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"Promoting Jobs & Housing for Humboldt Families"

February 5, 2007

Ms. Loretta Nickolaus
Chief Administrative Officer
Humboldt County
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: General Plan Update

Dear Loretta:

The Planning Department's General Plan update schedule on the County's website is very useful. HELP is eager to see the update progress in a timely manner, however we have serious concerns about certain aspects of the update process. As we testified before the Board of Supervisors on December 5, 2006:

- One of the initial reports used as a basis for the General Plan update is the "Critical Choices Report." Housing is not mentioned in that study/report. HELP believes housing should be at the top of the list of choices which are critical.
- The initial studies done over 4 years ago make no reference to certain infrastructure issues – a vital consideration to any land use planning effort. The intent to include an "Infrastructure and Public Facilities Element" was not added to the update program until a year ago, during February 2006.
- Another report being used as the foundation for the General Plan update is the "Residential Land Availability Survey" dated February 2004. This report grossly overstates land available for housing. "Grounds truthing" to establish a factual land inventory has still not been performed, in spite of the Supervisors' direction to the Planning Department to do so in cooperation with members of NCHB and HAR.
- The public input process is being thwarted by the Planning Department. As an example, the Supervisors appointed members of the community to volunteer their time to serve on the Williamson Act Committee and the Forestry Review Committee. And yet when a member of one of the committees suggested a recommendation be forwarded to the Supervisors, a staff member from the Planning Department stated: "I don't think the boss (Girard) would tolerate that." Public input should not be intercepted by the Planning Department. HELP was formed in an attempt to be heard by the appointed and elected officials.

- Consistency among all elements of the General Plan is mandated by the State. We foresee a major inconsistency problem when studies performed over 4 years ago which do not address housing or infrastructure, are being used as the basis for the update to the General Plan.

The sequence, Planning has established for drafting and reviewing the various elements, is also of concern. It seems to us the infrastructure-related elements must be drafted prior to such elements as "Land Use". And yet Planning staff has the process in reverse.....Land Use Element being drafted and reviewed prior to the Infrastructure and Public Facilities Element and Circulation Element.

HELP is pleased to learn of the County's intention to award a contract to Winzler Kelly for work on the General Plan Update. They are a fine organization and should bring valuable talent to the update effort. However they must be given adequate time to perform the work required. We have concerns that the massive amount of work which must be done on the infrastructure analysis, for example, can effectively be completed according to the County's schedule we see on its website. We would appreciate receiving a copy of the Winzler Kelly agreement when it is available.

Could you please explain to HELP the rationale that is being used in the sequencing of the various General Plan elements?

We appreciate your consideration of these issues. Please call anytime if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Kay Backer
HELP Consultant

PS An electronic response to kbiusa@aol.com would very much be appreciated.

cc: Supervisor Jimmy Smith, District 1
Supervisor Roger Rodoni, District 2
Supervisor John Woolley, District 3
Chair Bonnie Neely, District 4
Supervisor Jill Geist, District 5
Commissioner Bruce Emad
Commissioner Mary Gearheart
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