

August 25, 2020

Subject: **Why Does the Planning Board Ignore Testimony**

All,

We wish we could disagree with Chris's assessment below regarding his latest Planning Board (PB) experience. Unfortunately we cannot. Just go to

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=3v7NVedhSfE>

at 16:10 to hear his testimony. I witnessed this case and was very disappointed the PB completely ignored the testimony.

It seems the non-development community continues not to get their due process especially with the PB because we are completely ignored by its members. Why do the voices of the community not count? It doesn't matter if we provide oral or written compelling testimony as the PB has not shown interest in acting or acknowledging we even exist.

The latest example is that on 20 August regarding the Starbucks Redline case on Snowden River Parkway to expand the facility. The PB had their minds made up prior to the case even was heard. Why because as mentioned in a previous email they told the Petitioner they liked the revised plan and for them to come back to be reheard. When a PB member previously states the Petitioner has invested heavily in lawyer and design fees that this should be considered is nonsense. With this attitude why even bother to testify. Chris Alleva was the only person to testify on the 20th. His testimony was very compelling. After Chris's testimony the PB went into their Work Session to deliberate. They never addressed the testimony, but instead said the plan was well thought out and therefore approved by a 5 to 0 vote.

A second example of being ignored is that HCCA sent written testimony at the first Starbucks hearing focusing on concerns about the Redline process. This was ignored.

A third example is when HCCA sent written testimony regarding suggested revisions to the PB Rules of Procedure. This was ignored.

A fourth example occurred in 2017/18 regarding the Settlement of Savage. One of the keys to this project was a land-swap with the County and Petitioner so additional units could be built. The concern citizens were not allowed to discuss this aspect.

A fifth example is when testimony was provided for the Royal Farms case on Snowden River Parkway with many exhibits provided to the PB. The PB deliberated the same evening completely ignoring testimony.

The PB rarely asks questions to the concerned citizens who take the time to testify.

As the Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning stated to me in an email she can understand our frustration.

Will there be a day when the scales of justice are balanced and those that testify get the recognition they deserve? All one is asking is that the PB shows they not only hear and see public testimony, but have the courtesy to show the public that their concerns matter. Communication should not be limited to a one way street. George Bernard Shaw is quoted as saying, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." Yes - better communications needs to prevail by PB members. Let's hope in the future the atmosphere might be better.

Stu Kohn
HCCA President