

# POINT REYES LIGHT

## Closing in on downtown Bolinas parking measure

By

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The Bolinas Community Public Utility District suggested some significant tweaks to the recent proposal from District Four Supervisor Dennis Rodoni to institute new parking regulations on downtown streets in Bolinas.

For the past year, the utility district and the supervisor have been bouncing ideas for possible ways to address the growing numbers of people living in their cars or leaving large vehicles in limited downtown parking spaces, often for months on end.

At a public meeting last month, Supervisor Rodoni addressed a series of suggestions from the utility district, discounting many of them in consideration of timely implementation, legality and enforceability. He also unveiled one new idea: ban parking overnight on one side of Brighton and Park Avenues between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. but give residents special parking permits for the other side.

Last Friday, BCPUD's board of directors held a special meeting to consider that proposal, and to discuss drafting it as an advisory ballot measure in time for the November elections. The board ultimately came up with a counter proposal, which it sent to Supervisor Rodoni and published in the Bolinas Hearsay News on June 29.

According to the board, the supervisor's proposal would not garner community support for a number of reasons. These included that prohibiting all overnight parking on one side of Brighton and Park Avenues "would severely and negatively impact homeowners, tenants and coastal visitors [and] guests of the homes on those streets as there is insufficient street parking there already for those folks," according to its letter.

The board wrote that many downtown events run well after 11 p.m. and that limiting parking would be "highly unpopular." Lastly, the board expressed concern that the proposal would effectively move long-term parkers to Wharf Road, shifting the problem to another already congested area of downtown.

As an alternative, BCPUD outlined a proposal it contends could be supported by a clear majority of the community: ban overnight parking only between 2 and 6 a.m. with an exception for all 94924 residents, for whom there would be a parking permitting system, and apply that ban not only to Brighton and Park Avenues but also to Wharf Road.

The board suggested that local permits be fashioned as placards, similar to the blue handicap parking cards. It also pointed out that permits would need to be accessible to the residents' guests and patrons of businesses of all types, including short-term rentals.

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The clock is ticking for a proposal to be finalized. The board's stated goal is to have the language for the advisory ballot measure hammered out with Supervisor Rodoni and his staff in advance of the next regular board meeting on July 18.

The deadline for submission for November ballot measures is Aug. 10.

Reached this week, Supervisor Rodoni said he is evaluating BCPUD's counter proposal. "In general, I'm very supportive of what the BCPUD is proposing," he said. "What I am doing now is evaluating it with county counsel and our other departments to make sure it is legal and also enforceable—and that we are able to implement it in a timely way."

The supervisor said that if BCPUD's proposal did not fall within the scope of a parking ordinance that allows street-by-street rules in unincorporated Marin, the county would have to consider drafting an entirely new ordinance, which could take longer than the one-year timeline he had proposed for his initial plan.

For now, the county is preoccupied with another enforceability issue in Bolinas, which Supervisor Rodoni has said must be ironed out before any new rules are implemented. Recently, the county discovered that the vehicle code cannot be enforced on the non-county-maintained roads in Bolinas. Staff have drafted an ordinance to close the loophole, but are waiting to find out if a California Coastal Commission permit is necessary before the item is placed on the Board of Supervisor's calendar.

The BCPUD board, in its letter to the supervisor, addressed a common concern from residents that regulating overnight parking on the downtown streets might just move the problem to the Big Mesa. But the board was unconcerned.

"This might happen, and if it does, we respectfully suggest that we then work together to find a solution if requested to do so by the community," the board wrote. "Note, however, that there are no public facilities on the Mesa. [The] board believes, but may be proved wrong, that the public bathrooms downtown are a major reason why the long-term parkers are there."

As far as residents' opinions on regulating overnight parking, they are all over the map. "It's never going to work," one lifelong local said. "There are too many people and not enough space, even with permits—sometimes I can't even park in front of the post office to get my mail. It's impossible to enforce this without pissing everyone off."

Another resident, who works on Brighton, supports regulation. After 7 p.m., she starts to feel unsafe with all the people hanging out. "These people have free food, clothes, parking—that's why they like to come, and the numbers are expanding," she said.

Edmond Hattar, whose family owns the Bolinas Market, is in favor of regulating overnight parking but said many of those people are customers and he is sympathetic to their needs.

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A Berkeley resident who owns a property in Stinson Beach, Carol Brosgart, said she agreed that “residential areas should be for residents. But the town does need a public place for R.V.s that is not in the middle of town where people live with their kids.”

One woman, Red Hughs, who has lived in her car downtown for the past three months said, “This is cruel and unusual punishment.” She said interactions with sheriff’s deputies are constant. “Where are we supposed to go?” she asked. “This is a forced migration.”

One man said he moved to Bolinas to live in his trailer after he lost his home in a fire. “They can’t kill poverty like this, because we create poverty,” he said. “There are bad days in cubicle jobs, bad days in an ice cream shop, bad days on the street.”

*Reporting contributed by Sasha Landauer.*