

Beaudry, Jacqueline

From: James Carl D'Amour [james@peoplepowerunlimited.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2009 11:17 AM
To: Planning; Hieftje, John; Smith, Sandi; Briere, Sabra; Rapundalo, Stephen; Derezhinski, Tony; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Greden, Leigh; Higgins, Marcia; Teall, Margie; Hohnke, Carsten; Anglin, Mike
Cc: Rampson, Wendy; Beaudry, Jacqueline
Subject: Forward to my note on 8/12, re: AHP process, is there a way to improve it?

To all:

Yesterday I sent a note commenting on the AHP process. The note was essentially a revised and extended text of a public commentary I wished to speak at Council last week Thursday, but time constraints prevented me from signing up or speaking at end of meeting. After sending, I realized I forgot to send a quick cover.

I had intended to share gist of this note at work session of Advisory Committee for AHP plan this afternoon, but business commitments are likely to prevent me from attending this meeting. I have copied Ms. Beaudry and Ms. Rampson (Wendy, I hope you're not getting a double-email, apologies in advance-j) directly on this as I would like to see both this email and the one yesterday included in communications to council in next packet and that the email of yesterday be hopefully put to attention of Advisory Committee members before meeting today.

Thanks for your attention to this.

-James D'Amour

Beaudry, Jacqueline

From: James Carl D'Amour [james@peoplepowerunlimited.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2009 1:24 PM
To: Beaudry, Jacqueline
Subject: FW: AHP process, is there a way to improve it?

Jacqueline,

FYI.

Thanks again,

-James ☺

From: James Carl D'Amour [mailto:james@peoplepowerunlimited.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2009 4:50 PM
To: 'planning@a2gov.org'; 'JHieftje@a2gov.org'; 'ssmith@a2gov.org'; 'Sbriere@a2gov.org'; 'SRapundalo@a2gov.org'; 'TDerezinski@a2gov.org'; 'CTaylor@a2gov.org'; 'LGreden@a2gov.org'; 'MHiggins@a2gov.org'; 'MTeall@a2gov.org'; 'CHohnke@a2gov.org'; 'MAnclin@a2gov.org'
Subject: AHP process, is there a way to improve it?

As a former member of this city's Planning Commission and I have had a chance to observe an important project the city is working on, and with my experience, I believe I need to communicate to you directly on this.

Recently, Council asked the Planning Department to initiate a public outreach program for city planner Jeff Kahan rewrite of the Chapter 55 and 59 ordinances pertaining to Area Height and Planning zoning. Two citywide meetings, as well as five ward area meetings, were proposed and have been held, with the exception of the last city wide meeting.

While the meetings were helpful in one regard in sharing Mr. Kahan's and other city staff's insightful changes with the public, and while there has been, in my view, comprehensive archiving of citizen remarks over the proposed changes and of the process, there is still something missing despite over the significant work that has been done.

The public has been talked to, but the public has not had a real chance to digest and have a formal dialogue between neighborhoods and the city as to if these changes are indeed desirable.

In discussion with concerned citizen groups, the perception appears to be that while public hearings ostensibly they are for the public to be heard, are actually more for the public relations benefit of the hearing body rather than meaningful dialogue.

Whether this is indeed the intention or not, perception has become reality.

As we move to the next phase of action regarding these proposed changes, let's take a moment and instead bring the entire public and neighborhood groups as full and valued partners in the process, rather than having to bang on the closed doors at the end.

I am fairly confident to that the majority of current Council members are quite comfortable with the current process, so why are process changes necessary here from Council's point of view.

I am going to propose that having a greater public process is in all of our mutual best interests. Wouldn't you rather have projects that improve the city quality of life—and even tax base, with wide acceptance at the time they appear before you, rather than facing dozens and dozens of angry citizens, not to mention hundreds more of angry voters, every time a major project appears before you.

In the text of this address I will share with you, I will give you an example of where greater public involvement happened, with positive results. An example would be the City of Indianapolis, with a major visioning process to revitalize specific neighborhoods in that city:

www.Greaterindyneighborhoods.org

I'm not saying this is easy...there will be much disagreement to be sure. Urbanists, preservationists, yes, even a NIMBY or two, "those people", "the usual suspects", the cranks, even those "with an agenda".

And yes, it's going to cost more money and people and energy resources in an era of tighter budgets of all the above.

But if we're going to really change the face of the city as we evolve, we need to involve everybody. The buy-in must happen from all sectors.

Planning for our future is not the sole province or first refusal of the development community, the urbanist intellectuals, nor an enthusiastic planning staff. It belongs equally as well to the neighborhoods, and citizens of ALL socio-economic strata, including the disengaged by lifestyle and/or economy.

I'm asking you to direct the Citizens' Advisory Committee overseeing Mr. Kahan, Ms. Pulcipher, and the AHP process to work directly with the general public to come up with a second phase of a fully-facilitated and open process, with neighborhood and citizen groups having a direct say in that process and selection of independent facilitators, not a top down process as the City Administrator had done in the initial stages of the Calthorpe process.

I would be happy to personally work with the Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, staff and council as well as interested members of the public to helping to make this happen and I offer my services to assist in this.

This needs to be a bottom-up grassroots engagement, not a top-down covenant, which is what we have right now.

In the end, I suspect you'll get what you want. It may take a little longer, but in the long haul you'll get less grief, and even that shining city in the Midwest we indeed can be and all want.

Thank you.

-James

James D'Amour