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Still no plan for maintenance of SDC after DGS exit, but talks continue

By Tracy Salcedo

With just 30 days to go, questions of who will be responsible for providing and paying for ongoing maintenance and security on the former Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) campus in Glen Ellen remain unanswered.

California's Department of General Services (DGS), which owns the 180-acre site, has declared that, come June 30, no State funding will be available to maintain the campus. "All state activities will shut down at that point," Monica Hassan, a deputy director with DGS, told the *Kenwood Press* via email in late April.

DGS has kept the campus in "warm shutdown" — providing only essential services — since closure of the institution in December 2018. Those services have included providing security; repairing broken infrastructure, such as busted pipes; landscaping, including re-

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Photo by Paul Goguen

Funding for upkeep of the Sonoma Developmental Center campus, including security and building maintenance, like protecting the roof of the historic Sonoma House, expires on June 30. The State of California's Department of General Services, which owns the property, is currently talking with officials in Sonoma County about who will maintain the property after July 1.

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removal of fallen trees; and building maintenance, such as draping the roof of Sonoma House with plastic sheeting to protect it during rainstorms.

As of May 15, the only sure thing was that Sonoma Valley Fire District would be responsible for fire and emergency medical response to the campus. The district is contracted to staff the Eldridge fire station on weekends through the end of June, according to Chief Steve Akre. After that, emergency services will be dispatched from stations in Glen Ellen and Agua Caliente, a response Akre described as “not ideal.”

The *Kenwood Press* reached out to county and state officials in late May for an update. The Office of Assemblymember Damian Connolly responded, but did not provide comment by the press deadline. Neither Senator Chris Cabaldon’s Office nor Senator Mike McGuire’s Office replied to email queries.

Queries sent to First District Supervisor Rebecca Hermosillo and officials with Permit Sonoma were answered by Sonoma County’s Communications Manager Paul Gullixon.

Asked who would be responsible for providing security on the campus, Gullixon wrote, “The State of California, through the Department of General Services, remains the property owner of the campus. Decisions on campus operations are the responsibility of the State.”

If there’s an emergency or to report acts of vandalism, Gullixon advised local resi-

dents and other folks who visit the campus to “contact local law enforcement with any public safety concerns. The Sheriff’s Office non-emergency number is (707) 565-2121. In an emergency, please dial 911.”

In response to questions about who will be responsible for landscaping and repair of infrastructure failures, as well as who will be fiscally responsible for campus upkeep, Gullixon provided the same response: “The State of California, through the Department of General Services, remains the property owner of the campus. Decisions on campus operations are the responsibility of the State.”

Gullixon provided more detail on the fire protection front. “The County’s Fire Prevention Division continues to implement vegetation management programs and other fire prevention strategies to safeguard the SDC property and surrounding communities,” he stated.

Gullixon confirmed that the Eldridge Fire Station will no longer be staffed come July 1, but noted that Sonoma Valley Fire will “upstaff” the Glen Ellen and Agua Caliente Stations “as needed based on conditions throughout fire season.”

Asked whether the State and County were still discussing the provision of maintenance, security, upkeep, and fire protection on the campus, Gullixon responded, “Yes.”

Stay tuned!

Tracy Salcedo is an award-winning writer based in Glen Ellen and chair of Sonoma Mountain Preservation.