

Development – Dan Lobeck – 4/13/2022

For those Planning Board members with time to read this before 1:30:

Some new information regarding your public hearing today, principally regarding process.

Here is a transcript excerpt from the 4/19/21 City Commission meeting at which Steve Cover requested and was given one year for public outreach on his proposed changes, which he never did:

Cover: "Certainly there's going to be a community engagement component" with a "number of meetings, perhaps one in each district within the City, whether that may be on Zoom or in person, refining some of the concepts," followed by "updating the Planning Board and Commission, having a second round of meetings, and then coming back." Later in the meeting Jen Ahearn-Koch urged that this community engagement include CCNA and DSCA.

Public records I have obtained over the year since then show Cover reporting that he was continuing to work on creating that community engagement process. It never happened. He is now trying to spring it on the public and push it through without that community engagement.

On March 24, staff held a Zoom conference to which it invited property owners within 500 feet of the corridor and centers proposed for the Urban Mixed Use district. The notice said nothing of substance about what was proposed and the enclosed map of the whole City showed the corridor and districts as such a small scale as to make it all but impossible for a property owner to identify his or her property in relation to the parcels at issue.

The new Urban Mixed Use district calls for increased residential and commercial development in extensive corridors throughout the City as well as seven shopping centers and a medical center, most of which are now for commercial or office uses. It would allow commercial and other nonresidential uses as well as density up to 25 units per acre in the corridors and 50 units per acre in the centers, with no height limits (until addressed in a later Zoning Code amendment). Many of these areas back up to single family homes, with residents who know nothing of this dramatic intensification of land use right next door. (See the maps on pp. 72 and 73 of the agenda packet).

Amazingly, staff is alleging that this change will reduce population even though it does the opposite by greatly increasing residential uses and densities, and only slightly increasing commercial development while reducing office use. On that basis, the School District reports a reduction of 11,920 students from the City of Sarasota into the public schools and the City's Transportation Engineer reports a reduction of 4,841.48 peak hour vehicle trips. How can development be increased with decreased impacts? Staff needs to explain this in a credible way.

Additionally, I find tucked into Steve Cover's Comp Plan amendments, on page 39 or 170, repeal of Policy 1.6 of the Future Land Use Chapter that calls for master planning. Even if not done as required since 1998, how can the City abandon planning to balance public facilities and services with land use planning, as required by this Policy?

Clearly, this amendment needs to be divided into its component parts, continued for the public engagement which Cover promised a year ago but never delivered, and so that Zoning Text amendments may be prepared to move in tandem with the Comp Plan amendment – just as is being

one with the Park East “Missing Middle” change -- so that Planning Board members, City Commissioners and the public know what this really is all about.

I know many of you favor doing more for affordable housing, as I do. What you have before you does not have the substance to do that, instead serving what is perhaps slightly below market rate housing and without needed policies. I know also that some of you may favor increased building heights. What you have before you though is to improperly make it easier to do that, by a 3 to 2 vote of Commissioners rather than 4 to 1, in disregard of the supermajority requirement added to the City Charter by initiative and referendum, and with one public hearing rather than two, allowing the fundamental character of our community to be changed without the broader public buy-in reflected by the supermajority Commission support.

Please pass a motion to continue this agenda item to a date uncertain, for the needed public engagement, separation of the proposals and preparation of Zoning Text amendments to be considered in tandem.

Again, thank you for your considerations and see you soon.

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