

Adam Zack

From: joe symons <joesymons@me.com>
Sent: Friday, June 8, 2018 3:19 PM
To: DL - Council; Comp Plan Update
Subject: Vision Statement Hearing / Testimony Comment

I write in response to a reply I received from Bill Watson on 21 May 2018, following an email I sent to Council regarding my experience testifying before the Council and Planning Commission on Friday, 18 May 2018.

Mr. Watson's reply is included below for reference.

I appreciate the timely reply and the clarification regarding types of testimony: public hearing v Citizen Access. This distinction has never been brought to my attention in the 3 decades of public testimony I have participated in. I would imagine that the vast majority of residents do not know of this distinction.

I am concerned that the definition, held in the minds of Council, regarding "Public Hearing" testimony, in the specific case of citizen input during the hearing on 18 May, is, was, and might be going forward, far too narrow. The topic was the Vision Statement. It appears that Council wanted the public to speak to specific words or phrases in the proposed Vision Statement, and any comments offered that were not wordsmithing were unwelcome and considered "off topic". Given that the majority of public testimony offered was directed toward contextualizing the Vision and not toward wordsmithing it, Council might have taken the opportunity to broaden its willingness to understand what the public is stating.

Instead, the public was admonished.

The Vision Statement is, arguably, the most important single component of the Comp Plan. It is listed, on page one of the Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan, as the "foundation" of the plan. Public comments about the importance of the Vision Statement would seem to be relevant, not just, for example, whether "agriculture" should replace "farming" on line 22 of page 2 in the "Economy" section of the Statement.

Further, the process by which the Comp Plan update is being conducted gives the public precious few opportunities to talk "big picture". Council has crafted zero plans for a thoughtful community wide comprehensive conversation regarding the update. Council has not instructed staff to perform a thorough buildout and impact analysis to validate that the existing UDC regulations, which describe the level of development at buildout, are consistent with the Vision Statement, nor establish a process to engage with the public to ensure consistency.

Thus comments "about" the Vision Statement should be considered valuable rather than being considered irrelevant and straying from the "topic". I appreciate that you acknowledge that you, as chair, did not make the "type of testimony" distinction clear. In addition, you stated:

"I know the Comp Plan is a complicated process with lots of moving parts and it is difficult to parse and separate comments into clear lines of delineation."

Indeed, it is a complicated process. Council should take care to listen to what is being said in those few opportunities that the public has regarding perhaps **the most important long term impactful activity the county is responsible for**. There may never be "clear" lines of delineation. Everything is connected.

The current process and schedule regarding the comp plan update is insufficiently structured and implemented; everything has slipped continually. Resources made available to staff are inadequate to meet the quality and timing of deliverables. The process by which the public can participate in serious conversations with Council and staff on this most critical topic has never been discussed or offered as a "topic" for review and public input. It appears Council is either unable or unwilling to encourage and/or support anything more than the bare minimum GMA-mandated public participation process. Given that the last GMA-driven Comp Plan process created a plan that was in egregious violation of GMA, and that SJC has no "Comp Plan for Dummies" summary of what the current (much less revised) plan actually "says" and more importantly **means**, Council should not only welcome broad public participation to ensure transparency, but should solicit it *proactively*.

Going forward, Council has the opportunity to build a bridge, rather than a wall, with the public on this very important topic. Council has the opportunity to lead the county into a conversational space where the Vision (which, to be achieved, will require some significant and fresh new thinking for all stakeholders) can be realized. Council could set an example of how to work with the public to achieve what everyone says they want, and by so doing demonstrate not only locally, but regionally and nationally that we can work together to create a truly planned, not market driven, future.

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Reply from Bill Watson, 21 May 2018:

Public Testimony during a Public Hearing is suppose to be limited to the topic of the Public Hearing and specific to the topic at hand. In this situation, the public hearing was about the proposed revisions to the Comp Plan Vision statement. It was not about the Comp Plan in general, the Comp Plan Update process, schedule, propane judicial decision, or any other aspect of the Comp Plan. It was suppose to be specific to the proposed revisions to the Vision statement.

Citizen Access time is the time for any other general comments on any subject the citizen feels is important for the Council to hear. The intent was NOT to stifle citizen input, but was to attempt to focus the comments to the specifics of the topic of the Public Hearing.

Several of the comments (some of yours and others) last Friday "strayed" pretty far off the "Revisions to the Vision" topic of the public hearing and would have been more appropriate during the general Citizen Access time. I realize that this "distinction" did not come out during the meeting. I as chair, will strive to make this distinction clear in future public hearings, as we will be having many (including 4 tomorrow).

I hope this clarifies this for you, and I encourage you to keep participating. However, let's limit our "Public Testimony" to the specifics of the topic of the Public Hearing, and use Citizen Access to the other comments. I

know the Comp Plan is a complicated process with lots of moving parts and it is difficult to parse and separate comments into clear lines of delineation.

carpe diem