prospect of changed ownership of their rentals, no doubt fearing that improvements will elevate rents. The Community Center is trying to reclaim its own well. Taking possession of the water system requires complete replacement of its infrastructure as well as creation of some sort of new organization to hold title, seek grants, pursue permits, oversee construction, and administer the system.

There can be no doubt about it: it would be easier and more comfortable to continue our policy of inaction. After all, if it ain't broke...

On the other side of the coin, tackling Caspar's Water Security could be our Next Big Thing. Thanks to the Board and anonymous backers, the pieces are falling into place to undertake the formation of a legal entity to own the water, seek grants and funding to replace the failing water system, revise our "village ecosystem" into a resilient form that can thrive through the next hundred years, and solicit "the next miracle" to keep Caspar resilient.

The reason our tiny village stands so tall is because, in the past, we have, together, undertaken big things. A little more "body heat" in the form of a dozen new homes for young professionals, first responders, and farmers (who currently cannot find reasonably priced work-force housing or arable land on the Coast and must unsustainably drive from Willits and Ukiah) would, perhaps, bring with them the little grocery store and coffee shop we wished for



The forest on Parcel A

in our 1998 plan. Owning and upgrading the water system, extending it to small parcels in Caspar unable to accommodate wells and septic, and hosting a water truck that could help outlying residents whose wells go dry in years with less rain (as well as responding to fires) . . . well, the Caspar Board and a few fanatical visionaries (like me) cannot by ourselves make this much rain. It takes a village.

For more detailed insight into the Water System and Community Land Trust deliberations, visit Caspar Community Land Trust

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409 Neighborhood News

The folks who live along Road 409 in southeast Caspar are an inspiration. They organize an annual road cleanup (and their road is dirty, as it receives all the trash flying off vehicles on the way to the transfer site.)

And, unwillingly and irrationally, the whole Coast's dump is in their midst. With a little help from "Central Caspar" they have been working for years to achieve Caspar's stated mission, "Improve the quality of all life..."

Here's what they're up to these days:

Other Caspar Neighborhoods

If you think it might be time for another get-together, Caspar Community is here to help. Email caspar@mcn.org

Transfer Site

Sorry to say, but things haven't moved forward on this. In fact, we're actually behind where we were when the EIR was approved last September.

Since then – the good news was that neither Hwy 20 nor the Sierra Club sued. However (likely due to behind-the-scenes pressure from them), State Parks decided to renege on its part of the land swap (with JDSF and the County) that would have transferred JDSF's 17 acres (on Highway 20) to the County. So, in a way, back to Square One.

The new plan (that the County and City are working on) is to purchase 17 comparable acres from one of the timber local companies and transfer it to JDSF (all done through state agencies that make sure no public agency is getting a raw deal), so JDSF can then transfer their 17 acres on Hwy 20 to the County for the Transfer Site.

409 News concludes

This process has been slowly happening over the past five months. Nothing concrete has yet happened, unfortunately. But the City/County people making this happen believe a deal may happen in the next few months. And that within 6-12 months, all systems will be “go” to put out the bids for construction of the Hwy 20 Transfer Site.

Meanwhile, it’s very important to remember that there will be several more votes on this, on the various transfers, funding, construction bids, etc. A-n-d, the City Council has two new members. The EIR (with the original council) only passed 3-2. If either of the 2 new members opposes this Hwy 20 Transfer Site, a 3-2 majority can deep-six the whole project – and the 10 years and \$400,000 already invested in it.

We believe Dave Turner and (new Councilmember) Will Lee are in favor of it. But Lindy Peters and Mike Cimolino already have voted against it. New Councilmember Bernie Norvell likely holds the deciding vote – and to date he hasn’t indicated where he stands.

A Road 409 Fire Department Substation

409er Josh Miller, one of the Mendocino Fire Dept members, is happy to report that our Fire Dept is currently exploring building a fire substation here on 409. It would go where the big water tank (at 2.0 miles) is. Plans still being developed, but the goal, happening in stages, would be a fire house with two fire trucks (a large pumper and a smaller utility truck). Aside from having this great and more immediate fire protection help, there’d be a probable (and perhaps significant) reduction in everyone’s fire insurance rates. What a great benefit to our Road!

This is in the What-we-hope-to-do stage, the Mendocino fire people advise. There’s a strong chance it can come to be, but several things have to happen first.

1) First up, and perhaps most important right now, the Fire Dept wants to know that we (as a community) really want and support this. So for starters, if you would like having this, **please take a moment and email your name as a supporter of this.** Real easy and very helpful: send it to Josh at jkmiller72@yahoo.com Include your name and every adult and child’s names in your household along with your exact street address and phone number, please. This is actually quite important as the Fire Dept really wants to see as many people here actively asking for it to happen. Josh will gather them all and pass them on to the Fire Dept. officers. And if you know neighbors who don’t get this email, please pass this important request on to them.

2) The Fire Dept would like “active” support for this from us. This would include one or two of us being liaison people between Rd 409 and the Fire Dept. This would mean working with them on design, funding, contacting 409ers when important issues came up, helping with fund-raising etc. and attending the Fire Dept’s monthly meetings (last Wed eve of each month). This is also important. If you might be interested in being one of these people, please let me or Josh (962-0747) know.

3) They also would like to the 409 community supporting this financially as well, to help cover the cost of this. \$25,000



is reportedly already on hand, but a lot more will be needed. Some of this will come from our \$75/year Fire District property taxes, but donations by us will not only supplant that but let the Fire Dept know we really want this so they prioritize us in their annual budgets. They believe the first truck -- the larger fire truck (being retired from the Mendocino fire house) will become available in a year or so, but future funds will be needed to get a second one and to construct the fire house. As this moves forward, please consider making some donation. The Fire Dept says what’s more important is the number of people on 409 supporting this in some financial way, not the size of the checks.

4) In support of this, here’s an idea that’s been presented: How about our putting on a Road 409 yard sale this summer (down on the highway). It would be a great way to both help raise money and show the Fire Dept we’re actively organized and all together for this. Plus getting our sheds, attics, and garages cleaned out! I’ll be away again this summer – but if someone would like to organize this, we’d all be most grateful!

Ed O’Brien, the Fire Dept Chief, reports that the Fire Dept has a strong interest in making this happen, but with there are competing demands for their funds and resources. If you haven’t emailed him yet, please do so! All you need to do is list all the people in your home, and include your physical address and phone number and send to him at: jkmiller72@yahoo.com . This is so important and easy to do – **please, please, 409ers! add your name.** The Fire Dept chief, Ed O’Brien, says if there’s enough 409 interest/support, they’ll commit to it and start the planning, etc. this summer!

Meanwhile, on a positive note, Rick Sacks has volunteered to paint/letter the two fire trucks we’ll have and the roadside signing. And Inger Grape has said she’ll organize a fund-raising garage sale this summer! She’ll need lots of help; if interested in helping (in any way) to make this happen, please email her at:

bouncedancer@gmail.com

– Rick Childs

UPCOMING

Fridays, 9:30am
 May 19, June 2 & 16, July 7 & 21
Caspar Community Board
 All Welcome

4th Mondays, May 22, June 26, July 31 7pm
Emergency Preparation Meeting

Wednesdays 12:15-12:45
BOOKMOBILE
 May 24, June 7 & 21, July 5 & 19

4th Saturdays, May 27, June 24, July 22 10am-noon
HEADLANDS WORK DAY

Sundays May 28, June 25, July 23, 9 - 11 am
Caspar 4th Sunday Breakfast

Sunday, May 28, 9am - 2pm
Annual Flea Market

Sunday, May 28 4pm
Community Meeting: Water & Land
potluck afterwards

2nd Fridays, June 9, July 14, 6:30 - 9 pm
Caspar Pub Night
 Family Friendly - Teens Welcome



2nd Sundays, June 11, July 9, 4:30-9:30pm
Movies+Games in Caspar

A complete schedule can be found at our website.

NEW at CasparCommons.org

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
 Including the Bridges-down Escape Map

Annotated Version of Sev Ickes's
Caspar Painting (mouseover for names)

New additions to
the Caspar Wall of Fame



Marty's Canning Classes
 June 4 July 2

Gwyneth Moreland Concert

On Saturday, June 10th, at 7pm, local favorite Gwyneth Moreland, accompanied by David Hayes and her brother Morgan Daniel, will share songs from her recently released album **Cider!**

"The personal nature of Gwyneth Moreland's songwriting is a hallmark of the best folk music, but her musicality is equally powerful."

— Carlitos Music Blog

Also performing at the Center that night, Misner and Smith, whose soaring vocal harmonies and story-filled, poetic songwriting harkens back to the bedrock of modern American rock & folk. Paying tribute to strong influences like Simon & Garfunkel, The Band, and Buffalo Springfield, they invent a sound all their own.

This is an evening of music that is bound to be remembered as one of this year's best ...and it's all right here at our Caspar Community Center.

Tickets may be purchased at Icons in Mendocino, Harvest Market in Fort Bragg, and online at brownpapertickets.com.

This edition of
Caspar Community News
 was laid out by Michael Potts

The next edition might appear in July. Submissions of activities, events, or information of interest to Casparados is invited. Send them to lists@casparcommons.org

We  **Caspar**