

Sunshine Week for open Government Week of March 10, 2013 (See Kitsap SUN Editorial 3/10/13)

Dear Members of the City Council,

We (Charles Schmid and Bruce Taft) attended the open meeting hosted by the Shoreline Homeowners held on Saturday, March 9th at Eagle Harbor Church sponsored by the Bainbridge Shoreline Homeowners, Bainbridge Defense Fund and Bainbridge Citizens. Two members of the City Council, Mayor Steve Bonkowski and member David Ward, were also in attendance.

A lot of information was provided at the meeting, including recommendations for political action for those advocating property rights - the majority of whom attended. As you may know, our personal inclination is to support strong environmental protection of shorelines. In fact we were selected to be members of the citizen work groups by the organizations which support the environment. It turned out the main organizers of the Saturday meeting had also been selected to participate on the advisory committees but by the property rights groups.

It is of course the prerogative of the meeting organizers to present their interpretation of the current draft SMP which we had all worked together to create over almost 2 years, and which was finally approved after many compromises were agreed to; and then approved by the Planning Commission. It was therefore disturbing to hear previously decided issues brought up for changes, some of which were backed up by mis-information and half-truths. We feel these difficult issues had reached the required balance between environmental protection and property rights. **Hence our first recommendation is that staff present a special educational meeting on the present draft SMP so all can agree on what the facts are, what was decided, and what the SMP regulates --without all the political overtones.**

A second concern was the strong political nature of the Saturday meeting given that two elected officials were present. Three featured speakers were attorneys who strongly suggested an appeal of the SMP should be started before it is even approved. Furthermore they stated the City is inviting the "perfect storm" by their own arrogance, and that the current insurance company is considering dropping the City. This was more than a veiled threat as requests were made for large contributions for a legal fund for an appeal. The City should of course be warned about legal implications, and in fact it has already employed a lawyer to review the draft SMP. **We noted the two council members were still present when this threat was made and probably all Council members should discuss this item openly.**

Finally, the personal charges that were made against City Council members who were not present can only increase the present discord at Council and among citizens. Frankly we were surprised that one of the council members present did not ask that these personal attacks remain outside the meeting. Tactics described included specific information on how political pressure could be applied to the 4 Council members who voted in favor for the 4-3 decision to maintain the *nonconforming* label in the SMP. Their stated goal is to change one of the 4 votes, which is reasonable if done civilly and openly. But one method mentioned was to subject elected officials to a "political vice." If our notes are correct, methods recommended to the audience included "infiltration, confrontation and punishment." These techniques are much too big for a small island like ours. Another claim was that elected officials weren't elected because they were courageous, suggesting this was an avenue for changing a vote. **We don't have a recommendation here, other than state it is our hope that testimony from all sides in the coming weeks will rely on civility, proper information, and avoidance of further personal attacks.**

Sincerely,

Charles Schmid and Bruce Taft March 13, 2013