

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA BARBARA

January 6, 2016

Mayor James Farr and City Council Members,
Director Jennifer Carman
Goleta City Hall

Subject: New Goleta Zoning Ordinance

The League of Women Voters continues to have the same concerns that we outlined in our letter of November, 2014, which we will enclose. Now, in addition, we have looked at the almost 500 page document that covers the rezoning and we know that the public will not have any way to deal with it. We find it impossible to know what changes have been made, or why they would have been made.

We want to suggest that an Executive Summary be prepared before the public hearings. That summary should point out any major changes that have been made, and why they were made. It would be good to note what public demand had asked for these changes. We are afraid that all the public testimony that was given at all the earlier public hearings will be totally lost, both for you, and for the interested citizens.

We ask that particular attention be given to who will be making any decisions. It is frequently easy to have a Zoning Administrator make many decisions, but that excludes any public participation, and may produce results that shock the neighbors, and even the decision makers. Other local cities have had trouble refining this process, and have decided that their Planning Commission must make all important decisions.

The League believes that it will be very hard to conduct public hearings on this document unless more clear information is provided before they are held. The staff that has made these changes should be able to explain the principle ones, and why they would be done. After all, the City has used the County's original zoning for 10 years, and sudden changes could upset the entire community.

We thank you for your time and attention.

Lindsey Baker, Co-President for Program and Action

Contact: Connie Hannah, Vice-President for Program at 967-4720

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11-20-14

Director Jennifer Carman
City of Goleta
Goleta City Hall
cc: Mayor and City Council members
and Goleta Planning Commissioners

Subject: Goleta Zoning Revision Process

Dear Director Carman:

A number of members of the Santa Barbara League of Women Voters have been attending the public meetings called to present the Zoning Revision changes being considered by the City. Since our area of jurisdiction includes the entire South Coast we have long been interested in the Goleta General Plan and zoning. The League approved the original General Plan, and we have been concerned that many changes have been made to it. Now we see that the zoning requirements that have been in effect for over ten years are being changed as well. We are eager to see that process as open and well understood as possible.

We have been concerned that decision makers may not be well informed about the comments that the public has made so far. Those public comments should have been made accessible to the public and city officials. Instead they have been housed in a single binder at City Hall. In addition, the hour-long open houses hosted by Mr. Dyett prior to the Planning Commission meetings were neither televised nor recorded, so no wider audience has ever seen them. Goleta residents have an important stake in these changes and their views must be heard before these changes are made. The public input must have more exposure, and soon.

The changes have also been difficult to follow. The original language was not shown, and the basis or rationale for change was absent. When these changes are presented to the public, they will need to show the original text and the final text side by side. The reason for each change should be shown with the change, or in a separate attached list, so everyone will understand the purpose of each change.

Finally, one particular concern relates to who will be making the key decisions about projects. It appears that a Zoning Administrator would be able to make many important decisions alone. The difference between ministerial and administrative decisions must be more clearly defined and recorded. We want to see the Planning Commission able to consider all precedent setting or large projects, with an appeal process to the City Council. This is a long established route to make sure that any major projects have full review and a real opportunity for the public to participate.

Susan Shank, Co-President for Program and Action

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