

CITY COUNCIL Feb 4, 2020

When my husband and I first began to gather information about the Premier Development in the wetlands off Baker Creek we had three experiences. The first time after we turned from the counter to leave, a woman's voice said, "*They're nice people, too bad they're going to lose.*" Really? Isn't the Planning Department supposed to be *objective*? The second time we visited the PD, an angry female informed us that if it's in the urban growth boundary, it's going to be built on. We came back a third time and this time met with a male staff person (not Jamie) who also stridently informed us that if it's in the urban growth boundary, it's going to be built on. This was before Premier ever submitted their plans. Citizens waste their time bringing their concerns to the PD, Planning Commission and City Council. Meetings are only boxes to be ticked, not places of compromise and collaboration.

We raised many points in objection to the development of the wetlands – traffic, delineation problems, flooding issues. One council member brushed it all aside by stating that the homeowners should have known what they were getting into. Several of the property owners did do their due diligence and made trips to the Planning Dept. speaking with the Planning Director at the time. They were told that nothing would ever be built on the land below the homes. They shared their good news with the rest of the neighbors. So much for due diligence. But we should have known. Our fault.

When we raised our points before you, you asked the PD for comments. Could this entire mess have been avoided by requiring the applicant to get the required state and federal permits. Ms. Richards comment? "*These are very complex issues.*" This is only one example where you asked good questions but accepted hazy responses instead of demanding clear answers.

You are voting for another development. The density at the corner of Hill and Baker Creek is mind-boggling. This development, like Premier's, has one traffic exit point, to the south. North and West are county land. East is another approved development with the same problem. You didn't feel that putting 1200 vehicles a day past two blocks of homes was a problem so I'm sure you don't see this invasion of homes a problem either. Doing a traffic study at this point is a waste of time and money. Why? Because you already have not one, not two, but three developments on the opposite corner under construction. Dense developments, one of which is Stafford's. A traffic study today doesn't reflect what will be a congested reality when all the new dense construction is finished. And the information gleaned from the study just completed only serves to tick yet another box to show we're following the rules instead of actually thinking.

Another example of this box-ticking mentality is the problem with the areas identified as wetlands and flood plains. No matter how many pictures of flooding we presented we were told that we had to use outdated maps. How absurd! The homes won't be built on a map, they will be built on land which this year is flooding when the map-identified flood plain is not. But that was okay with the PD, the Planning Commission and the City Council. You voted to approve. The planning process is representing the developers and the state – not the people of McMinnville. How many times have developers come before you when the people have objected and yet you voted to approve? Over and over again.

Government is supposed to be of by the people, by the people and *for* the people. Rules are made *for people*. The Planning portion of our government is all about The Plan for growth. When citizens object, it's just too bad. The Plan for growth will be forced on the people whether they like it or not.

We gave it our best shot. We were voted down. We felt our concerns were dismissed. Our requests for compromises weren't acknowledged. We asked to preserve one tree. We asked for crosswalks. In the dark of winter children cross Baker Creek to meet their school bus across three lanes of traffic. Too bad. We felt we were treated as political adversaries rather than respected as citizens. We were accused in print by Ms. Richards of spreading mis-information. Someone wanted to be right more than they wanted to listen and compromise. It was easy to lay blame on the homeowners, saying we should have known and ignore the voices from the county. It was easy to dismiss what you didn't want to hear by labeling this a NIMBY issue. You had a valuable opportunity to work with the county, but pushing this development through was more important. The other fail-safe cry is "affordable housing". Mention that and approval is almost guaranteed, even if none of the homes turn out to be affordable!

The people grow weary of bringing their concerns to you and finding those concerns ignored. I don't care how many times you leave this development open for comment if all you do is approve the development. You're still not listening. The people aren't being heard.

If government is to work, both sides have to do their part. Meetings were structured to discourage citizen input. Citizen input was demeaned. I would ask that the PD be instructed to be objective about the plans submitted instead of approving them before they ever cross the desk, and then be held accountable.

I still want crosswalks on Baker Creek. If the mass of humanity to be housed in these two developments wants to connect with the city's walking trails, they need some protection to cross three lanes of busy traffic. I want protection for our children. Now. Not at some future date on paper. We live now, not on paper.

When government no longer represents the people, the people have to take action. We have an obligation to make government work here, at home. We don't want houses with three foot easements built in cookie-cutter style. We don't want roads and homes built in wetlands. We don't want parks that can't be maintained. Last year we held a special election because government wasn't working. The people voted. Compromise was found. If government won't listen to what the people are willing to support and what they won't support, our only recourse is to perform city planning at the ballot box.

You are here to do a job: represent the people. Don't lose sight of your purpose. Listen to the people. Have a heart *for the people you* were elected to represent especially the member whose job is to represent this district! Make government work *for the people*, not the developers or the Planning Department or the state. Before you vote, ask yourself – who will this hurt? Who will this benefit? You're good people who signed up to do a difficult job. Thank you.

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