

Public Comment – City Council Meeting (Dec. 15)

Agenda Item 4.b – Downtown San Rafael BID Advisory Board Appointments

Good evening Mayor and Councilmembers.

Ken Dickinson, San Rafael Meadows

I'm speaking on this item because it involves how the City uses advisory and oversight bodies in situations with significant public impact and financial risk.

Within that context, I'd like to address the City's recent agreement with the County of Marin to purchase 350 Merrydale, operate an interim homeless shelter through 2029, and then entitle at least 80 units of permanent affordable housing.

This project represents a major commitment. While the City received approximately \$8 million from the County, not all funding is in place to carry it through to completion. Ongoing operating costs of roughly \$2 million per year will need to be raised after the first year, and if the property cannot be entitled for 80 units, some or all of those funds may need to be repaid.

At the same time, the *Marin Independent Journal* editorial of December 4 recommended that the City consider forming an advisory committee — including neighbors, shelter residents, and service providers — similar to those used for homeless projects in Larkspur and Corte Madera.

San Rafael already recognizes the value of oversight in high-stakes situations, including the voter-approved tax oversight committee, which I attended on December 11 and found valuable for transparency and accountability.

Given the scale and risk of the Merrydale project, I believe a formal neighborhood advisory or oversight committee — or at minimum a structured public reporting process — would help manage risk, improve transparency, and rebuild trust.

I respectfully ask the Council to consider creating such a body and to report back on that decision at a future meeting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ken Dickinson, San Rafael Meadows

December 15, 2025