



### John Kramer

#### Local Progressive Activist Passes

By Una Glass, Sonoma County Conservation Action Board Member

John Kramer, a leader in Sebastopol Tomorrow for twenty-five plus years, passed away on February 26. His contributions to Sebastopol

challenging and very engaging. He had a Socratic style of teaching that inspired my lifelong interest in political data and demographics, a rather odd



John Kramer with his wife, Nancy Dobbs

interest for a nineteen-year-old. I received an A in the class and this lead to a job working for the Political Science Department where John became my mentor and friend for forty plus years.

John was a true renaissance man, accomplished at an amazing spectrum of callings. John, with his wife Nancy, designed their home, and did much of the hands-

have been profound and his loss is a terrible blow.

John, who had a PhD from MIT in political science, was a died-in-the-wool New Deal Democrat with serious green undertones. In addition to his leadership role in Sebastopol Tomorrow, he participated actively in Sonoma County politics and served on the Board of Sonoma County Conservation Action for over twenty years, serving as Board Chair for several of those years. He was a dedicated supporter of labor and was active in his union. He was also a great supporter of local and family-owned business.

I first met John in 1972 when I took a class from him at Sonoma State. The class, Quantitative Methods, was

on building himself. He grew his own grapes and made his own wine, bottling Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir. He was a baseball fanatic and a treasure-trove of baseball statistics. He attended spring training in Arizona with his children every year, often meeting up with his sister and other friends. He was a devoted Giants fan. He sang tenor with the Bach Choir, having first developed a love of choral singing when in high school. He was an excellent cook and loved hosting dinner parties for friends and family. He made excellent pasta and was always experimenting in the kitchen. He traveled extensively with family and friends, visiting most countries in Europe several times, as well as the Philippines, Indonesia,

Mexico, Argentina, and several countries in Africa. He spoke German, Italian, Spanish and French.

John served in the White House Office of Telecommunications during the Carter administration. While there, he was inspired to found a public broadcasting station for Sonoma County. John, and his wife Nancy, went on to found KRCB TV & FM Radio after John returned to Sonoma State. Later he received a Fulbright fellowship and studied public broadcasting policy in Italy and its effects on Italian society.

The focus of John's life, in addition to his family, was the pursuit of a better society and a restored planet.

After completing his masters degree in physics in 1961, he participated in the Crossroads Africa program, which was the forerunner to the Peace Corps. This changed his life. In a recent letter to his Crossroads friends he said:

"The experiences living and working with our Crossroads group and Guinean students changed the direction of my professional life. I found that I had more interest and passion about politics and social justice than I had felt about physics through two years of graduate school."

The Crossroads experience lead John to enroll in a PhD program at MIT where he was able to apply the mathematical skills he had developed in studying physics to social and political data. He focused on the fairly new field of public opinion polling and social science data analysis.

### Stay Informed

Sebastopol Tomorrow has encouraged citizen involvement in local issues since 1985. Read more at our website:

[www.sebastopol-tomorrow.org](http://www.sebastopol-tomorrow.org)

[www.facebook.com/SebastopolTomorrow](http://www.facebook.com/SebastopolTomorrow)

Thus began John's fifty-plus-year commitment to fighting for the common good in the civic sphere. John lived and breathed politics. For John, unlike many political scientists, politics was not a spectator sport. Many academics, especially today, just enjoy watching the score card...2 points for the Dems, 3 points for the Republicans, 0 for the greens...this political scorekeeping was not John's calling.

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John was concerned about outcomes. His profession as a political scientist was the result of a passion for the common good, social justice and making the planet a better place. He pursued political science as a  
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## John Kramer

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career because he wanted to use his skills to obtain better outcomes for his community, our nation and the world. Grassroots politics was essential to John...and he was very good at it.

### Progressive Activism

John's activism was routed in essential progressive ideas. John taught me these ideas when I was still a teenager and his student at Sonoma State. I will share these ideas with you now, upon John's passing, because John, the educator, would be mad at me if I didn't!

### Public Investment

First, public investment and government regulation allow for a better private quality of life. For example:

- Availability of quality public transit means families need only one car—thereby giving them more opportunity to invest their income elsewhere and achieve a middle class standard of living.
- Low cost public higher education is essential to the existence of the middle class and advancement of society.
- Universal health care is a human right, not a consumer commodity, and allows everyone the opportunity to enjoy a healthy full life.
- Clear air and clean water are human rights too; air and water are part of our public commons, and those who pollute must pay in full for the preservation and restoration of our public common assets.

When government invests in and requires these things, the quality of life is improved for everyone.

### Property Rights

A second big idea John taught me was that property rights exist in the context of the commons. Our society as a whole provides the roads, water

works, regulation, education and publically-funded research that enables the existence of private property and private commerce. ***Because of this the public has an essential right to a "say" over actions related to private property.***

### Equality

A third big idea is that equality for all is an essential of the concept of American democracy, and activists must vigorously fight for equality. ***But*** being progressive means ***more*** than equality of opportunity; equal opportunity to compete in a destructive dog-eat-dog system hardly defines progressivism. It must be coupled with the idea of the ***common good***, i.e. creating policies and a society that is good for most people, rather than just the few who elbow their way to the tops of the heaps.

Equal opportunity, freedom of expression, public investment, and policies that uphold the ***commons*** and the ***common good*** are the essential ideas of progressivism.

It was these ideas that were central to John's activism in local grassroots politics.

John and I joined the Board of Sonoma County Conservation Action (SCCA) together twenty some odd years ago. John was a key member of the board, developing strategy, endorsing truly green and progressive—and viable—candidates, and insisting that we build alliances with labor, minority groups and other progressive allies. John served as Chair of the Board for many years and was at the heart of SCCA's long-term and powerful influence on county-wide politics.

John was a strident supporter of Labor. He joined picket lines and vocally supported the right of workers to organize. He was active in his own union and saw labor as essential to offsetting

the power of concentrated money and capital.

### Sebastopol Tomorrow

Small town politics was also extremely important to John and it dovetailed with his understanding that all politics is local.

John brought me into Sebastopol Tomorrow, a local grass roots environmental group, twenty-five years ago when we first bought our home in Sebastopol. His strategic skills, ability to frame local issues in a way everyone could understand, and persuasive writing led to many victories in City council races, initiatives and the overall direction of our small town.

John was a "genius at the door" walking precincts at election time. John loved people, often even those with whom he disagreed. He could knock on a door, chat up the residents about baseball, or some new recipe he just tried and then sneak in a quick lesson on local public policy, invariably walking away with a commitment from the resident to vote for his issue or candidate.

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### CVS Traffic Nightmare

When CVS's out-of-state headquarters decided to relocate their store to the center of our downtown, at the intersection of two state highways, John could not sit back and let some big corporation impose its traffic nightmare on our residents. John, Helen Shane and others got to work, rallying

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***John would like you to remember the fight to maintain our small town quality of life and to think about how you can better sustain the quality of life for our community and your neighborhood.***

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opposition, winning a council election and eventually suing about the issue. When you drive through town and pass the site of this potential "public crime scene," John would like you to remember the fight to maintain our small town quality of life and to think about how you can better sustain the quality of life for our community and your neighborhood. We still do not know if we will win the fight against CVS, even though our City Council is with us. CVS can afford big time lawyers and we are just a small, green California town. However, we can support our elected officials and encourage them to use their good judgment in how to best implement the progressive ideas discussed here. We may not always be able to win the fight for progressive ideals because of laws and policies that originate in Washington and Sacramento but we can at least try. And, we can work to send representatives to Washington and Sacramento who will fight for more progressive policies there too.

Discussing John's activism would not be complete without mentioning his partnership with Nancy. Nancy and John were a tremendous team...bouncing ideas and tactics off each other, they were a tremendous force and have accomplished an incredible legacy for this county.

John was my mentor, teaching me the essentials

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## John Kramer

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of a progressive political philosophy. He hammered into me the whys and wherefores of populist economics, social justice and a green point of view. He did the same with countless students, launching many an activist's career. His legacy lives on in the work of his many students *and* in the minds and work of his children and extended family. Standard dinner conversation for John's kids and my daughter included electoral strategies, Keynesian economics, and organizing ideas. John loved these kids so much and delighted in their many accomplishments. He has passed the torch on to them and to us...and now it is up to us to keep his legacy alive.

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# CVS Status Report:

## The CVS Situation as of May 1, 2014

*By Helen Shane, Committee for Small Town Sebastopol*

Reminder: There are two cases in the courts regarding the CVS downtown project.

One is the case in Federal District Court: CVS vs City of Sebastopol, in which CVS is suing the City for enacting a moratorium on drive thrus that would affect the proposed CVS store at the junction of Hwy 116 and Hwy 12.

The other is the case brought by the late John Kramer and Helen Shane, for the Committee for Small Town Sebastopol, claiming that the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) on the CVS project issued by the City Council on July 5, 2011 was based on a flawed, inadequate traffic study.

### **CVS vs City of Sebastopol**

CVS has sued the City claiming that the City had no right to enact a moratorium on drive thrus on projects without building permits. They claim

that their civil rights have been violated. There is no guarantee that whatever happens in this Federal case would be definitive or affect the Small Town suit. The CVS attorney in the Small Town Sebastopol case once stated that if the City prevails and the moratorium is legally enforceable, CVS "would go away". However, she is not the CVS attorney in the Federal case. CVS could theoretically opt to proceed with the project without a drive thru component, or again file their complaint in State Supreme court. At this writing, the City and CVS officials and attorneys are attempting to negotiate a settlement.

### **Small Town vs City of Sebastopol**

In Superior Court on April 29 Judge Daum confirmed dates for the Small Town CEQA case. The dates for submission of briefs and responses mean that

the hearing on the case will not take place until mid November. The MND issued by the City Council, which allowed CVS to proceed without an environmental study would "run with the land" and theoretically could be valid for a new project on the site, now owned by CVS.

Still at stake is the claim by Committee for Small Town Sebastopol that the traffic study for the project was flawed, and that there should have been an EIR rather than the issuance of the MND that negated the need for the critical, thorough assessment of impacts on the environment of our community.

If Small Town Sebastopol prevails in its case, the judge could set aside the MND entirely and order an EIR, or he could order a new traffic study that might modify the MND. The project would have to go back through public hearings to get a building permit, which could be denied.

If CVS prevails in the Small Town Sebastopol suit, the MND holds up and CVS will have only the moratorium suit to deal with, if that is still active.

### **CalTrans**

More than two years ago, CVS asked for Encroachment Permits that would permit access to and from the project via left turns into and out of Hwy 12 and Hwy 116. In response to the many community members who complained to CalTrans that the turns requested would negatively impact traffic and safety here, CalTrans Public Affairs officer Allyn Amsk stated in writing: "Safety and mobility are priorities at Caltrans, and you may be assured that pedestrian safety and traffic congestion will continue to be an essential element of consideration during the permit process." No permits have yet been issued by CalTrans.

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## The General Plan Update Process, People and Dates

The deadline for starting the 20-year update on our General Plan, the document that is our "constitution" for planning the character, size and pace of our town is upon us.

At a public meeting, our update consultants De Novo Planning Group's principals Ben Ritchie and Beth Thompson presented an overview of what we can expect. The public asked questions and made some suggestions. It was agreed that General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) meetings will be "videoed" and posted on the General Plan website. At least 10 three- to four-hour GPAC meetings are planned so far.

The GPAC roster consists of three appointed from the Planning Commission and Design Review Board. They are Planning Commissioners Linda Kelly and Scot Stegeman and Design Review Board member Ted Luthin. Public members are Paul Fritz, Maureen Purtell, Kathy Oetinger, Marsha Sue Lustig, Geoffrey Skinner, Clare Najarian, Paul Andre Schabracq, Chrit Longmaid and Craig Boblitt, and six alternates Rob Cary, Paul Jaffee, Buffie Harris, Erik Ohlsen, Jim Wheaton and Omar Figueroa.

Three more public meetings will have been held by the time you receive this.

All GPAC meetings are

public with opportunity for you to comment. It is up to you to attend as any meetings as you can, and to go to the GPAC website to see videos of the meetings. The website posted by the consultants offers a very comprehensive newsletter about the process and a link for you to send comments to Ben Ritchie and Kenyon Webster.

The update will take about two years to complete. There will be opportunities for input by you. Your job will be to pay attention.

[http://sebastopol.generalplan.org/sites/default/files/GPU\\_Newsletter\\_1\\_4-14.pdf](http://sebastopol.generalplan.org/sites/default/files/GPU_Newsletter_1_4-14.pdf)

<http://www.denovoplanning.com/>

# City Council Synergy Interaction and Cooperation on All Fronts

By Kathy Oetinger, Sebastopol Tomorrow Steering Committee

The rhododendron by the back door was bursting with clusters of vivid pink blossoms on the spring day in 1983 when we moved into our Sebastopol home. And it was just a few years later when I noticed the first Sebastopol Tomorrow newsletter delivered to my front porch. I set it aside for a leisurely read at a later time, and when that moment came I relished every hand-typed, hand-delivered word from other like-minded citizens of this small town. I got involved right away, listening and learning about citizen involvement in the public debate, volunteering to walk newsletters, and helping to elect progressive candidates to the City Council.

By the early 90s, Sebastopol's citizens elected the first progressive council majority voting consistently for the principles that have guided our efforts (see *Sebastopol Tomorrow Promotes* on page 6), and over the years various councils have struggled to get the best results through contentious debates leading to split 3-to-2 votes and great divisions within our community. Divisions on the council often translate into divisions within the community, and every move forward seems like a baby step.

## A New Dynamic

But something new is happening in City Hall with the current five council members. We're consistently seeing

5-to-0 votes, and occasionally seeing 4-to-1 votes—offering the opportunity to make a minority statement of conviction without altering the outcome. The 3-to-2 split vote barely exists in the recent public record.

What's going on? No, we're not getting the old "rubber stamp" vote for the status quo, but a new dynamic altogether. Even though they don't always agree on complex issues, the current City Council is effective in working toward solutions that work well for Sebastopol. Each council member brings a hefty toolbox of strengths, professional expertise, and personal enthusiasms to the table, and our community benefits

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*Along with effectively managing our city, the synergy of their interaction and cooperation seems to be propelling our community to a new level of civic participation on many fronts.*

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greatly from their constructive deliberation and resulting good conclusions. Along with effectively managing our city, the synergy of their interaction and cooperation seems to be propelling our community to a new level of civic participation on many fronts.

After "watch-dogging" many city councils over the years, I am convinced that this team is at the top. I can't help but look forward to the future of our small town and to many more years of magnificent spring blooms in Sebastopol.



## Mayor Robert Jacob

*Editor's Note: Robert Jacob was visiting our sister city in Japan, Takeo (formerly Yamauchi-machi), when we started work on this newsletter. Sign up to receive his informative and up-to-date email newsletters at [robert-jacob.com](mailto:robert-jacob.com).*

## John Eder

City Council Member

Even though times are still financially challenging, I am proud that this Council has started the task of rebuilding Sebastopol's financial reserves, which were previously at zero. The start of the General Plan update has gone well so far, and we are fortunate to have such a high level of citizen interest and participation in this process. I am proud of the continued unanimous resolve of this Council to defend Sebastopol against



the unwarranted lawsuit brought by CVS. Finally, I am proud of the Council's unanimous support of our Solar Ordinance, which will help increase Sebastopol's solar adoption rate.

**City Council meetings, agendas and reports are listed on the City's website: <http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/calendar>. And it's easy to contact your representatives by email:**

Mayor Mayor Robert Jacob: [robertjacobcc@sonic.net](mailto:robertjacobcc@sonic.net)

Vice Mayor Patrick Slayter: [ps.sebcc@gmail.com](mailto:ps.sebcc@gmail.com)

Mayor Michael Kyes: [michaelkyes@sbcglobal.net](mailto:michaelkyes@sbcglobal.net)

Sarah Gurney: [sarahcouncil@yahoo.com](mailto:sarahcouncil@yahoo.com)

John Eder: [johneder@comcast.net](mailto:johneder@comcast.net)

## *Vice-Mayor Patrick Slayter*

Sebastopol is enjoying a renaissance of energy and spirit; a few examples: the thriving Sister City cultural exchanges; the Core Project's facilitation of the SDAT team visit and follow up report; the leadership in community resilience and natural resource conservation through policies like our groundbreaking photovoltaic ordinance, healthy living campaigns and home gardening; the once-in-a-generation opportunities offered in the update of our General Plan; our strong non-profit community service organizations; and our reinvigorated business community. This is an exciting and positive time to be living in Sebastopol.



The City Council, the City Staff and the residents of Sebastopol have worked very diligently over the last several years to provide the City with a sustainable revenue stream, provide essential city services without interruption or staffing degradation, undertake the General Plan update and fund grant requests from a wide variety of nonprofit organizations that provide vital services to our community.



## *Michael Kyes*

*City Council Member, former Mayor*

Our City Council is a great team. We do not always agree with one another, but, we are able to really discuss the pros and cons of issues which helps us come to better decisions. When I compare how well we work together in Sebastopol versus other City Councils in Sonoma County I am very grateful to be a part of our "quirky" town.

I am particularly proud

## *Sarah Glade Gurney*

*City Council Member, and three-time Mayor*

I encouraged the Council to sponsor the SDAT (Sustainable Development Assessment Team) Study that recommended ways to make Sebastopol a better place to live.

I am working productively with each Council Member:

- With John, I am planning community forums about the future best use of the Diamond Lumber/Tractor site
- With Michael, I am working to replace the old cement plant on Morris Street with a gateway to the Laguna
- With Patrick, I wrote our Complete Streets Ordinance



and am developing the Pine Grove Square Project

- With Robert, I have set in motion the re-landscaping of our Library and City Hall.

Our Council is working together to take care of our community.

that I instigated developing a five year financial projection which helps us better plan for the future.

I am very glad that I championed our local sales tax that passed by 70% in 2012. Without it we would be in deep financial trouble. With it, we are able to make progress on street maintenance, sustain our fire department, provide some funding to

our non profits such as the Community Center, and support our police department.

I am proud that our Sebastopol Council has led the way on climate change by requiring solar on all new construction where viable. We have the technology to respond to climate change now and Sebastopol is showing that real change is possible.

# Walk Friendly Sebastopol

By Marty Roberts, Cittaslow Sebastopol Steering Committee



The Park Once and Walk Initiative is a Cittaslow Sebastopol joint project with Complete Streets, iWalk Sebastopol, and Studio L'Image.

In response to our recent Eco-Tourism vote to reduce the impact of tourist traffic, a Pedestrian Connector Task Force has been formed to create maps and signage designed to promote area attractions and encourage visitors to “Help the planet: Park the car and walk.” The committee of roughly 20 to 30 people has attended evening meetings and has participated in weekend Walking Meetings to assess the conditions of suggested routes. Consistent with Cittaslow Sebastopol’s mission to foster collaboration, members of the Pedestrian Connector Task

Force include representatives from the joint sponsors mentioned above.

We plan to pilot three primary connectors and then decide how best to expand the program once we get initial data from the pilot. This is, first and foremost, a transportation initiative designed to give visitors confidence to leave their cars and progress on foot. For instance, when the program is finalized, imagine signs at the main parking lots that say “Help us protect the environment: Park your car and take the Sebastopol Ped Line.”

On maps, on a mobile app and then on signage along the routes, visitors will be guided to follow one of three arterials to help them get to where they want to go. Think of it as

Sebastopol’s eco-version of the Paris Metro, encouraging visits to parks and points of interest while also providing efficient (and healthy!) transportation options:

- The Green Line to the Laguna Wetlands
- The Blue Line to Ives Park
- The Red Line to Florence Avenue

Routes will be suggested and then piloted with guidance from the Complete Streets Advisory Committee and the Planning Department. Interested residents are welcome to join this effort. Contact [tourism@cittaslowsebastopol.org](mailto:tourism@cittaslowsebastopol.org) to learn more.

## Sebastopol Tomorrow promotes:

- Traffic planning which channels traffic along major thoroughfares, preventing it from being re-routed onto neighborhood streets.
- A vital downtown and downtown redevelopment that encourages measures to concentrate most commercial activity in the central area and create a pro-business climate for locally owned businesses that spring from and serve our small town community’s agricultural, artistic, and innovative interests.
- “Managed growth” including mechanisms to mitigate the impacts of growth on traffic, schools, parks, and the cost of city services such as sewer and water. Growth should not be allowed to occur more rapidly than our carrying capacity will support.
- Expansion of public transit and other forms of traffic relief, including bicycle routes and safe pedestrian crossings.
- Preservation of the Laguna, Atascadero Creek and other environmentally sensitive areas. These are assets to our community and should be carefully stewarded.
- Planned affordable housing, especially projects, including “sweat equity,” long-term affordability, and housing appropriate for family living.
- A well-reasoned General Plan which provides City officials with clear, objective criteria with which to make policy decisions, including an Urban Growth Boundary that citizens will support at the ballot box.
- Promotion of renewable energy solutions and energy conservation by City government and its residents.

