

CONTROVERSY SWIRLS AROUND BODEGA HARBOR (PART 3)

Bay Harbor Master Plan Allowed to Gather Dust

In 1958 the Press Democrat¹ reported “only through tideland development will Bodega Harbor become the great commercial and recreational center that almost everyone interested believes it could be. The more boats, wharves, ship’s chandleries, marine ways and so on, the more you have the salty flavor and useful facilities that attract both the visiting pleasure boatman and the landlubber tourist.” The dream for Doran Park was to supply fresh water and sanitation instead of carrying water by jug from town several miles away. “Hundreds of sportsmen towing boats on trailers line-up bumper to bumper to get to the meager public boat ramp. If they get in parking lots are jammed, toilet facilities are insufficient with no fresh water.”

Eight years had already passed since 1951, when CA State granted “certain tide and submerged lands to the County of Sonoma.” That left only two short years for Sonoma County to act and show real improvements to the State. At the County Board of Supervisors meeting at the end of 1957, a letter from a Fish Processor in San Francisco surfaced with interest in building a fish hoist and wharf at Doran Park. But with only three of five Supervisors present, knowledge was scant. (Absent was Fifth District Supervisor Nin Guidotti the key Supervisor responsible for Bodega Bay.) One Supervisor mentioned that Bodega Harbor’s Master Plan had not been adopted. But in fact, the Master Plan was adopted two years earlier and apparently laid idle. Sonoma County, with acceptance of the 1955 Master Plan of Development for Bodega Bay, had put owners of shoreline property and potential investors on notice that development guidelines, including rent for use of tidelands, would be forthcoming.

Meanwhile investors large and small were ready, waiting and losing faith in the County’s ability to come up with a fair, simple formula to rent the tidelands presumably to the owners holding property adjacent to the tidelands, in time for the State deadline.

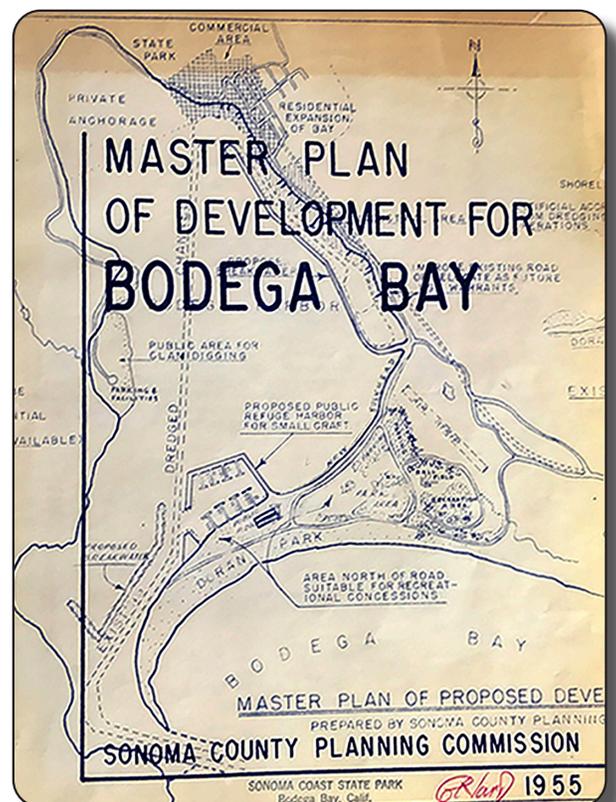
Ray Carpenter – respected, articulate, resident leader. 35 years fishing up & down the Pacific Coast. Owns harbor frontage. Father-in-law of the future post-mistress was “*just sitting tight ... and waiting.*”

Ivan Davis – experienced seaman from Sebastopol, forced to moor in San Rafael. Owned 250 ft of frontage planned a dredged mooring basin, a break water to protect boats and rental berths. “*I’ve given up in disgust.*”

Burt Bean -- garrulous, big, brawny former commercial fisherman who owned a marine engine and boat repair shop said “*Would you buy a pig in the poke?*”

Ray Shaw -- owned 1,200 feet along the shore with the Beach Hotel and Mystery Spot cannot sell or build without knowing if the County will not lease the tidelands to someone else.

Paul Hindringer -- sub-leased his wharf to Harbor Fisheries with the stipulation the “government” could step in and nullify the lease at any moment.



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The plan was conceptual. It said: "Everyone would benefit." California would have an open accessible harbor from land and sea. Increased commercial fishing, expansion of fish processing plants giving jobs to locals, more facilities for recreation. Fees would pay for the facilities. Better shipping for the inland fish markets, beautification of the harbor, a good refuge harbor and more use by pleasure craft to bring customers into local business. Not only would the County profit from increased business and increased assessed property valuation but also by the fees collected from users of tidelands and public facilities. These fees could help pay for some of the improvements. Everyone would profit."

So, what IS going on? Controversies continue....

The premise of Press Democrat's Bodega Dream articles was that the failure of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to take action on implementing the harbor master plan for Bodega Bay amounted to a "dream in arrested development."

Fifth District Supervisor E. J. (Nin) Guidotti was particularly pilloried in the Fletcher articles for his failure to move the Bodega Harbor plan forward. Guidotti had prior history as a Supervisor in the 1940's. A rough relationship with a vocal political faction in Bodega Bay unseated him and kept him off the Board of Supervisors for six years. Guidotti's opponents still showed strength in the 1954 special election that returned him to his seat as Fifth District Supervisor. Not incidentally, the intervening Supervisor Miller was said to have promised Bodega Bay voters that the County would not collect tideland rents while he (Mr. Miller) was Supervisor.

In 1955, a Court House Committee had appointed Guidotti to make an early report on a uniform system for leasing the County's tideland for private development. He was Chair of the Bodega Bay Development Committee but failed to make a report to the other Supervisors in more than two years. Guidotti felt the other Supervisors sided with his opponents when they asked County Counsel for an opinion as to the County's Title to the tidelands. Guidotti was rumored to be "out to get" his opponents, which he denied. Then he asked to be relieved of his Chairmanship of the committee.

Burt Bean was once a leader of the opposition to Guidotti but said the time is long past for an end to the squabbling over the rights and obligations. Mr. Bean said previously that the adjoining upland owners could prove in a long and expensive court action that they, not the County, own the Tidelands "But we all want to consider that a dead issue, he said *"I'll pay a reasonable rent, if they tell me what it is."*

So what IS going on? Who or what IS stalling the process? Political infighting, benign neglect, preference for a large developer over a hodgepodge of several property owner plans? Or perhaps insider knowledge of things to come? ■

¹Seven Part Article The Bodega Dream by Fred Fletcher appeared in the Press Democrat the first week in Jan 1958 . The Series earned Reporter Fletcher a second-place award at the CA State Fair newspaper competition that year.

