

From: homel@provide.net [<mailto:homel@provide.net>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 14, 2014 10:13 AM

To: Kowalski, Matthew; Rampson, Wendy

Cc: Jane Lumm

Subject: Response to Tom Covert's Version of 8/28/14 Citizen Participation Meeting re Proposed "South Pond Village"

Matt (cc Wendy)---

Thank you for inviting me (and anyone else) to submit comments about the proposed housing development called "South Pond Village." This memo reacts to the developer's version of the CPM at Morris Lawrence Building, Washtenaw Community College, August 28, 2014. That version was submitted by Tom Covert and dated September 29, 2014. Covert, however, conducted the meeting. Another person was the developer's note taker. Either that person took incomplete notes or Covert edited them selectively. Or both.

Some of the Covert report is accurate. The date, time, and location of the CPM are undisputed. Also, Covert fairly represents his own description of what the developer proposes and fairly summarizes the city's planning process. Third, Covert fairly reports his answers to some of what residents said.

However, the Covert report is, as a whole, unreliable owing to its selectivity about audience reaction. First, the report understates attendance. I counted sixty at one point, but total attendance was slightly higher, as some residents came and left during the two-hour meeting.

Second, and more significant, the Covert report mischaracterizes the nature of citizen reaction. It says the discussion was lively, attendants asked questions and presented their views, and many people spoke. While such comments are true, they do not reveal the tone of that input. Covert does not tell you that residents at the meeting voiced overwhelming opposition to the project. There were comments like "you don't care" and "this is part of an entire area, not just a piece of land." Another said, "What are you thinking?" in a way that was not a request for an answer but rather a rhetorical blast against the plan. Further, he does not tell you that no residents stated support for SPV.

Third and also importantly, the Covert report omits many objections to the proposed housing project. That deprives you, Planning Commission, and City Council of information he should have provided; thus, it betrays the purpose of the CPM. Covert states, "This letter covers most, if not all, of the subjects discussed at this meeting." This statement is false. The Covert report does not mention at least three comments criticizing SPV because his plan ignores city PROS standards for neighborhood parkland. His report omits complaints about the condition of Chalmers Drive and resident demands that the developer pave it. His report leaves out several objections to the use of Algebe Way, because it would increase traffic on Meadowside Drive. Covert also omits a citizen request for visual and sound buffering along the north side of the access road and the west edge of the 48-acre site. His report does note complaints about Washtenaw Avenue traffic and the problem of access from Chalmers to Washtenaw. However, the Covert memo omits opposition to the project's homes on Huron River Drive on the grounds of heavy traffic here, the danger of a narrow, winding road, and proposed houses' incompatibility with the landscape there. Moreover, Covert's account ignores citizen claims about an endangered species of butterfly and fears that SPV will harm that scarce insect. Furthermore, Covert's version leaves out the opposition to the project on the grounds that increasing impervious surface

on the 48-acre site will harm the environment, and, specifically, South Pond, after which the project is named. Other fears of environmental harm residents voice were probable use of fertilizer on SPV yards, which would increase phosphorus run-off into the watershed. Covert's report also leaves out a call for all of the land abutting Huron River Drive to become parkland. Finally, Covert blacks out a lengthy statement by Councilmember Jane Lumm toward the end of the meeting. Lumm stated a traffic study of Washtenaw Avenue in the 1990s gave traffic conditions a grade of F; she called for a neighborhood park on the SPV site; she urged the paving of Chalmers Drive; and she expressed concern for the condition of the Mallett Creek watershed.

What weight planning staff, Planning Commission, and City Council give to these various comments and how they require the developer to modify his plan remains to be seen. But you cannot consider residents' views if the developer whitewashes them. In conclusion, the city's practice of having developers submit reports such as this is a gross conflict of interest. This practice increases resident suspicion and distrust. It is time for the city to halt this practice and provide city staff or some other impartial party to record and report on CPMs.

Michael Homel, Secretary, Woodcreek Homeowners Association

3473 Wooddale Ct, Ann Arbor, MI 48104