

March 22, 2023, GPAC Item IV.c Comments

These comments on an item on the Newport Beach [General Plan Advisory Committee](#) agenda are submitted by: Jim Mosher (jimmosher@yahoo.com), 2210 Private Road, Newport Beach 92660 (949-548-6229)

Item IV.c. Consideration of Formally Requesting Council's Support for a Sustainability and Resiliency Element

Although a copy of the Steering Committee's most recent report to the Council, which was received as agenda Item 13 on February 28, 2023, is attached to the present agenda, it would have seemed useful to have also provided a link to the [video](#) of the Council's discussion of it.

That would have given GPAC members a chance to directly review what was said, which seems important since it touches on what the Council believes the GPUSC and GPAC have been tasked with doing.

In particular, although the [City website](#) and the [RFP](#) discussed under Item IV.b refer to a "Comprehensive General Plan Update," and although at their first meeting the GPAC members were [encouraged](#) by the GPUSC Chair to be "bold" and "creative" in transforming a "20th century plan" into a 21st century one, the Council's view could be different. "Comprehensive" may mean only looking at every piece, and "updating" may mean only revising the present words, not "rethinking" the structure or adding new features, as seems to have been encouraged in 2000-2006.

In essence, what happened on February 28 is that Mayor Pro Tem Will O'Neill "pulled" Item 13 from the consent calendar (where items are received without discussion) to express his displeasure with the GPAC discussing adding any new elements to the General Plan other than the required new Environmental Justice element. Mr. O'Neill expressed the view that adding elements is beyond the scope of the GPAC's and Steering Committee's mission as defined in their enabling resolutions, and constitutes an unauthorized use of City resources unless approved by the Council as the result of a formal request to expand the scope (which request it appeared he would not support).

Mayor Noah Blom agreed.

The only other Council member to speak was Robyn Grant, who supported considering the request and seemed to believe achieving a comprehensive revision of the General Plan might require giving the GPUSC/GPAC more latitude than the Mayor Pro Tem found in the original resolutions.

Hence the title of this item, "Formally Requesting Council's Support for a Sustainability and Resiliency Element."

That request, if made, would, like a game of telephone, have to be passed from the GPAC to the GPUSC and then from the GPUSC to the Council, with the answer passed back following the same path in reverse (this is perhaps the reason that the GPUSC meeting, which was originally scheduled at 5:00 p.m., before the GPAC, has been moved to 7:00 p.m., after the GPAC).

Given the uncertainty that has been created, **it seems to me GPAC's request to the Council should include not just their support for a "Sustainability and Resiliency Element," but more generally a request for clarification of what the current Council sees the GPUSC's and GPAC's purposes as.**

For reference, the revisions that resulted in our [current General Plan](#) were initiated in May 2000 by Council [Resolution No. 2000-45](#), which created a General Plan Update Committee. That committee, revised by [Resolution No. 2000-102](#) and consisting of a set of Council members and City commission and committee members, was charged with devising a public outreach program and recommending a "scale and scope" of revision based on its outcome.

That original GPUC recommended the creation of a citizens General Plan Advisory Committee, which was accomplished with Council [Resolution No. 2001-22](#) in April 2001. The original GPAC was charged first with reviewing the results of the community outreach program and technical reports prepared for the City, and then with reviewing and making recommendations about staff's draft "Vision and Strategic Directions Report" and General Plan policies.

Out of this came a General Plan significantly different in structure and content from the one that preceded it.

By contrast, when the Council launched a new "comprehensive update" in 2019, it was not clear if the intent was to repeat the 2000-2006 experience or to do something more limited, especially since the enabling resolution for the new GPUSC contained no request for a recommendation about the "scale and scope" of the update needed: see [Resolution No. 2019-7](#) from January 2019, which initiated the current process and created a five- (soon expanded to seven-) member Steering Committee.

But that committee was disbanded, and the enabling resolutions of the current [GPUSC](#) and [GPAC](#) (summarized on those pages) refer only to recommending changes to the existing goals and policies.

The uncertainty is compounded by the "previous" Council's decision to pursue revisions to the Housing, Circulation, Land Use and Noise element on a track separate from, and largely independent of the others – in a process that could hardly be called "comprehensive" in the sense of viewing as an interconnected whole.

In short, since the Council has not clearly stated what they expect the "scale and scope" of the update the current GPUSC and GPAC are undertaking is, and since we have not been asked to make a recommendation as to what it should be, it seems reasonable to ask. Otherwise, it is hard to see how we can operate within it.