

COMMENTS TO THE 2012
“GENERAL PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT”

Kristin Casey, March 13, 2013

To the Planning Commission:

I was glad to see that the Planning Department is providing the required annual General Plan report; however, I would characterize the General Plan differently from the staff’s meager description of it as simply an “information document” and a “policy document” that “establishes guidelines.” The General Plan was held by the California Supreme Court in 1990 (in the *Leshner* case) to be the single most important planning document for a city, the “constitution for all future development.”

As the constitution for all future development, it becomes important for the city to act on the policies and actions that citizens placed in our 2003 General Plan. However, I continue to be dismayed by the actions and policies that have conveniently been ignored by Calistoga powers that be, over the past ten years.

The purpose of the annual report on the General Plan is discussed in the Government Code at section 65400. The city’s planning agency is required to “investigate and make recommendations...regarding reasonable and practical means for implementing the general plan...so that it will serve as an effective guide for orderly growth and development, preservation and conservation of open-space land and natural resources, and the efficient expenditure of public funds...”

I will address below a few of the actions that have regrettably been ignored by the city over these past ten years. The lack of attention to these particular actions is especially disturbing in light of the push for significant large commercial developments that are now imminent in Calistoga. These actions are needed now, and you are in a position to demand that staff address them now, before it is too late to implement them and stay true, to the extent possible, to the vision of Calistoga that is presented by our General Plan.

- Action 2, LU-1.3: [Page 4 of report]. Review all development applications to maintain an acceptable balance between jobs and housing in Calistoga, *as described on page LU-10*. Page LU-10 requires the City to “pace commercial growth so that existing jobs/housing balance is retained” at the 1.3 jobs per housing unit level, which is considered a healthy balance. **Question: How is staff addressing this?**

- Action 2, LU-2.1: [Page 5 of report]. Amend hillside Ordinance to clarify the calculation of slope and permitted densities. **Question: Given the imminent development of our RR-Hillside, why does this action continue to be ignored?**
- Action 1, LU-3.2: [Page 5 of report]. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require multi-family structures located adjacent to single-family parcels to incorporate adequate screening into project design. **Question: What is so difficult about this that it continues to be unaddressed?**
- Action 2, CI-1.1: [Page 5 of report]. Conduct an evaluation of city guidelines, ordinances, and infrastructure to ensure they are consistent with community identity features. **Question: Given the legal imperative of internal consistency in a general plan, how can this remain unaddressed?**
- Action 1, CI-1.3: [Page 6 of report]. Prepare and adopt design guidelines for residential areas. **Question: Are you aware that, on page CI-26-27, this action actually goes on to specify addressing building scale, lighting, trees, landscaping, visual impacts on neighbors, and viewshed protection, including ridgelines? So, given the imminent large developments about to occur, how can this action continue to be ignored?**
- Action 3, I-1.1 [Page 11 of report]. Revise the water use projections contained in the Final Water Facilities Plan in light of land use development projections in the 2003 General Plan. **Question: Given the imminent large development in the city, how can this required action continued to be unaddressed?**
- Action 3, I-2.1: [Page 11 of report]. Prepare a wastewater master plan to identify current deficiencies, quantify needs, enumerate necessary improvements and establish priorities. **Question: Where are we on the mandate at Page I-28, which states “when wastewater flows to the treatment plant reach 95% of the plant’s design capacity of 0.84 mgd, development in Calistoga will be halted until the city provides additional treatment capacity sufficient to accommodate new development?”**
- Action 1, I-3.3 [Page 13 of report]. Conduct a health and safety study and develop regulations to address...Boron concentrations. **Question: Why is something as important as Boron in our waterways and reclaimed water not being addressed?**

- Now we get to the Open Space Element of the general plan. Government Code sections 65563, 65564 and 65561 require the city to prepare, adopt and submit to the state a local open-space plan for the comprehensive and long-range preservation and conservation of open-space land within its jurisdiction and which further require that this open-space plan consist of specific programs which the city intends to pursue in its implementation of the open-space plan, and which is further required to be done “at the earliest possible date.” **Question: Has Calistoga ever developed its open-space plan?**
- Action 2, OSC-1.1 [Page 16 of report]. Develop and adopt guidelines establishing wildlife corridors, biological habitat preservation techniques, and wetlands restoration methods. **Question: Given the imminent large development in Calistoga, how can this mandate continue to be ignored?**
- Action 1, OSC-1.2: [Page 17 of report]. Amend the Hillside Ordinance to specifically include preservation of forest lands. **Question: Given the imminent large development on our forested hillside, how can the city continue to ignore this mandate?**
- Action 1, OSC-1.6: [Page 17 of report]. Amend the Hillside Ordinance to include: Provisions related to light and glare; Viewshed protection; Protection of skylines from visible development; Requirements to protect forest lands within the Hillside Overlay Zone. **Question: Given the imminent large development on our RR-Hillside, why does this mandate remain unaddressed?**
- Action 1, OSC-5.2: [Page 21 of report]. Revise the Hillside Management Ordinance to protect hillside viewsheds and prevent development along skylines. **Question: Given the imminent large hillside development, why has this required action continued to be ignored?**

You, as Commissioners, do have the duty and right to let staff know that you have priorities. I urge you to let staff know tonight that the neglected actions listed above need to be elevated to priority levels that may see them come to fruition before they are declared moot.

Thank you,
Kristin Casey