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Ukiah Slaughterhouse Update

After a splash of publicity last summer and fall, proponents of a Ukiah slaughterhouse have been curiously silent in recent months. Several times Citizens Against a Ukiah Slaughterhouse (CAUS) expected Sam Goldberger and others to provide updates about their plans, but each time there's been a cancellation or a delay. Still, CAUS has been closely monitoring progress, and we'd like to share what we know—and what we don't know.

Background: Slaughterhouses Proposed in 2006

On July 7, 2006, the *Ukiah Daily Journal* ran a story about Marin County resident Sam Goldberger's plans to build a slaughterhouse in Ukiah. In that story and in interviews on KZYX&Z radio on July 17 and October 10, Mr. Goldberger said he'd created "a virtual company" he called North Coast Meats, and wanted to build a facility to slaughter a minimum of 50,000 cows, sheep, goats, pigs, and buffalo. He stated desire to build where he'd have access to city water and sewage, and mentioned four sites of interest along Highway 101 near Plant Road, Talmage Road, and the fairgrounds. According a posting on the North Coast Meats website at the time, the facility would draw animals from all over the state and serve the San Francisco Bay area market as well as local markets.

Around the same time, Mendocino County resident Chris Stone was meeting with members of the Yokayo band of Pomo Indians and the Bureau of Indian Affairs about building a slaughterhouse, dubbed Mendocino Abattoir, on land privately owned by tribal members. That property includes river bottom land on Old River Road approximately two miles south of Talmage Road. Mr. Stone hoped to have the parcel declared reservation land, presumably to minimize the need to conform to environmental regulations.

In October 2006 a group of concerned citizens met to discuss the impact a slaughterhouse might have on our community. The group included working people, retirees, and students, life-long meat eaters and vegetarians. We determined to work together to conduct research to educate ourselves and the community about the facilities Sam Goldberger and Chris Stone proposed to

build, and the effects similar facilities had had on other communities. That was the genesis of CAUS. As we made our intentions known to fellow citizens, our numbers grew dramatically. We looked into the details of the Goldberger proposal (Stone's "abattoir" was virtually the same), spoke with independent advisors in agriculture, the real estate industry, our local Water Board and Farm Bureau, and read volumes of literature generated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Appraisal Institute, experts in environmental health, the U.S.D.A., and the slaughterhouse industry itself.

The results of our research were troubling, and generated a flood of letters to the local paper and calls to the radio station from concerned residents. Details are available on the CAUS website at www.NoSlaughterhouse.org. In brief, we found that a facility of this kind would have troubling environmental, economic, and cultural consequences. Here are just a few examples:

Environment: Proponents expect to bring in a minimum of 50,000 animals per year, or 200 per day, and hold animals for 3 days prior to slaughter, resulting in approximately 600 animals on site at a given time. Six hundred cows produce 39,000 pounds of manure and 900 gallons of urine *every day*. The anticipated acreage for the entire plant, including buildings and parking, is 30 acres or less. This volume of waste on a small parcel of land raises grave concerns about air quality, environmental health, odor, flies, and groundwater contamination. Also, local water resources are not sufficient in a dry year to supply the current needs of our citizens, and the prospect of allocating the vast amounts of water necessary to operate a slaughterhouse seems impractical at best.

Economy: Various reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics list slaughterhouses as the most dangerous or among the 3 most dangerous industries, with 35% of employees incurring serious injuries each year. The turnover rate averages 100% per year. Other communities have reported severe financial burdens on social services and hospital emergency rooms from serving the needs of slaughterhouse employees. Because the meat produced by a slaughterhouse is not taxable, the facility would generate no ongoing sales tax revenue for our community as would other types of industry. If the water necessary to run the facility were instead allocated to new housing, it would supply 154 houses, which would generate \$745,360 per year in new property taxes, all of which would be lost if that water goes to a slaughterhouse.

Culture: The Ukiah valley is a beautiful place to live. Many of us enjoy the peaceful feeling of our community, the fresh air and beautiful hillsides. Numerous residents and a growing number of visitors have come to get away from the noise and pollution of the city. If there's a slaughterhouse in our midst the odors, the noise of animals in distress, and the sight of the facility at our entryway will lead visitors to remember us as "that town with the slaughterhouse." For those of us who live here, all our senses—and our sensibilities—will be reminded of it every day.

What's Happening Now

So what's the latest news on the slaughterhouse? Little has changed since October. Chris Stone is now overseeing a new residential development, and as a result his attention appears to have been diverted from the Mendocino Abattoir. In any case, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has shown little interest in converting the privately owned Yokayo property to reservation land, a key element in Mr. Stone's plans.

Sam Goldberger has been keeping a very low profile. There is more to report about what we haven't heard from him than about what we have. Mr. Goldberger was scheduled to speak at a meeting of Ukiah Rotary on January 23 and again on February 27. He ultimately declined to appear each time. On February 1 he was scheduled to speak to a group of city officials and other residents of Willits about his plans, but canceled that appearance as well, citing concerns about a "Ukiah-like resistance." We had hoped to get updated information about his plans at each of these meetings—and perhaps that's why he decided not to appear.

What we do know is this:

- In November 2006, Economic Development Finance Corporation (EDFC) submitted a preliminary application for a federal grant to study the economic feasibility of operating a slaughterhouse in Mendocino County. Once approved, information contained in the application will be a matter of public record, and Madelin Holtkamp, executive director of EDFC, has promised to release the information at that time. At this writing Ms. Holtkamp has received verbal approval for the grant, but is awaiting written confirmation. The study will explore *only* the economic feasibility of a slaughterhouse in our county. It will not examine environmental concerns except insofar as they have a financial impact on facility construction or operations. Neither will it examine the

positive or negative financial impact on the community. While the results will be applicable to anyone wishing to build a slaughterhouse in the county, Ms. Holtkamp has worked with Sam Goldberger in developing the grant application, and he will be a direct beneficiary of the study's findings. Once the grant is approved, Ms. Holtkamp estimates the study itself will take a minimum of 6 months to complete.

- In December 2006, CAUS contacted Mendocino Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) because of Sam Goldberger's claims that his interest in this project originated in his work with MALT. On numerous occasions he has listed Phyllis Faber, a director of MALT, as a partner in North Coast Meats. We notified MALT of our opposition to the plan, and received the following response from executive director Richard Berner: "It is my understanding that Ms. Faber has no plan or intention to seek to establish any animal processing facility in Ukiah Valley or Mendocino County." Unfortunately, Ms. Faber has not responded to our inquiries, and without confirmation from her we can only take Mr. Berner's statement under advisement.

What CAUS Is Doing Now

With so little new information coming from slaughterhouse proponents, and principle players largely waiting for results of the feasibility study, CAUS's research and information efforts have been adjusted accordingly. We've been monitoring progress at EDFC, and staying in touch with local officials to stay abreast of any new developments at the county level. We're keeping a watchful eye on news of our water supply this year, as allocation of water resources is one of our major concerns about a slaughterhouse.

Most of all, we'll continue to be on the lookout for actions or events that indicate slaughterhouse proponents are moving forward with their proposals. As soon as we hear any news we'll post it on our website, send an email announcement (go to www.NoSlaughterhouse.org to sign up for our email list), and make it available to the *Ukiah Daily Journal* and KZYX&Z and KMEC radio stations.

Stay tuned.

Jan Allegretti

On behalf of Citizens Against a United Slaughterhouse