

LOCAL NEWS

Bolinas RV camp proposed for emergency housing



By **RICHARD HALSTEAD** | rhalstead@marinij.com | Marin Independent Journal

PUBLISHED: October 21, 2023 at 10:51 a.m. | UPDATED: October 23, 2023 at 5:11 a.m.

The Bolinas Community Land Trust is attempting to raise more than \$2.59 million to provide emergency housing using recreational vehicles for people who have been living in substandard conditions for years in western Marin.

The trust plans to install 27 recreational vehicles with utility connections and a new mound septic system on a 20-acre parcel at 130 Mesa Road. Water for the project would be supplied despite Bolinas' moratorium on new water connections by reallocating water from other land trust properties.

The trust purchased the property in 2018 from the receiver in control of Tacherra ranch, Larry Baskin. The receiver was appointed following a legal dispute between Jim Tacherra and Ernie Tacherra.

The recreational vehicles would be a temporary solution. The trust's ultimate goal is to create permanent affordable housing at an adjacent site at 160 Mesa Road, where approximately 60 people are living. The trust is negotiating with the receiver to purchase that property.

On Tuesday, Marin County supervisors will consider a request to allocate \$622,000 to the project. The Marin Community Foundation is considering making a matching contribution of the same amount.

"There's a true emergency situation happening," said Len Rifkind, the land trust's attorney, during a county hearing that secured a coastal permit for the project on Monday.

Several Bolinas residents spoke in support of the project during the hearing.

"I'm familiar with the deplorable living conditions, and I'm deeply appreciative of the compassion that the Bolinas Community Land Trust, the Tacherras and county officials have shown to find a solution so as to not displace the families that live there," said Edward Chiera.

"We in Bolinas are fortunate to have these Latino families as an integral part of our community," Chiera said. "Like all working families, Latino and Anglo alike, they provide necessary services we need to maintain our village."

Nick Bogle said, "They are presently living under conditions that no one should have to live under. Time is of the essence. The rainy season is coming, and it is vital to the residents of this ranch to be located in this temporary RV park."

Chloe Sladden said, "Bolinas has stood by for 30 years. The community is ready to do the work. It's ready to acknowledge that this is not acceptable. I can tell you that not a single person I've talked to is in opposition."

But Alicia Gomez, who will be able to view the camp from the floor-to-ceiling window of her part-time home, said, "While my esteemed and respected neighbors say that no one's in opposition, I actually am in opposition."

"Many people have approached me quietly to say that they also oppose it," Gomez said, "but they're afraid to raise their heads up because the community just descends on them."



"It's farcical," Yates said. "This is not a campground. I can't go in there with my North Face tent and camp. It's residential housing."

Yates said the project will actually be a mobile home park, which is not a permitted use in the coastal zone.

Yates said the site is under a Williamson Act contract, which gives property owners tax subsidies for maintaining their land in agricultural production.

"It's a blatant violation of the Williamson Act," he said. "The county needs to enforce it."

In her letter, Ruggiero wrote, "For 30 years Marin County has known about the substandard conditions in which the residents of the ranch have been living. In October 1993, Marin County posted a notice of violations at the ranch, listing numerous violations of the county code, including, but not limited to, substandard and unsanitary living conditions."

At the request of the receiver, the county inspected the property in July 2022. During the inspection, county staff documented unpermitted trailers, mobile homes and detached accessory structures that were being used for residences without an approved means of sewage disposal or access to drinking water.

The county report noted that the residents were being provided water through garden hoses and bathing facilities were provided in portable toilets dispersed throughout the property. Testing at the site detected sewage surfacing onto the ground at four locations.

In his report to supervisors for Tuesday's meeting, County Administrator Matthew Hymel wrote, "Recognizing that no alternative living options for the residents in the community existed at the time, the Community Development Agency provided a list of emergency actions to address the deficiencies in the wastewater disposal and safe drinking water in the short term."

Hymel added that while these temporary actions were put in place, "certain measures including a gray water disposal system will not be functional during the wet weather season."

In September, Legal Aid of Marin filed a legal action that would give it and the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation permission to sue the receiver and the Tacherra family on behalf of current and former tenants.

The filing asserts that for over a decade the defendants "charged rent to families to live in deplorable makeshift dwellings," that ranged from "a van draped with a tarp, metal sheds, old travel trailers, and housing structures lacking basic needs."

"When temperatures drop below freezing these families have no heat and parents try their best to keep their children warm, including their newborn infants," the filing says. "When it rains the septic system seeps green liquid with a strong odor in the same place where the children played."

If the permission to sue is granted, the two legal groups will seek restitution of back rent as well as compensatory and punitive damages.

Baskin said, "They have a right to file their claims. Our intent is to enter into good faith negotiations to try to resolve their questions. We're fully supportive of the Bolinas Community Land Trust efforts to create the emergency temporary RV park for them to move off the ranch and then move back when affordable housing is constructed."

Start your day with us

Our top stories curated & delivered to your inbox each morning.

SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#),
[Privacy Policy](#), and to receive emails from Marin Independent Journal.

Nature's 'Liquid Adderal' is going viral in Bolinas

(Try Without Prescription)

Health Headlines | Sponsored

Try Now