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[REDACTED]
San Rafael, CA 94901
[REDACTED]

May 20, 2026

San Rafael City Council
San Rafael City Clerk
1400 5th Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

Corrected letter Re: Lighting proposal for the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park

Dear Members of the San Rafael City Council and City Clerk,

I am writing this letter for myself and on behalf of the Marin Action to Retain Starkweather Habitat (The MARSH Alliance) in regard to the proposed project to install lighting along the San Pablo Bay Waterfront on the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park, also known as the Starkweather Path, in eastern San Rafael.

The San Rafael Department of Public Works March 2, 2026 staff report for this project recommended that the City approve this project without any investigation of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed lighting. We believe that the San Rafael DPW staff incorrectly concluded that the Starkweather Path part of the project was exempted from CEQA for the following reasons:

The path, the project site, is known as a habitat for the Ridgeway Rail bird and for the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse), both of which are federally-listed endangered species. The proposed lighting will endanger those species as well as other waterfowl that nest in the marsh. I have seen salt water harvest mice in the area recently. Perhaps because of the longer days this time of year, I have seen these typically nocturnal creatures dart out of the brush for a quick nibble of grass around sunset.

The salt-marsh harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys raviventris*), also known as the red-bellied harvest mouse, is a species endemic to the San Francisco Bay Area salt marshes. It is listed on federal and state endangered-species lists. The endangered designation of the salt-marsh harvest mouse is due to its limited range, historic decline in population and the continuing threat of habitat loss due to development encroachment on the perimeter of the San Francisco Bay. It occupies marsh habitats where pickleweed and marsh plants abound. It is able to drink salt water. Its many predators include hawk, snake and owl species, as well as shorebirds and larger mammals.

Another environmental concern is preservation of the night sky, which is recognized as important for the health of humans, and which is a very special concern of people living near the path who treasure their night view of the bay.

We are also concerned that the proposed lighting would encourage public use (and misuse) of the path at night despite the fact that this special park is closed by ordinance from sunset to sunrise, and for good reason. The path is not patrolled and there are bushes and shrubs where people can hide. The path and surrounding area are littered with beer cans and food containers, and the litter will likely increase with path lighting that invites nocturnal use.

Sufficient data has not been shown as to the need for lighting.

Public notice and comment as a part of project review under CEQA was not adequately solicited during the planning process.

We are going on record to protest any lighting project on the path at this time. We urge the city council to pause consideration of this project until these potential environmental impacts are properly considered.

All mitigation measures must be identified and incorporated into the project design in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This project can only be approved if these and any other environmental impacts identified during the public process can be reduced to a level of insignificance.

We look forward to being engaged in public comment opportunities, and hope that the other projects included in the grant funding for this project can go forward without it.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edward J. LaBarre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and "L".

Edward J. LaBarre

From: Edie W. Lesieutre [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2026 2:37 PM

To: Mayor Kate <kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maika Llorens Gulati <maika.gulati@cityofsanrafael.org>; Eli Hill <eli.hill@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maribeth Bushey <maribeth.bushey@cityofsanrafael.org>; Rachel Kertz <rachel.kertz@cityofsanrafael.org>; Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>; Paul Navazio <paul.navazio@cityofsanrafael.org>; April Miller <april.miller@cityofsanrafael.org>; Craig Veramay <craig.veramay@cityofsanrafael.org>; Greg Minor <greg.minor@cityofsanrafael.org>; Grey Melgard <grey.melgard@cityofsanrafael.org>

Subject: Concerns About Environmental Impact on Starkweather Path

Dear [Official Name], My name is [Your Name], and I'm a [resident of/frequent visitor to] the Baypoint / Spinnaker neighborhood. I'm writing to express serious concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed "Peoples of the Canal" art installation (3'X2') and the Canal Neighborhood Active Transportation Enhancement ("Canal ATE") artificial Lighting Project on the 2-mile Starkweather/Bay Trail Path. Starkweather Path runs directly adjacent to sensitive salt marsh habitat, one of the Bay Area's most fragile ecosystems. The proposal to install 22 permanent placards (3'X2') and artificial lighting proposed by the Canal ATE would:

- Disturb nesting shorebirds and migratory species that depend on this corridor
- Introduce artificial light into a naturally dark environment, disrupting nocturnal wildlife and natural circadian rhythms
- Proposal to increase foot traffic on a shared use path with constrained widths leading to pedestrian safety issues

I understand and appreciate the value of public art and cultural storytelling. However, I believe this particular location, a nature corridor with documented wildlife sensitivity, is not the appropriate setting for permanent infrastructures of this scale. I respectfully request that the city reject both proposals in their current form and stand with the residents who are directly impacted by these decisions. Sincerely, [Your Name] [Your Address]

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, May 31, 2026 8:48 PM

To: Mayor Kate <kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maika Llorens Gulati <maika.gulati@cityofsanrafael.org>; Eli Hill <eli.hill@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maribeth Bushey <maribeth.bushey@cityofsanrafael.org>; Rachel Kertz <rachel.kertz@cityofsanrafael.org>; Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>; Paul Navazio <paul.navazio@cityofsanrafael.org>; April Miller <april.miller@cityofsanrafael.org>; Craig Veramay <craig.veramay@cityofsanrafael.org>; Greg Minor <greg.minor@cityofsanrafael.org>; Grey Melgard <grey.melgard@cityofsanrafael.org>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Concerns About Environmental Impact on Starkweather Path

Dear City Officials,

My name is Jim Phelps, and I'm a resident of the Spinnaker neighborhood. I'm writing to express serious concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed "Peoples of the Canal" art installation (3'X2') and the Canal Neighborhood Active Transportation Enhancement ("Canal ATE") artificial Lighting Project on the 2-mile Starkweather/Bay Trail Path.

Starkweather Path runs directly adjacent to sensitive salt marsh habitat, one of the Bay Area's most fragile ecosystems. The proposal to install 22 permanent placards (3'X2') and artificial lighting proposed by the Canal ATE would:

- Disturb nesting shorebirds and migratory species that depend on this corridor
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I understand and appreciate the value of public art and cultural storytelling. However, I believe this particular location, a nature corridor with documented wildlife sensitivity, is not the appropriate setting for permanent infrastructures of this scale.

I respectfully request that the city reject both proposals in their current form and stand with the residents who are directly impacted by these decisions.

Sincerely,
Jim Phelps
Spinnaker Point