BLOG: Morning View Film Studio Update

Looking at the past, and explaining what's to come for the Morning View film studio project.

Posted by Mike Smith, January 24, 2013 at 02:42 pm

First, allow me to say how thankful I am that most of Dixon has been so open and patient about the news flow from Morning View.

Most understand that many people and businesses enjoy (expect) some level of privacy while a growing few demand to know everything about everyone. I know there is no way to make the few understand why many of us do not wish to have private matters posted for every person with internet connection to see until the end of time. Within that mindset I shall provide as much information and background as possible.

The Past

Yes, Morning View did attempt to locate in various other locations. Some of those locations people know about and others remain private. When I showed Morning View Dixon and
provided the background – Morning View also had other locations under consideration. Sometimes things did not work out for them, other times it was the other party. Sometime, neither was to blame. No, I will not say why the other locations were not successful. Perhaps it was like looking for your soul mate; once you find them you stop looking and don’t look back.

Morning View was serious, they held a public meeting to get the feel of the community and let the world know they were serious about Dixon. Believe me, others were still interested in having Morning View consider their city. When the City of Dixon wanted information – Morning View provided it. However, Morning View has never planned and then declined to make a presentation before the City of Dixon. When updates were needed, either Morning View emailed them to the City Manager or I spoke before the city council.

**What about the purchase of land?**

Morning View considers the purchase of the land a private matter and will not provide the names, locations and dates of discussions on the process to date. And if landowners do not wish to go public – why should I?

What I can tell you is the process for the purchase of the land. First will be the large parcels under the foot print of the studio within city limits that do not have homes and businesses on them. After that, other land around the studio within the city limits and then the county. However, before we can even talk about purchasing the land we have to address the “show me the money” question.

From the point of view of the City of Dixon, funding the building of a project has no bearing on the land use and permitting requirements. From the point of view of the general public, no requirement exists. The people of Dixon have never asked for a family to submit a "wherewithal" or financial statement to build a home and my neighbors did not require one when I moved to Dixon. Many of the recent businesses that moved into or expanded in Dixon, were not asked to provide a financial statement. Genetech did not. Altec did not. From memory – no one asked them to and most were happy to have the added jobs in Dixon. There is no requirement for the financials or the backers. Morning View considers this private. That should address the land purchase, financial and backers of this project.

**Measure N’s Impact & More**

Things were moving fast until Measure N came about and then came some serious rethinking. While I do not wish to recount Measure N, I feel you must know how this impacted the project.

Morning View was going to build and operate the studio. However, to be absolutely sure the backers of the project would be able to remain private (in any future attempt of a like Measure) another layer had to be added. Morning View had to select a development company to build the project. This not only added a time delay but a huge additional cost. Time was lost waiting for the election, selecting the development company and then forming the legal entities for the construction and operation of the studio. Application to the city and opening of escrow to purchase land was subject to this delay.

The City of Dixon also has work to perform as part of the development process for the studio. The housing being displaced by the studio has to be accounted for elsewhere in Dixon so the housing element is in compliance. Part of Dixon’s general plan states development will pay its own way. Therefore, for the housing element work, Dixon must collect from the developer. One of the easy ways to do this is via a reimbursement agreement. I have been working on
the housing element options to get the project back on schedule. David Dowswell recommended an approach and Morning View asked for approval of the reimbursement agreement so the City of Dixon could move forward.

Contrary to what is being written or discussed, this agreement is not a litmus test or a type of promise. Morning View will deposit $100,000 to be applied to Dixon’s cost to complete the work needed so down the road Morning View can seek approval for their project and pull permits. As the reimbursement account is drawn down, additional funds will be added.

So why no public meeting or more information?

Consider the time required to complete the work to date. Consider the scale of this project... $2.8 billion... 300 acres... millions of square feet... with a goal of two years from start to finish. It is a lot of late nights with contracts, scope of work, budgets, conceptual plans and working with various partners, associates, bankers and team members.

I get updates every few days to assist in keeping things on track with the approval process and update the project schedule showing time lines, responsible parties and critical path and then advise Morning View if we are slipping. And for reasons stated above we are slipping.

However, here is what you should see in the near future. Morning View will have a website to provide information, gather comments; public meetings soon. Look for an announcement of the developer, construction team and closing on properties. There will be less speculative info posted by bloggers and more facts directly from the source – Morning View. Speculation and name dropping are counterproductive.

Some question how and why Morning View is going about this $2.8 billion project and who is behind it. Morning View’s industry is different. It differs like that of brick and mortar to internet retail; to your favorite mom and pop shop to the big box store; or an old friend that will help without question. From what I have learned, the industry is relationship based, your word is your bond and what is private... remains private.

Dixon is set to have a wonderful member of the community. They are not asking you to change or totally understand the how and why they do business they way they do. They just ask you to consider their wishes and consider accepting them. It’s a free country, with free speech and free internet. Please consider the impacts of public speculation and name dropping on the folks that value their privacy.

Feel free to contact me if you would like to be added to our email update list.

Mike Smith
mikes@ibewlu180.org

Comments
that's it. Until then, it is none of my business what they do and I have plenty enough to occupy my life without concerning myself of what might or could be.

To date I haven't heard of anything and don't care to, until they come to us. When I was evaluating my business venture it took 6 months to gather and process the data and that was just for a little automotive repair shop. I can only image what they must go through for a venture of this size. Sounds like fun and exciting.

Recommend

The Great Libertarian  January 29, 2013 at 05:36 am

I find this all very interesting. Actually, I find anything Mike Smith involves himself with amusing as he is little more than a "shill" as he was for the failed race track venture. Quit concerning yourself with jobs for your electrician brothers. You sound little different than Gary Erwin touting how wonderful this will all be and how we shouldn't investigate anything but just approve it.

Despite my criticisms of Smith and Erwin, and their factual misrepresentations such as 300 acres which is the actual footprint of the studios and does not mention the 800 total acreage Ms. Carpenter is attempting to purchase, I was working closely with Carpenter and her group until I was sabotaged by Smith and others who did nothing to find a suitable location within Dixon but rather were stuck "inside the box" as usual. Now that Morning View is looking at land that was to house residences, I should turn to that to correct more of Smith's nonsense. The housing element also seems to be open to interpretation. When looking for sites for low to very low income residences, we are told that the land must be immediately developable. Yet the Southwest Area has no infrastructure and can't be included in providing sites for any income levels. The Southwest area was a "planned" area for future residential not much different than Peter Timm's property to the east of town which was the original direction for expansion of our city's residential. I will continue in a second post.

Recommend

The Great Libertarian  January 29, 2013 at 05:52 am

To be direct and to the point, if planned residential is removed from the Southwest Dixon will simply have to find another area to develop for this use if and when demand returns. The Timm property is the obvious choice as it has already been designated for that purpose far in the future which now will be much sooner. But does Morning View have to pay for a housing element update? That is unreasonable. They will be more than paying their way by providing some of the funds for the Parkway Blvd overpass, all of the infrastructure for their project, and contributing to expanding our wastewater treatment plant along with its rehabilitation.

As Smith brought up Measure N, I will simply respond that Morning View was a convenient pawn in his efforts, and the other miscreants who opposed this, to continue to hide the inner workings of what should be the public's government but instead is a continuation of a corrupt few who attempt to remain in control. There was nothing in Measure N which required exposure of any "trade secrets" or "financial information" which is protected from exposure in existing State law. The last point of disagreement is on financial disclosure which is out of Smith's frame of reference. Genentech's financials are known. It is a publicly traded company. Anyone can obtain their quarterly or annual reports. Morning View is not a publicly traded company and that is the difference. Continued once more ...

Recommend
The Great Libertarian January 29, 2013 at 06:03 am
I agree with Aaron. This is not an update. This is a waste of breath. However, I do agree with Smith on a few of his points.
This is a large project. The first step is the acquisition of the land. We all know all we need to know about this. Once Carissa Carpenter buys the land, her credibility goes sky high. There is a substantial amount of money involved simply to do this first step. As much as Carpenter would have loved to achieve this immediately, reality and negotiation both point to a longer duration of effort. After the land is purchased, two other processes can be simultaneously be started: one is the "entitlement" process which includes changing zoning and land use and two is approaching the actual studios who will be providing the funding for construction of their facilities. A third piece of this puzzle is the infrastructure improvements which will be financed through a "communities facility district", a Mello-Roos district as it is otherwise known as, to be put together by investment banker Piper Jaffrey. I also agree that Carpenter's failed attempts in other cities means little to Dixon. How or where she gets the money to do any of this is also no concern to me. She has a team in place to get this job done. However, she is not a developer and has therefore made the right move in hiring one to bring this project to fruition. The final topic I will address is the "privacy" issue.

Recommend

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The Great Libertarian January 29, 2013 at 06:17 am
As I have already stated, I am not concerned with Morning View's financial information nor Ms. Carpenter's personal fortune. What does concern me is exactly what this project will be and the "800 pound gorilla" it will create with the money Carpenter has already stated she will "philanthropically" be spreading around not as sugar but more like tainted manure.
I do understand the need for an "anti-Paparazzi" ordinance. It is no one's business which movie star will be where in the city of Dixon. If Tom Cruise decides he wants lunch at Bud's, that is his own business. However, he is a known public figure and Dixonites are friendly and sociable. Hell, I might even offer to buy him a beer. To insist that everything must be secretive and that no speculation heard is more nonsense. Back to Dixon Downs. The speculation from those who took the time to investigate the horse racing industry and Magna Entertainment's finances was that this was not a good bet (pun intended). This wasn't so much speculation as it was common sense. Yet Smith was in denial as were his peers on the council who only saw dollar signs. Maybe Mike will admit he was wrong now but I doubt it. Why don't you tell us exactly what this project entails so we don't have to speculate? Carpenter personally told me this is a "family oriented films" venture. She also shared that there would be four studios whose names cannot be disclosed because they are under contract elsewhere. Now to finish ....

Recommend

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The Great Libertarian January 29, 2013 at 06:28 am
Don't bother us with your championing of a project in which your union is intent on investing its pension money or which you know will provide full time electricians jobs as well as carpentry jobs. I agree with Greg Coppes that non-union trade workers also should be given jobs rather than the exclusion from opportunity.
The idea of having a number of movie studios here in Dixon is a great idea. Clean industry despite being associated with Hollywierd has the potential for benefitting many of our residents. But will this be more of the same "bad old boy" bullshit of having to be part of the "in group" in order to benefit? I would suspect so. So let's sit back and wait and see where this all goes. I agree with Thom Bogue that none of this
means anything until something, such as the purchase of the land, occurs. Despite what anyone at city hall says, the deposit of $100,000 means nothing until a project application is submitted. This won't occur until land is bought. And no land owner other than the Bank of West Sacramento has entered into any agreement or even heard from this group in four months. Hope that "updates" you a bit better, Aaron, than Mike Smith's spiel ...

Recommend

Shirley Fanning Humphrey January 29, 2013 at 10:55 am
Dixon's Housing Element should be underway with a number of neighborhood meetings with citizens involved as required by California Housing Law. Having Morning View pay for the housing element is restrictive and ridiculous.
The Southwest area may stay residential or it may be changed, depending on what the citizens of Dixon want. A housing committee should be appointed immediately. In fact, citizens took this issue before the Planning Commission in June of 2012 and the commission seemed to agree with a housing committee. Citizens have also asked the city council for a housing committee comprised of citizens from each neighborhood area. Whatever Morning View does is up to that company. What the citizens would like to see in the next housing element, which is due in less than 11 months, should be a high priority and a committee should be appointed regardless of Morning View's intentions.

Recommend

Mike Smith January 29, 2013 at 01:12 pm
Mike Ceremello a/k/a The Great Libertarian
People should see two properties closing soon and more to follow. Owners are keeping things private. However, the sooner they reply to Morning View the sooner the escrows can move forward – it takes both sides to close the deal. “Development pays their own way” per the general plan, so yes, Morning View has to cover the cost of the new housing element along with all the infrastructure. That is why they wanted the reimbursement agreement – to get things rolling. As for you “working” with Morning View, no you came in years later by injected yourself. You activity worked to promote and support the studio. To the point - by your own comments about me – you would be prohibited from discussing or voting on the matter. Both people with and without union membership will have an opportunity to work on the construction of the project. Many private businesses will be supportive vendors to the studio. But to work for the studio – you have to be union – that is what Morning View requires. We have had non-members working on PLA’s in the past – membership is not a requirement to get a job through the IBEW and many other unions. Building green requires sourcing materials and labor as close to a project as possible. To assure this, you use specifications for materials and a PLA for labor. A new blog on who will use the studio is coming soon. Mike Smith

Recommend

Gary Erwin January 29, 2013 at 04:48 pm
Mike Ceremello AKA/the confused “Great Libertarian” and Community.
Michael, you have forgotten that I e-mailed you very early in the process with my concerns and that you after personally meeting with Morning View told me things were fine. I also want to point out that it was I that told you about the “George’s Orange” property and how it should be considered as a potential site. The 300-800 acre issue... in some articles Ms. Carpenter is credited with wanting to purchase 800 acres of
property and in other articles it says 300 or more. If I waiver on my number it is because I am not an insider and do not know the real number of acres that she wants or will purchase. If you are going to step on my reputation you had better be right. The purchase of the property is key. If Morning View is willing to invest the Millions needed to move forward and purchase the land we are one step closer to reality with this project. Naming the parties involved will also be a big step. It is one thing to buy the property and it is another for these Directors and Producers to come out into the light and associate with the project, put their names on it and fund it. Continued:

Recommend

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**Gary Erwin** January 29, 2013 at 04:50 pm

I believe that this project will be great for the town. Do I think we will have problems; well yes there is no doubt that we have hurdles to jump over as we have already witnessed. Will the studio benefit the town more than hurt it, yes it will. The Movie Industry is about to go through a big growth spurt. Asia’s population is experiencing tremendous growth in its middle class. The Asain middle class enjoys western media, including Movies, Television and we hope at some point Live Performance. The Dixon facility, from what I gather is being designed to take advantage of this opportunity. The Movie industry is highly unionized in the USA. I would encourage people interested in working in the Studio to invest their time in getting to know the Unions that will be doing the type of work they are interested in doing rather than waste their time being a sour grape. Want a job? Educate yourself, have an open mind, be ready to work and get to know the Unions involved. Small town politics can be ugly and are often not pleasant on a personal level. Let us all hope that we can keep it at a minimum and move on to get this project built

Recommend

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**Gary Erwin** January 29, 2013 at 05:23 pm

Highlighting my point about tremendous growth in Asia and their appetite for media, see the below statistics.

the Chinese film sector — which saw box office jump from $144.2 million in 2002 to $2.69 billion last year, with the number of screens going from 1,400 to about 12,000 in the same period.

http://thinkprogress.org/alyssa/2013/01/28/1498581/if-china-buys-an-american-movie-studio-how-will-it-change-what-we-see-on-screen/?mobile=nc Let’s bring some of this money back into our U.S., State and local economy.

Recommend

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**Bil Paul** January 30, 2013 at 02:10 am

Ordinarily, when someone wants to build something as big as this movie studio complex -- especially from multiple landowners -- they go in and buy the properties before announcing to the world what their plans are. Because if they announce the project first, and then attempt to buy the properties, the asking prices can (and often will) skyrocket. Or speculators will come in and buy the land, and then try to resell it to the project at greatly inflated prices. In the case of Dixon, only one or two landowners in the center of the project could hold out for exorbitant prices, holding up the entire show. Of course, there's always the eminent domain process, but not many municipalities are willing to exercise it for private projects.

Recommend
Dixon, CA to film on stages?" There is NO SUPPORT structure there for the myriad of additional services that are necessary to support a thriving Production Studio. Take a look at what happened to the production studios built in Pontiac, Michigan. Even with state supported tax incentives (California's film tax incentives are paltry to what was available in Michigan) the Studio provided few jobs and went broke. I would not expect any better outcome for any production studios built in Dixon.

Recommend

Jim Ernest March 21, 2013 at 10:51 pm
It is easy to forget what Dixon has to offer. Dixon and Vacaville are right between two big metropolitan areas, on the biggest freeway in the U.S.
Even with all the political turmoil and tax problems, our state is still a highly desirable destination. Dixon WILL grow in almost any scenario. These people are bringing their own money with them, and obviously believe in what they are doing. Their vision is a bright one. Morning View has the right to attempt this business venture, here or somewhere else; I hope they succeed here.

Recommend

Gary Erwin March 21, 2013 at 11:32 pm
Kip,
Why did Lucas settle in Marin? Why did Coppola settle in San Francisco? They left L.A. to set up their own Shangri la away from the overbearing structure of the "Big Six" where they could work unobstructed on their projects. Benefits of Dixon: Affordable available land and housing. Trainable, egger labor pool. Highway 80 at its doorstep with 505 nearby Nut Tree Airport that accepts corporate jets Sacramento International Airport 25 minutes away. National Fiber Optic backbone runs through Dixon Small government able and agile. The Studio will have its own scene shop, wardrobe, props dept. Studio will own its production gear and it will be located in house. The difference here is that the Directors and Producers are signing onto the project it is not coin operated as in the examples your provided. Yes someone can come in and rent the facilities MV also has their pool of signed creative’s with their projects.

Recommend

union member March 28, 2013 at 01:12 am
So if you knew this,why didnt you tell us at the union meeting?

Recommend