

## SHWindow

**Tuesday is the first meeting of the new Council.** (6PM, Vintage Hall) On the lengthy agenda is the continued catch-up with State housing law via general housing [amendments](#) to our ordinances and the [affordable ones](#). This enables St. Helena to submit a compliant Housing Element to the State HCD this spring. Two other big items are the appointment of a new Planning Commissioner for Brian Russell's place (see [applications](#)), and the [Tree Ordinance](#). Also enlightening, all the [political committees](#) to which SH sends reps.

- On trees: Trees are now an important political issue. Why? Climate change. Period. Large trees drink up storm water, absorb CO2, provide shade, and have the deepest roots in drought. Waste water districts in New York and Texas have planted 100's of trees to stave off building more capacity. Trees are ranked 80.+ whereas vines are 1.+ in value for absorbing CO2. Shade trees will save power -- in this State, that will be alternative power, like your solar system. But trees are under siege as new wealth arrives with design ideas and large footprints and seeks to remove them. Towns without a good common canopy will be hotter, less livable, avoided and more expensive to maintain -- and valleys are hotter than mountains. Defend large trees. Plant more here, now. [2014 Heat Chart](#)

- On Housing: Our Town St. Helena is a local group that advocates for fair housing and works with Habitat for Humanity. They need donations to help with costs of repairing St. Helena homes in need: Contact Mary Stephenson at 963-1548.

- **Legal Issues:**

- I filed a complaint with the Fair Political Practices Commission about the alleged conflict of interest which Brian Russell identified in his Form 700 (required disclosure of financial interests) and received a letter saying they were looking into it. A similar case happened in Calistoga with the Mayor in his conflict with his role on the Chamber -- the Multiple Hat Problem, again.

- Beckstoffer/Silvestrin case: For a nominal sum, you can access the [related public records](#).

- **Updates:**

- Jim Haller assures me that he will get CalTrans to prune the Elm Tunnel, in case you're wondering this year.

- For a glimpse of the future, check Register publisher, [Sean Scully's very important demographic editorial](#). With less people living UpValley, on-going educational campaign about the value of Ag is urgent, especially for the new, urban or young people who live and vote in cities. One can imagine a point in the future of the Bav Area in which

nearby ag land will be needed simply for food, not tourism or wine, but by then it may not be there. See [Ag vs Urban water use](#).

- Re that future, check the [Gallo Wine Trends](#)' first annual survey. It's a generational eye-opener.

- **Rumors:**

- Of an invisible Hwy 29 Tourist Plan for south of the bridge. Said to be talking (investing?) are all the usual players clustered in the area. However, there is a legally viable Highway 29 Specific Plan which is part of the General Plan, both new & old, which is not going away without due process. [See map](#).

- Of "St. Helena prices" approaching the gouge stage. Evidently there is now little shame in telling people "it's St. Helena prices". Shoppers are expected to nod knowingly and pay. The Chamber should be advising business owners that this fosters a negative reputation (so easy with social media now) about coming here -- especially among the social media generation which will soon be economically essential (see Gallo trends above). It's another rationale for opposing the Wealthy Only Plan.

- **The Archives:** There is a new page on the website -- [Archives & Editorials](#) -- in case you want to check a past topic and its attached files -- an Index and dates are coming.

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- Sandy

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