

PUBLIC COMMENT

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To City of Ashland council members, planning commission members and staff, city manager, attorney, parks and recreation members, and any other interested city officials:

Whereas I am very grateful that we have an amazing community and a responsive council such as ours, and I appreciate that we were able to step back and participate more intimately - I feel it was a good effort and it was minimal. It needs to be expanded upon.

The Group was comprised of 3 city council members, including the mayor
Also there were 2 planning commissioners, and their planning commission staff members an excellent note-taking secretary.

The meeting space was located at 51 Winburn Way. It is a small space. Most meetings were at a time of day when most citizens are working.

There were several invitees to make presentations, at nearly every mtg. They were given ample time. Most were developers and people sympathetic for them.

Yet -

We the citizens were sitting outside this table's circle. We were allotted the last 15-20 minutes at the end of the mtg. Our time was divided amongst those citizens wanting to speak. This happened at every mtg.

We were emailed when and where the mtgs. would be, because we were on the email list. No other citizens knew these mtgs were happening.

Our larger groups, much like this group, had been showing up regularly to city council mtgs. As it turns out, were whittled down, and it ended up being that we and our issue was removed from public view. For about 8 months.

I can understand the purpose of the mtgs. This is a complex matter with many viewpoints variables and visions. There are a lot of numbers and factors which need to be seriously and thoroughly calibrated, (I use the word "calibrate" to emphasize that a smooth running machine necessarily needs periodic adjustments and corrections). Things need to be clearly explained not only to the public, but dare I say, even council members would probably be wanting more actual impact studies so as to make an informed decision.

These ordinances needed to be strengthened. There are too many loopholes. Citizens need to be more informed and involved in the actual ordinance writing process.

A decision to pass these ordinances prematurely, which are of this magnitude and impact, needs to be made by and with an informed citizenry with an opportunity to express their input possibly even brainstorming with developers whom are currently interested in making proposals.

Several new ideas for land use came up at these small group mtgs. from the few citizens in attendance. Tonight I've heard many more citizens with vision, speak. Give them and others a chance to speak more thoroughly and join in the cooperative designing process. I know I feel like I'm just getting up to speed and feel like I'm beginning to grasp the immensity of what we have in our hands. There's no turning back to "business as usual" old models. There's a way to transition. Let's find it.

Perhaps the city could consider using taxpayers money to buy sizable portions of these properties, and offer vouchers to the owners. These vouchers could possibly form a "vouchers bank" for owners to use in other ways.

(My time ended here)

Another idea, maybe overlooked, is, that perhaps we could have the land's use be designated as a natural park that preserves the natural habitat, and educates citizens and visitors on the beauty and wildlife corridor. The Park could be self sustaining by our community through a subscription process. There could be bench donors and plack donors, with quotes by people like Gary Snyder and other visionaries.

The park could be maintained by the citizens in a rotational, perhaps seasonal basis.

The community of Ashland has the sensibility to restrain overly exuberant development.

Perhaps portions of the land could be set aside for agricultural use. In this fast changing world of climate change, we may be glad that "Ashland is Ready" in this respect, as well as ready for storms and emergencies.

Keep it natural. Save it for a rainy day. Offer a voucher-banking system for future use. These ideas deserve further investigation.

I myself am curious to know more about these kinds of ideas.

Let's be inventive. Yes, property owners deserve a ROI, and the possibility to design their property's uses. I ask these property owners to consider possibilities yet unseen thus far - that the ROI gained might easily stem from the careful understanding of what people, buyers, investors, residents, citizens and voters - actually want and would pay for, these possibilities may be of a different kind. Be an innovator. The inspiration will come. Listen. (Still speaking to developers)

Our valuable resources may be needed to sustain us in the long run, and be of a much more long term value, than a temporary profit. Perhaps investors, developers and subscribers would learn to enjoy the wisdom and satisfaction of passing on a new prototype for community?

To bring about "the perhaps of a vision" into reality, takes more consideration, and that is the call of the times in which we live, no matter how we seem to comfort ourselves.

Democracy can be uncomfortable. Rushing this process is unnecessary. We will be very glad we heeded these calls as we go forward. We can choose to continue the thorough consideration of all ramifications to our future, and give hope to future generations. We can show those who follow, that we took the time to have foresight for a healthy future.

Thank you all for all you have done so far in these directions. I urge and encourage you to stay on this track a while longer.

Perhaps something as far reaching as these kinds of ideas may be worthy of bringing the matters to a city vote, or at least a poll, to see if there's an interest amongst the citizens to take on a project of our own.

I appreciate your time and consideration for the opportunity for NEW IDEAS on the horizon to be expanded upon.

I might remind you that in the small working group, I mentioned many of these ideas at various times. I'm not sure they were taken as seriously as I meant them. I hope to articulate more on these visions in the future.

I recognize, as I too, tend to be somewhat limited in what I can see in any given moment, I would trust the value of the process of broadening out to a wider, interested group of people, might bring. There could be some beneficial outcomes, as yet unseen.

Respectfully submitted by,
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PS

I hope I have offended no one and rather, have inspired many of us, to look into these matters, with a fresh attitude for new possibilities.

Julie Matthews
African Proverb "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."