



November 17, 2011

Mrs. Mary Gearheart, Chair
Planning Commission
County of Humboldt
825 Fifth Street, Room 111
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: General Plan Update
Chapter 1, Introduction
Section 1.4, Guiding Principles

Dear Chair Gearheart and Planning Commissioners:

As we have stated in the past, the County's policy to provide a thirty-day (30) review period before the various sections of the General Plan update goes to a public meeting, is not being respected. Because we have had only two (2) days since the staff report was made available for the subject chapter, we are raising only one issue this evening. It has to do with the Guiding Principles presented on page 1-3 of the staff report:

1.4 Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are presented in this section to provide a statement of community values and of the overall objectives of the General Plan.

Throughout the process of updating this General Plan, the residents of Humboldt County have expressed their interest in preserving the county's unique character and quality of life. They desire to have the county remain a place with a small town feel; a place to raise a family; a place with quality housing, schools, and recreational facilities. Residents also value the existing rural and natural character of their communities and, through an appropriate balance of regulations and incentives, want to protect forest and agricultural lands for continued timber and agricultural production. They also desire improved streets and roads and expanded pedestrian and bicycle access. Additionally, they want to grow and diversify the economy to create increased high-quality job and career opportunities that can support families. They want a range of housing opportunities and recognize a significant shortage of affordable housing in existing urbanized areas. Though they seek to discourage sprawl, they desire to encourage new development by simplifying and streamlining the development review process to minimize the risks and financial costs of getting new construction approved.

As has been communicated numerous times over the past several years, the "community values" were not properly captured during the outreach meetings conducted by your planners over the past decade. It was why the HELP group was formed. It was the subject expressed by large groups as they filled the chambers to capacity during Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings. It was the subject of a letter written by attorney Allison Jackson of the Harland Law Firm on March 16, 2007, where she states:

At the point I became aware of this irregularity, a young man by the name of Hans Parshall had been speaking to the Commission. I was immediately impressed by how Mr. Parshall presented himself and the sincerity of his message of wanting to realize his dream of being able to have an acre of land after he graduated college. He said that he hadn't even intended to speak or even known what was on the agenda, but that it seemed like the proposed Update was going to make that dream impossible. When I glanced over at the note taker, I saw that he had completely quit taking notes. Neither Mr. Parshall's name nor his remarks had been documented. The previous speaker's name was Diane and spoke on behalf of Healthy Humboldt. Her remarks were recorded fairly in depth.

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The values that are being represented in the County's base documents, which lay the foundation for the rest of the General Plan update, represent only a small segment of the Humboldt community. This remains very troubling to many of us, including, but not limited to the members of HELP. It is the subject (General Plan Section 1500) of a recent lawsuit filed against the County by some of its citizens.

To properly represent what the majority of County citizens are concerned about, i.e., their "values", please consider a poll conducted by a professional polling company, Moore Information, Public Opinion Research, during August 2004. It is statically sound and can be scientifically validated. It clearly demonstrates your constituent's value:

Issue Number	1	Jobs & Economic Development	87 %
	2	Housing	69
	3	Crime / Safety	66
	4	Growth / Land Use	64
	5	Taxes & Government Spending	60
	6	Health Care for Needy	60
	7	Protecting Open Space	57
	8	Traffic / Transportation	50

It would be reasonable to expect the concern for jobs to have increased beyond what it was seven (7) years ago, because jobs have continued to become more and more scarce. We would be glad to have a presentation made to your Commission, of the Moore findings, if you wish.

We respectfully request you to pause, and take the time to properly capture the true concerns and values of your citizens before moving forward. Several years ago, when your staff bypassed Chapters 1, 2 and 3, of the GPU, and decided to address those subjects last (Introduction, Guiding Principles, and Governance), many of us objected. Even at this point, it is not too late.

We support your philosophy to complete the GPU as soon as possible, however we have to believe it is better to get it right now, rather than continue down a path that has been driven off course.

Thank you for considering these very important issues.

Sincerely,

Kay Backer

Kay Backer, representing
Humboldt Economic and Land Plan

cc: Board of Supervisors
Planning Commissioners
Phillip Smith-Hanes, County Administration Officer
Wendy Chaitin, County Counsel
Carolyn Ruth, Assistant County Counsel
Kirk Girard, Community Development Services Director
Michael Richardson, Senior Planner
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board
Norma Lorenzo, Planning Commission Clerk

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