

MEMO

To: Orange County Commissioners, County Manager
CC: Jay Bryan, Chair, Orange County Planning Board
Tom Altieri, Orange County Comprehensive Planning Supervisor
From: Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition
Date: August 13, 2008
Re: Planning Board's Process for Review of Comprehensive Plan Public Comments

The Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition has closely followed the Comprehensive Plan Update initiative. Our members have attended public input sessions, advisory and planning board meetings, and public hearings. We have also submitted written comments including specific alternative language for many of the goals and objectives.

The Coalition believes that all public comments should be reviewed and discussed by the Planning Board during their meetings. Because time is of the essence, we commend staff for preparing a Table of Proposed Revisions (TPR), which includes the public comments. This table will be very helpful in facilitating the Planning Board's review in a timely manner.

However, it came to our attention at the August 6 Planning Board meeting that not all the public comments are being included in the TPR. Instead only those comments deemed as "not too controversial or are not significant changes to the meaning of the objective" are included.

In contrast, the Coalition strongly recommends that all public comments received to date – and for as long as the Public Hearing is open – be included in the TPR. The Planning Board should solely be responsible for selecting which public comments to incorporate into their recommendations rather than for Planning Department personnel to filter the comments that will be considered. Such filtering could all too easily be mistaken as staff censorship and/or usurpation of the Planning Board's role.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter. We look forward to reviewing the Planning Board's recommendations in advance of the scheduled vote in October.

Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition Member Organizations

Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce, Community Action Network, EmPOWERment, Inc.,
Foundation for a Sustainable Community, The Greater Chapel Hill Association of REALTORS,
Homebuilders' Association of Durham, Orange and Chatham Counties, Inter-Faith Council on Social Service, The Village Project, Walkable Hillsborough