
FW: Council Contact Form - Jim Wells - 9/2/2015

From : Dave Kanner <dave.kanner@ashland.or.us>

Wed, Sep 02, 2015 12:24 PM

Subject : FW: Council Contact Form - Jim Wells - 9/2/2015**To :** 'bill molnar' <bill.molnar@ashland.or.us>, brandon goldman <brandon.goldman@ashland.or.us>

From: Jim Wells [mailto:ann@ashland.or.us]**Sent:** Wednesday, September 02, 2015 12:21 PM**To:** council@ashland.or.us**Subject:** Council Contact Form - Jim Wells - 9/2/2015**Name:** Jim Wells**Email:** homegrown53@hotmail.com**Subject:** NNP**Message:** September 2, 2015
Ashland City Council members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public input regarding the NNP at your September 1 meeting.

A) In this follow-up, I would first of all like to commend Mayor Stromberg for his handling of the meeting. I am well aware of the challenges of doing so in such circumstances.

B) Next, then, I would like to point out two unfortunate artifacts of one of John's choices in that regard. (I emphasize: artifacts – I believe I understand and I do appreciate why he made that choice, and I seriously doubt he had anticipated them.)

Because the staff report was at the end of the meeting:

1) Many people had already left (whether frustrated at having been relegated to a back room where they could not hear the proceedings well, it became past their bedtimes, or for any other reason.) Those people did not have the opportunity to hear and assimilate the information from staff. Many of the public comments I had heard seemed to characterize the NNP in ways that the staff report seemed in conflict with. It would have been illustrative to see what folks would have said differently if they had already had that staff report in mind. If those who have already commented now think differently about any of what they previously commented on, we are unlikely to hear that.

2) According to the rules that the mayor said would apply to public comment on the matter, because I had a turn at the mike I am now barred from commenting on any aspects of the NNP except for on any changes made in a next reading. But, as I made clear, I had been commenting as an "undecided", for lack of sufficient understanding of the matter, and seeking much more information in order to comment intelligently in a helpful manner. The staff report was an important conveyor of some of such information, but, now better informed, I seem disallowed to comment from a more informed position and yet others who were not present to hear that information are allowed to comment from a

position of ignorance of it! If I had anticipated this, when called to comment I would have asked to be put in the "next meeting" category.

It might be tempting to say that because the audio/video record of the meeting is available online, that those yet to testify have the opportunity to be exposed to the staff report, and it may be tempting to say that because I have the opportunity to submit written testimony that is searchable online, I have the opportunity for my comments to not only further the deliberations of the Council but also the public dialogue. But that would diminish the realities that not all citizens are e-facile, and that, even for those who are, face-to-face interaction has far more potential to be of value in the case of community conflict –

--and, yes, more potential to be over-dramatic. But I am someone with experience in community conflict resolution, including one instance that resulted in what most people saw as a "miracle" wherein a formerly 27-clique community for three decades running as if is an "open-alliance" game of Risk (vitriolically lining up for and against one another differently depending on the issues at hand) had instead come out speaking in one voice. (The subject at hand involved nudity at a hot springs on federal land. One of the cliques at the table were "preaching" fundamentalist Christians who considered nudity to be such a non-nuanceable sin that I would not be surprised to learn that they slept with their clothes on even with their spouses. Prior to the conflict resolution process, they had advocated for blowing up the hot springs to prevent the sin of nudity. Another clique was "preaching" nudists who had threatened to march naked down Main Street on Sunday as churches were letting out if they were not allowed to exercise their God-given right to nudity at the hot springs. There were plenty of other pre-divisions, but that particular one should illustrate how significant it was that all ended up speaking in one voice.)

If such a thing were possible in that case, it should be a piece of cake in this one. The format of the September 1 City Council meeting was anti-conducive to that end. It brought up memories of the ever-disrespectful model of USForestService public comment – 'Thanks for your input, we will interpret it without your ability to make sure we actually understood what you meant, do what we wish with it, maybe or maybe not discuss it among ourselves in private, make a decision with or without it in mind, perhaps even justify our decision by twisting your comment into sounding like it somehow supports it, only then will you be able to learn the outcome, and if we failed to properly consider your input, your only recourse to help us properly consider it will be to take an escalated adversarial position.'

I am NOT saying that is the Council's attitude, nor that the Council's process does not have elements that attempt to avoid such dynamics – as I said in my oral comment, I am a neophyte with regard to the Ashland city governing process. As a matter of fact, I currently have an expectation that you are all extremely well-meaning individuals, likely of high intelligence, and place great value upon both progressive municipal policy (as well as manifestation) and community cohesion – in fact, I am strongly counting on that. What I am saying is that truly collaborative brainstorming is almost like magic, but it requires a very different format.

C) I noted that the mayor made a point of asking the Senior Planner to take his time in giving his report, citing its importance to the public, and that the mayor attempted to see to it that one particular aspect of the SP's report was especially clear. I am somewhat erudite and a 'quick study', and yet I found the use of bureaucratic terminology and the speed of delivery in that attempt at clarity to make it difficult to be sure what that clarity was. An imperfect analogy might be

when someone uses only all pronouns such as "he", "they", and "it". This, as I am sure you are aware, is a common occurrence. Those of us familiar with the language of our own worlds easily forget that its use may not be so quickly descriptive for others less used to it. Maybe I was the only person listening that could not be sure what was being described, but I doubt it. The Senior Planner's report had similar drawbacks in that regard, although not as strongly, but since the SP's report covered much more ground, the overall result was similar. I will be seeking, and will obtain, greater understanding via direct conversation with the SP, but it is unlikely that many others who would likely benefit from gaining such understanding will do so, and thus (since I believe that the Council's process would greatly benefit from a wider public understanding of the SP's report) I strongly suggest a widely and loudly advertised public meeting be held solely for that purpose.

D) I wish to corroborate the testimony of another speaker who reported regarding the current traffic concerns on Clay St:

The consequences of the housing developments along its east side between Ashland St. and East Main were a marked increase in danger. I find myself often feeling the need to drive at 5mph, and so sometimes still feeling like that is too risky, so then driving on the wrong side of the road or in one stretch driving down the middle of the road because neither side of the road feels safe. These concerns go beyond the usual residential road concerns which the residential speed limit is designed to effectively mitigate. For instance, the subsidized, multi-family housing across from the Wingspread Mobile Home Park (where I live), is clearly stocked with young children and the parked cars on the narrow street present a feeling of (and actual) blocked visibility. Anyone who has ever experienced (as I have) a ball suddenly appearing from between blocked cars with a small child chasing it, and/or a mother or child opening a car door on the street side into one's oncoming path, never forgets that feeling of terror. It seems clear to me that particular housing development involved similar issues (such as wetland considerations) that are supposedly addressed in the NNP, and so the results of the developments on Clay St. do not give me great confidence that I can trust the city's planning process with Council oversight to be adequate with regard to the NNP.

Again, I seek to be clear: I am NOT saying that I distrust city's planning abilities nor the Council's oversight in the case of the NNP - I am saying I have cause not to yet take a "trust us, we know what we are doing when it comes to making and acting out sound land planning/development decisions for the good of the community" stance, especially when it comes to "affordable" housing (a term which I would like to see the city's definition of, btw, if it is going to be used as a buzzword.)

E) In closing for now:

I hope that I will be able to be of help in reaching an all-party-embraced outcome - not a "compromise" - a "win" for everyone.

I imagine that you are as busy in your lives with many other matters than civic (just as I am, or you and I would already have become acquainted around issues municipal.) I thank you for taking the time to read this, and I thank you for your service to the City of Ashland, its residents, and the greater good.

Jim Wells
321 Clay St., spc 115

FW: Council Contact Form - Jim Wells - 9/3/2015

From : Dave Kanner <dave.kanner@ashland.or.us>

Thu, Sep 03, 2015 08:29 AM

Subject : FW: Council Contact Form - Jim Wells - 9/3/2015**To :** 'bill molnar' <bill.molnar@ashland.or.us>, brandon goldman <brandon.goldman@ashland.or.us>

From: Jim Wells [mailto:ann@ashland.or.us]**Sent:** Thursday, September 03, 2015 2:06 AM**To:** council@ashland.or.us**Subject:** Council Contact Form - Jim Wells - 9/3/2015**Name:** Jim Wells**Email:** homegrown53@hotmail.com**Subject:** NNP**Message:** CORRECTION TO MY ORAL PUBLIC INPUT:

When I spoke of the handling of the NPP development process as having been in "bad form", I was too brief in the interest of time, resulting in me speaking too narrowly.

What I wish I had said was (and if I had the opportunity to speak of it in public again, I would hope to say):

IF the characterizations I have heard from those dissatisfied with the process are accurate, then the process was in bad form in that it was disrespectful of constituents.

IF those characterizations are NOT accurate, then the process was in bad form in that it allowed constituents to FEEL disrespected.

In either case, it can be said that there are certain people who just don't seem to want to and/nor are capable of valuing or recognizing respect, instead only interested in getting their way. In my experience, those types of people are extremely rare, other than among the sub-set of humans who are "anti-socials" (which tend to become criminals or politicians.) For all but those rare individuals, there are formats and techniques of public policy formation that can not only avoid creating feelings of disrespect among its participants, but can actually reliably produce feelings of mutual respect. So powerful are these formats and techniques in that regard, anti-socials weed themselves out of the process because they recognize that they are not going to be able to have power over others via neither directly as individuals nor indirectly via creation of factions they can manipulate.

I advocate for a change in the process in that direction.

-Jim Wells