

July 29, 2019

Chair Bennett and Ventura County Supervisors:

A County's General Plan is one of the most important documents that is considered by the Board. This long-range planning document guides regulations and policies related to land use, water resources, economic growth and stability, resource protection and development in Ventura County through the year 2040 – impacting generations of residents beyond those that draft this language today.

Planning staff have done an admirable job in their attempts to engage the public. Since the draft preliminary General Plan elements were released to the public on May 9, 2019, staff have engaged in public open houses, held Focus Group meetings with subject matter experts, and worked to provide the Planning Commission with constantly updating reports of errata and newly received public comment for the multiple Planning Commission Work Sessions held in June 2019.

Now, however, it appears the critical public engagement process is about to be derailed. County staff have indicated that there are over 110 significant recommendations from the Planning Commission work sessions. Despite staff's tireless efforts to summarize these critical documents for public review, they have not yet been released to the Public. Even if they were to be released today, the Public would have less than 10 calendar days to review, educate themselves and provide comment on these 110 Planning Commission recommendations before the Board Hearing on August 6.

What does this mean in real numbers? If the Board were to restrict their deliberation to only those recommendations brought forth by the Planning Commission (and did not take any time for public comment and ignored all other recommendations and comments), the Board would have merely 2 minutes to discuss, deliberate and vote on each of the 110 Planning Commission recommendations.

In addition, we have significant concerns over the amount of time the Board has scheduled for the final vote on the General Plan language. The draft agenda for August 6, 2019, indicates the Board believes that 4 business hours is sufficient to receive public comment, discuss and deliberate the 110 recommendations from Planning Commission, thousands of recommendations from the Focus Groups, the Public, and subject matter experts – and then vote on the long-term future of the County.

After all the efforts of the Planning Staff and Planning Commission to fully engage the public in the process, this self-imposed "race to the finish line" only serves to give the appearance that the Board of Supervisors is simply going through the motions in order to "check the box" for public engagement at the Board hearing on August 6<sup>th</sup>.

Ultimately, Ventura County's unrealistic deadline to finish this milestone is not aligned with the public review processes and timelines utilized by other Counties.

- In Sacramento County, staff participated in 212 public meetings, 109 workshops, and 216 sub-committee meeting over a period of several years. They also engaged in a tribal outreach strategy, coordinated through the Native American Heritage Commission – something that appears to be lacking in the Ventura County General Plan Update process.
- In Kern County, after a 6-month Planning Commission Workshop process, the final draft General Plan was then circulated to the Public for over 6 months, prior to the Board of Supervisors vote and the EIR process, to allow for full public engagement.
- In Humboldt County, the Board of Supervisors engaged in a series of three 8-hour public hearings over a 2-month period, in order to receive, review and deliberate over public and expert comments and recommendations.
- In Fresno County, Planning Staff released the draft General Plan in December 2017 – and collected public comments throughout the entirety of 2018 – prior to the Board of Supervisors vote and the EIR process.

Also, contrast this against the discussion and deliberation time given this past June to the County's own budgetary hearings, which plan for a single year. In one half-day, the County will be finalizing a document that will be setting the stage for 20 years of policy.

As the deadline to complete the General Plan draft by August 6<sup>th</sup> is arbitrary, it can and should be amended to allow for the most important step in this process - public review and engagement as the Board deliberates and votes on the final draft (including all Planning Commission recommendations).

**We, the undersigned, as representatives of labor, industry, business, and agriculture, request a later hearing date be considered with a longer allotted time so the Board of Supervisors, staff, and the public can fully discuss, deliberate and vote on the next Ventura County General Plan.**

Sincerely,

California Energy Workers  
California Independent Petroleum Association  
California Women for Agriculture  
Camarillo Chamber of Commerce  
Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business  
Coastal Energy Alliance  
Farm Bureau of Ventura County  
LiUNA Local 585  
Oxnard Chamber of Commerce  
UA Local 484 of Plumbers, Pipefitters, Welders and Apprentices  
Ventura Chamber of Commerce

Ventura Citizens for Energy Independence  
 Ventura County Agricultural Association  
 Ventura County Cattlemen's Association  
 Ventura County Contractors Association  
 Ventura County Economic Development Association  
 Western States Petroleum Association

