

To: Basalt Town Council
From: Chris Touchette
Re: Resolutions 54 & 55
Date: 11/24/15

Our Town manager Mike Scanlon once described the Our Town planning process as creating the capacity for change.

At the conclusion of the initial phase of the Our Town planning process on 5/29/14 as chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission, I outlined the P&Zs position with current chairman, Dylan Johns. We described Basalt's amazing potential as well as an anemic downtown environment desperately needing change. As architects and planners, the solution was obvious- density drives revitalization! This was the central thesis to our statements captured that night on You Tube...

Predictably, P&Z's comments did not sit well with the group of citizens most fearing change and they emerged to lobby prodigiously to the Town claiming their viewpoint had been excluded from the first phase of the Our Town Planning Process; thus, the DAAC was born.

The DAAC was an eclectic group of citizens representing many different viewpoints and I am proud of my role on that board authoring the Core Values and Guiding Principles as well as offering multiple pro-bono land use options. As licensed professionals both Ted Guy & I were doubtful of the Big V but in the spirit of compromise and wanting to move the DAAC discussion forward, we supported the concept even though it makes little sense from an urban design perspective. Shortly thereafter on 10/25/14 the Mayor took to the airwaves proclaiming that "the people have spoken and the vast majority of Basalt citizens believe the Pan & Fork should remain an open space park." The Our Town Planning process has been hijacked ever since. Let's be honest everyone- that's what this is all about...

13 Months later, downtown businesses continue to struggle and close- the latest casualty being the General Store. (It's sadly ironic that many of those fearing change saw the General Store as proof positive that the status quo was working when it opened this summer.) There is simply not enough foot traffic to sustain a robust business environment in downtown Basalt at this moment in time. Downtown rents are half of Willits and this council is leading us down the path of a financial disaster that our children will be paying off 20 years from now if they are lucky enough to find housing here post-college other than in their parents' basement rooms. And for what- even more parkland?

When we introduced the Lowe Proposal to the community, I underscored the project benefits which included full \$2.5M reimbursement for the town's investment in creating the development site on the CDC parcel, an additional \$2M payment to the town in impact fees as well as a dozen or so new affordable housing units. What could have been a \$4.5M source of income to the Town is now at best a \$2.14M deficit that this council could have prevented by embracing a public-private partnership opportunity. That's a \$6.64M dollar swing for Our Town's tiny budget. Other than asking for a tax-payer bailout, there is no funding source now for other important programs like the Southside underpass, Real America Affordable Housing, and sensible Daycare solutions.

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Time to face the music: We have vitality by default due to our spectacular location in the summer; not so much for the other 7 months of the year.

With this council we are on the brink of leaving \$1 to 1.5M on the table in unrecoverable reimbursements for the CDC parcel improvements. \$1 to 1.5M down the drain. This is on top of the \$10k annual salary we pay each council member for managing our treasury?!

Our Town council has been duped by the Mayor's hijacking of the Our Town planning process and her wanton disregard for the public good.

Time to wake up, Council- stop the hijacking. Ignore the vitriol, lies, and misrepresentations by those unwilling to compromise for the greater good of this community. Embrace the capacity for change. Take away the Mayor's wedge issue and shallow politics.

Yes- It's time to wake up, Basalt citizens. Demand accountability from our elected officials. We're paying them to lead and make the tough decisions. At a minimum, Council needs to uphold the Staff, P&Z and POST recommendation for Resolutions 54 & 55.

Let's move forward together already. Enough of this senseless hijacking. It's selling out our kids' future and the financial viability of Our Town.

Don't believe me? Read the Ehlers Report...it's in there: like it or not, we're about to be a debtor not better town.

The urban growth boundary is an awesome tool for controlling sprawl in progressive communities across the country. Why are we gutting it from within and encouraging auto-oriented development that the UGB was intended to buffer us against?

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. H. Taylor' or similar, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.