

8 September 2015

To: Mayor Stromberg and City Councilors

From: Beth F. Coye and Sabra Hoffman, Citizen Action Group, Normal Neighborhood Plan

Subj: Where to Go Next re Normal Neighborhood Plan (NNP)

Given the immense citizen opposition to the City's Normal Neighborhood Plan (NNP), several options are possible: (1) Modify the plan slightly to accommodate some citizen concerns at the first reading of the ordinances and pass the Plan soon; (2) Table the First Reading and initiate dialogue with concerned citizens and decision makers; or, (3) Table the First Reading and initiate dialogue to include citywide education about planning.

We ask you to select either option 2 or 3. We, as well as many other Ashlanders, will be disappointed and angry if the NNP is passed by the Council without considerably more discussion and real dialogue between and among residents, city leaders and decision makers.

Before a month ago, few citizens outside the Normal Avenue neighborhood were aware of the City's NNP which is about to be adopted by the Council. When members of the Citizens Action Group were delivering flyers to areas not near the NNP, fewer than 5% of people had even heard about the proposed plan. Clearly the city has been negligent in informing citizens about the NNP. The ramifications of annexing 94 acres are numerous and deep and affect the entire city.

If the Council is authentic about its Strategic Plan wherein its second goal under "Government" is to "Promote effective citizen communication and engagement" which stresses citizen participation, as well as the State's Planning Land Use Number One Goal of "Citizen Involvement", then tabling the Plan is the right thing to do. In fact, tabling is the only prudent option. Strong leaders adjust policy and decisions when new information comes to light.

When the Council tables the Plan, we urge the Mayor or Council to appoint a citizen-led NNP Committee to report bi-weekly or monthly to the Planning Commission and the Mayor, depending upon the timeline. Under the third option above, one of the purposes would be citywide education about the *process of planning* within the City, using the NNP as an example of how ordinances, the UGB, the BLI, the Comprehensive Plan, *et al*, relate to the city's planning processes.

At the September 1st meeting, several residents testified about the *issue of trust*. As you each well realize, city residents believe that those who govern are acting on their behalf. It is crucial that the City Council acts with integrity and commitment to the best interests of all citizens. How could we have reached a first reading of the Normal Neighborhood Plan without citywide education and without Ashland citizens being heard by those who govern our city?

Respectfully,

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