

## Some are asking, 'What's the rush?'

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From the Editor's Desk

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A last-minute addendum to today's Calaveras County Board of Supervisors meeting agenda has some county residents fuming. As of Sunday only a handful of individuals knew about it.

The addendum calls for board “discussion and possible action ◆ regarding the draft Issues and Opportunities Report and the draft Working Vision Statement and Guiding Principles document” of the county's general plan.

Despite the bureaucratic-sounding titles, these documents form the foundation for the county's future general plan, the core development policy for Calaveras County for the next 20 years. They are meant to help us create a vision of what we want our children and grandchildren to inherit from us, covering everything from preservation of natural resources and open space, to building a sustainable economy and providing for good roads, affordable housing, and public safety, among other things.

The documents were first presented to the supervisors Aug. 5, when a few members of the audience were able to offer brief comments on them. Supervisors then asked that the matter be continued, “in a timely fashion, in order to frame discussion and provide direction to staff regarding the draft(s) for further action by the board in order to move forward to the next phase.”

Calaveras County supervisors have a long history of adding last-minute items to their agenda, but usually there's some urgency or explanation for doing so. This one doesn't fit that mold, so it raises alarm among those who closely watch county government. Its abrupt appearance without supporting documents reminds some of the early stages of work on the general plan when public meetings were hastily called with little or no public notice. Such missteps discourage groups and individuals who take public officials at their word when they promise a transparent process that is open to all.

Today's board agenda addendum was e-mailed late on Friday to a small, diverse group that included some journalists. The Enterprise first learned about it from members of the Calaveras Planning Coalition and the Community Action Project, groups who themselves had learned about the addendum second-hand.

On Saturday, Planning Coalition legal counsel Tom Infusino wrote to county Planning Director Bob Sellman, chastising him for the late addendum.

“Your woeful lack of public notice for this important general plan item is appalling,” Infusino said. “In every other place that I have worked on general plans over the last 19 years, public meetings were scheduled well in advance and publicized well in advance. Plastering this item as a last-minute addendum to the board agenda does not reflect a good faith effort at including the public in the General Plan process.”

The Calaveras Planning Coalition is an assembly of citizen groups committed to good planning in Calaveras County. Its membership stretches from Burson to Arnold, and Copperopolis to West Point.

“From the onset of this General Plan Update, the Calaveras Planning Coalition has been dedicated to promoting public participation in the General Plan Update process,” Infusino told Sellman. “We have been trying to get notice of meetings out to the public, so that they can participate constructively in the process as intended. We had problems with the county's short notices during the initial general plan workshops, but we thought the county had progressed beyond that problem ♦. Your latest last-minute and half-hearted hearing notice makes this impossible, and is antithetical to the proper completion of an inclusive general plan. The inclusion of the public in this discussion should not be a poorly noticed afterthought.”

Infusino asked that the item be held over until the public could be given a chance to properly study the issues and participate in the discussion. Perhaps the supervisors will have the wisdom to do that. In the meantime, anyone who wants to read the documents at the heart of this matter can go to <http://www.co.calaveras.ca.us/cc/> and click on General Plan Update.

Being informed is every good citizen's responsibility.

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