

Bruce Emad
Mary Gearhart
Sef Murguia
T Scott Kelly
Jeffrey Smith
Richard Hansis
Mel Kreb

Clif Clendenen
Mark Lovelace
Bonnie Neeley
Jill Duffy
Jimmie Smith

Martha Spencer

RECEIVED

JUL 15 2009

HUMBOLDT COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

July 1, 2009

The General Plan is designed to be used by elected and appointed county officials on a daily basis. It is not designed for infrequent consultation and failure to use the plan will quickly cause it to become out of date and irrelevant. Sec.1410

It seems to me that this is where we are; right now we have a decent General Plan that has been on the shelf and irrelevant only because it has not been used as intended. There is a lot of hubris surrounding the General Plan "update" without much serious examination of the General Plan that is in existence now and should be followed now; not abandoned because of anticipated future changes. It is not out of date.

Planning Commission Sec 1342

In order to provide for maximum public input, the commission has the ability to recommend the formation of advisory committees, see sec 1550.

In the recent past, and presently, the Planning Department, the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission seem to be ignoring the current General Plan. We citizens are being asked to accept this considerable amount of money and time that is being spent on an "updated" or new General Plan.

This existing plan recognizes the need for diversity of ownership and a wide range in the choice and use of the lands within our county. (Chapter 2, page 1, overview.)

This plan also was, and is, aware that the county may not be able to provide any new services and facilities or even maintain existing levels. (Chapter 2, pg 2, 2100 overview.)

This General Plan not only allows second units on resource lands it encourages second units. (2420 Housing Needs and 2430.)

This General Plan recognizes the benefits of intensive and alternative resource pursuits. (Chapter 2 2550 & 2551 Remote Rural Development.)

This current General Plan asks for more intensive use of our ag land. It asks for innovation, presumably on the part of the owners, the users of the land, not the Board of Supervisors or the Planning Commission and certainly not the Community Services Dept. It should be the motive of all of the above to provide a working environment for all of us people that you wish to guide, where innovation and more intensive uses can flourish, where people can invest their time, energy and money with some degree of certitude and embark upon new ideas without the rug being jerked from under them. (Ch 2, pg 26-27, pg 39-40.)

The proposal of a 600- acre minimum absolutely violates the General Plan that is right now supposed to be followed. There has been no plan amendment. In spite of this General Plan and present zoning, this county has spent millions of dollars putting in place a violation of this General Plan and also standing the Williamson Act on its head.

In response to Martha Spencer's "General Plan is a Community Guide", 4.30.09. Martha allows as how the true controversial issue is residential development in lands that are zoned and being used for timber and agricultural production. Yes, this seems to be the true controversial issue.

You ask, would restrictions on new housing development reduce property values? That is a no-brainer! However, it is not clear what you mean by development and what is meant by restrictions? Do you mean the haphazard growth of suburbia that requires the extension of municipal services to residential enclaves that interfere with timber and agricultural production? Or are you just trying to restrict a single would be owner from building a home on ag or timberland? To prevent either you wish to install a 600-acre minimum parcel size plus an owner must show necessity for a home so he or she or they can watch the trees grow, maybe in between a 40-year harvest. That requirement is just so much bogus rhetoric.

And what is meant by parcel? You intend to install a merger – you intend to involuntarily merge parcels? These are issues that are not going to be solved by outreach, at least not solved as to the good of the general public. You do need to establish planning advisory committees and community advisory committees. (Sec 1550 of the present General Plan.)

You ask, Can small homestead forest management be cost effective and produce a reliable supply of timber? Another no brainer. We must hope that local people will be able to own local land – small homestead timberland, and keep money for our resource turning over locally! There are two vital things that will produce a reliable supply of timber:

1. The price of a delivered log at the mill (if we can keep the mills from being sold for scrap)
2. The cost of being able to cut the timber.

If a small owner wishes to sell 20 or 30 loads of logs (100M – 200M) and 10 of those loads goes to the cost of being able to cut, that is a huge deterrent even if the price at the mill is a good price.

You ask – Do we have enough water supplies in rural watersheds to support new housing development?

When I was a young man in 1957 and moved my family of 7 soon to be 8 onto the family homestead that had been abandoned for a few decades, we had a plastic pipe over ground that filled a washtub – at night. The sun shut off the water by heat expansion during the day. It was July 1957. We had a tent.

That same spring supplied our house when I was a small boy. We had one cold water faucet in the kitchen and a little drip into a granite iron pan with nail holes in the bottom atop of an orange crate covered with burlap bags out on the back porch. A cooler – that was all – it was adequate. But let's fast forward. Today my house is in the same place as that old one. I have hot and cold water, a bathroom and washing machine and two of my daughters have houses with those amenities. We all use the same spring. Our storage tanks overflow all year into a gulley that feeds the Mattole River. The little creek that runs through my property has no name on the USGS map. In the past it ran dry each year. It has the smallest watershed drainage area of all of the other named creeks in the headwaters of the Mattole. That creek now runs all year.

The year that the Mattole flow went to zero just above its confluence with Bridge Creek my little creek with a tiny fraction of the Mattole headwaters' drainage was still flowing at 20 gallons a minute. Almost 30,000 gallons per day.

All three of our houses together use about 1500 gallons per day. So on a worst-case basis when and if the Mattole flow is zero above the Bridge Creek confluence I have increased the flow into the Mattole River by twenty times more than I am taking.

The point here is that anyone could do something similar. It's not rocket science. Water falls out of the sky. You just need to trap some of it and slow down its journey to the sea. My water situation is more complicated than what I have said, but I am giving you a truthful bottom line. When the Mattole is flowing I am putting hundreds of times more water into the river than I am taking.

We also install Australian built water tanks. We have now installed nearly two hundred tanks, 15,000 to 65,000 gallons, most of them 40,000 and 50,000 gallons. Most in Humboldt County on the Eel River and Mattole River drainages. Some in Mendocino and Trinity.

I submit that probably most of the planners, supervisors and commissioners have close to zero hands on empirical knowledge about springs, water or watersheds. That is another reason for the committees. To keep some common sense in the General Plan. (Ch1, pg 14, 1441.)

So my answer to Martha's tough questions are

1. Would restrictions on new housing development reduce property values? Yes.
2. Do we have enough water supplies in rural watersheds to support new housing? Yes.
3. Can small scale homestead forest management be cost effective and produce a reliable supply of timber? Yes.

I realize that all three of these yes answers could be a yesbut – and expanded upon. But we cannot have that kind of absolutely necessary dialogue in these outreach meetings/workshops or whatever you name them. We at best only identify the tough controversial questions. The planning advisory committees and the community advisory committees are the place for more dialogue regarding the examination of the more micro and macro effects of the issues regarding the update of a General Plan, a General Plan that is pretty darn good just the way it is.

I do not want to criticize Mr. Tooby or the Tooby family for not living in our wonderful county. But it is a fact that they live in Fairfield, Solano County. So for decades their cows have been eating Humboldt County grass and the money for converting that grass to meat has gone out of the county

It should be even a little easier to grasp in the case of timber. When timber is cut, by any absentee owner, be it an individual or a large corporation, the natural resource is gone and so is the money representing the resource.

I hope that this amplifies a case for local ownership. If that concept is debatable, the place to do so is with one of the committees I have mentioned earlier.

The need for a committee or committees has been recognized by a group of citizens that has assembled themselves into a committee. These issues have conceived and given birth to a committee in the face of the abandonment of that option by the Planning Commission.

BA McClell
P.O. BOX 400
WHITE THORN