

Presentation to Planning Commission-Feb. 20, 2014

My name is Bob Froehlich – I live rurally 4 miles outside of Garberville. I'm a property owner, tax payer, consistent voter, and supporter of sensible land management policy; that is, policy that guides sustainable development and has strong protections for preserving our resource lands for future generations, in the long-term. I've watched the processes, both in the Board of Supps and now here in the Commission, systematically strip away and water down many of those admirable environmental protections from the GPU version which was presented by the previous commission to the Supps back in July 2012. That Planning Commission GPU process represented many years, with countless hours of diverse public input, negotiations and compromise. By contrast, the hasty changes this commission has been making, with, by comparison, minimal public input, appear to many members of the public as driven by special interests, namely development interests, who have successfully coopted some folks, who are not in the business of development, by invoking the mantra of "property rights" and playing to those folks libertarian inclinations and basic distrust of government regulation. Now, I'm not trying to paint all of you as simply sitting there with a pre-arranged agenda, but the impression to be had from watching the proceedings so far, is that a couple of Commissioners have been advocating for holding fast to strong goals of environmental safeguards, while a couple of others are using irrational slippery slope arguments to drive the process, toward stripping out and watering down that language and a number of you are getting caught in between. But judging by the vote tallies I've seen, a lot of changes have passed with only two folks dissenting, so it appears the "strippers" and "waterers" are mostly having it their way.

I'm asking that you, who are trying to do the right thing, think about the legacy you are leaving, related to the natural resources in our county, by exercising your independent vote in these proceedings and that you try to find a way to keep the environmental safeguards while, when needed, finding language that protects against reality-based, not contrived, penalties to the land owner. Remember it's a lot easier and less expensive to protect than to restore.

In conclusion I want to mention that, from the typical citizen's point of view, it is really difficult for us to see the details of your decisions. The minutes, available on the website for these meetings, are lagging about 3 weeks behind. Transparency in this process is so critical to the public's perception that I'm requesting, after each meeting, you quickly publish a "draft fact sheet" showing only the original language, with changes made and the vote tally of the various motions. This would be pretty easy to do and would greatly increase the public's understanding of the proceedings and help with their trust and participation in the process.

Thank you for listening.....Bob Froehlich
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