

**Sonoma Valley Democrats General Meeting Feb 27, 2023.** Zoom: 91 attendees.

**Board Members Present:** Hadley, Baeyen, Taylor, Cesar, Martin, McDevitt

**1. Welcome, Introduce Elected Officials & Board members:** Mayor, Sandra Lowe attended.

- a. **Code of Conduct**– to provide a “welcoming, respectful, friendly, safe, supportive, and harassment-free environment.”
- b. Procedure for asking questions – please put your questions in the chat, Beth will read them to the presenter at Q&A time after the presentation.
- c. Officer elections: Officers will be elected at our 3/27/23 General meeting. Moved and seconded that present officers continue. Anyone interested in a position, contact Beth. Interested persons are invited to attend our next Board meeting on Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am. Only dues-paying members will be able to vote
- d. Dues \$20 for 2023. Pay online at svdems.org or send check to PO Box 1311, Sonoma, CA, 95476

**2. Marty Bennett reported on the February 9<sup>th</sup> Vigil at Sonoma Mission Inn.** 250 people attended including 27 workers at the site. Of the 250 employees, 50 % are women and Latina. The Hotel was purchased by the private equity firm: Brookfield Private Equity in 2021. Other efforts to unionize hotels, occurred in 2006 at the Sheraton which took 6 years, and in 2007, the Santa Rosa Hyatt which took 18 months. Marty reported that the unionization effort might spill over to the other hotels in Sonoma i.e. The Lodge. Marty also thanked the club members who participated in the Vigil.

**3. Mary McDevitt reported on the 2023 CMS** parameters for Traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage programs.

**4. Veronica Napoles reported on “Wake Up Sonoma”.** Veronica obtained a Masters in Architecture from U.C Berkeley and had her own company: Corporate Identity Design. This group of volunteers, started in November 2022 to monitor the purchases in Sonoma by the LeFever/Mattson group, which now owns 99 properties. Mr. Mattson is a Real Estate attorney. His group specializes in Real Estate Investment and property management. The LeFever/Mattson group uses many different LLCs to purchase and sell their properties within their holdings with tax benefits to their investors. The primary concern of “Wake Up Sonoma” is that the business properties that they have bought are only open limited hours or closed entirely and as a result the city has lost a significant tax base. Recent purchases included off-market sale of two bungalows from Bob McDonald for \$6 million. These properties were assessed in 2022 for \$ 1.65 million. The latest purchase was of the property of Harvey’s Gourmet Donuts on Railroad Avenue for \$1.4 million on December 15<sup>th</sup> from Susan Westerbeke. A planned association with Mattson to develop a plaza in the Springs was ended by Supervisor Gorin last month. Veronica also reported that anti-gay comments by Stacy Mattson posted on Facebook have been removed. Both LeFever and Mattson are members of the **Council for National Policy**, a secretive organization of 400 wealthy, right wing conservatives. Other organization with which LeFever/Mattson are involved include the **Family Research Council, Capital Resource Institute** and **Live Action**. Veronica reported that the LeFever/Mattson group has done similar purchases and a takeover of local government in Redding CA and West Olive, Michigan. Veronica suggested we watch the movie “People You May Know,” available on Amazon and read one of the following books: **Shadow Network, The Power Worshippers, Dark Money, or Beyond Belief**.

a. **During the Q & A period, Mayor Lowe** pointed out the importance of participating in the City’s commissions. She also reported that the Council will consider a **Vacancy Tax** at the next Council’s meeting but that this is a very complicated issue.

b. **Many questions were raised** regarding the legality of LeFever/Mattson Real Estate deals. Veronica stated that the organization needs funding and more volunteers to help with ensuring transparency and education of Sonoma residents about these activities. All interested parties should visit the website:

[www.wakeupsonoma.com](http://www.wakeupsonoma.com).

Minutes recorded by Mary McDevitt