

More public input needed

Written by Nancy Fisher, Gothenburg
Thursday, 02 August 2012 13:41 -

Gothenburg City Council member Jeff Kennedy said to us at the “stakeholder’s input” special City Council meeting July 24 regarding the Lake Helen master plan, “Every council meeting is open and anyone can come.”

He’s right. I am urging any of you who are interested in the city to do just that. Council needs to be reminded periodically that the stakeholders in public projects are the taxpayer-owners. The city council listened patiently and all the various state entities present answered taxpayers’ questions patiently after holding their meeting without mics and talking quietly among themselves.

Some of the answers we got, however, were not helpful. When questioned about the cost of alternatives to filling in the north part of Lake Helen (probably draining and dredging), no one had asked for a proposal on that. Why not? We understand (now) that a project cannot be done without grant money, but that does not preclude pricing alternatives. At this point, the grant process needs to be handled immediately, within a week after the “public input” meeting Aug. 7, and apparently the Department of Environmental Quality is making these decisions for the citizens of Gothenburg. Again, I urge us all to keep a better eye on our council’s actions.

Publishing a map containing “proposed future” elements for a filled-in Lake Helen was irresponsible at best, and was apparently put together with ideas and input from only the city administrator and the hired engineer with no taxpayer input, no public hearings and no city council approval. Setting up expectations for the myriad of hardscape projects (city administrator) Bruce (Clymer) thinks desirable without the steps of exploring better alternatives, compromises and best options for funding, etc., before publishing a visual is terrible government.

We have an excellent city council who should be delegating less of their leadership and policy-making decisions, especially the very sensitive area of land use.

My bottom line requests are: 1) Show up at the public input council meeting at 7 p.m. Aug. 7 , and 2) Let the council know that you care what happens with your Lake Helen. Hopefully at this meeting council will use mics and talk to all of us, not just each other.

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