



P.O. Box 935, San Andreas, CA 95249 • (209) 772-1463 • www.calaverascap.com

2/14/22

RE. Item 8 on the BOS 2/15/22 Agenda: Please answer our questions regarding 2019 General Plan Update implementation priorities

Dear Supervisors,

My name is Tom Infusino, and I am making these comments on behalf of the Calaveras Planning Coalition. The CPC is a group of community organizations and individuals who want a healthy and sustainable future for Calaveras County. We believe that public participation is critical to a successful planning process. United behind eleven land use and development principles, we seek to balance the conservation of local agricultural, natural and historic resources with the need to provide jobs, housing, safety, and services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on implementation priorities for the 2019 General Plan Update (GPU). As you read our comments below you will see that we agree with many of the observations in the staff report. **Below we pose a number of questions we hope to get answered on the 15th as you direct the Planning Department's efforts to implement the general plan this year.**

1) Staffing

We agree with the statements on page three of the staff report that, “[S]ignificant staffing and pandemic related measures have significantly affected the Department over the past year,” and “Once the County recruits a permanent Planning Director, significant progress is anticipated.” Also, page three of the staff report notes that farmland mapping is being held up by vacancies in the GIS department. In addition, the mitigation program for resource production land conversion has been delayed due to staff limitations in both the Planning and Agriculture departments. **We would like the hiring of a Planning Director, the filling of the ~~other~~ vacant Planner III position, and the filling of the GIS and Agriculture positions to be a priority. What do you think?** Please consider dedicating some current Planning Department staff to General Plan Update implementation.

2) Zoning Code Update

Last year Miller Planning Associates /Mintier-Harnish began work on some of the County Code/Zoning Ordinance updates called for in the 2019 GPU. On page two the staff report indicates that the Department and the consultants held “stakeholder interviews.” We find a selective process of stakeholder interviews much less supportive of meaningful public participation than a more open opportunity for public input. Please do not exclude the public from early consultations in the future.

The staff report goes on to note that the code update has been broken into three sections and that preliminary drafts of two of the sections are nearly complete. They anticipate workshops and study sessions in the spring.

There may be no need to wait to present all three sections to the public at the same time. **We at the CPC believe it may be easier for the public and the development community to review and comment on the ordinances if they were released in smaller parts rather than all at once. What do you think?**

Moving these ordinances forward would both give project applicants more of the direction they need to make their projects consistent with the general plan and would help the County comply with its obligations to protect the human and natural environment under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This will provide a clearer and quicker path for applicants to follow to secure valid project approvals. As you can see from our attached guide, the current path for project applicants is clouded by the County’s ongoing delay in implementing the 2019 GPU. (See Attachment 1).

At the 2021 priority setting meeting, the Planning Director indicated that it would be wise to add some additional content to the open space plan in the Conservation and Open Space Element to provide direction for the Open Space Zoning Ordinance called for in the 2019 GPU. He said, the supervisors should “consider adding open space planning to the programs the department should be working on,” because “before creating the zone we need to look at an overall plan, identify what we have out there.” We at the CPC support that recommendation. We believe that it is important to identify open space conservation objectives for each open space use: agriculture, recreation, public safety (fire, flood and emergency services), watershed, carbon sequestration, and wildlife habitat. **We believe that it is important to have a map that identifies priority lands for long term conservation to achieve these objectives, and we believe that it is important to map all perpetual conservation easements that have been recorded in the county (Civil Code, Section 815.5). What do you think?**

3) Copperopolis Community Plan

Last year the Planning Director postponed community planning for Copperopolis due to the limitations that COVID placed on community meetings. However, despite the challenges of COVID the County continues to perform other place-based tasks of public concern in the area including the processing of development applications and adjusting the district boundaries for the Supervisors. Thus, COVID does not hold up as an excuse to postpone community planning.

Also, there is a 30-year history of community planning in Copperopolis that can be used as a basis for community planning now. This basis can be refined and built upon to address current planning challenges in the area.

In addition, the 2019 General Plan Update includes many implementation programs that could be useful in Copperopolis. Give people a chance to pick out pieces of prior community plans to keep. Give people a chance to pick out key implementation measures in the 2019 GPU that should be promptly implemented in Copperopolis. Before you know it, you may have a community plan text to complement the land use designation map. **The CPC would like the County to start this Community Plan process in Copperopolis. What do you think?**

If community planning processes are not going to begin on the Highway 4 Corridor, **please consider putting on the Board of Supervisors agenda quarterly workshops on planning issues of concern and options for addressing them in Arnold, Murphys/Douglas Flat, Avery/Hathaway Pines, and Copperopolis.** Such quarterly workshops could provide these communities the attention they deserve in the absence of community plans. **What do you think?**

4) GHG Reduction Plan

We agree with page two of the staff report indicating that the GHG Reduction Plan will not proceed without Board direction on the draft GHG inventory. **The CPC would like the Board to provide that direction in the next 60 days. What do you think?** As noted in the attached letter to the COG, the CPC hopes that the GHG reduction plan will help to usher in a new and prosperous era of carbon sequestration in Calaveras County and assist in improving public safety through climate change adaptation. (See Attachment 2). We also urge you to take into consideration that grasslands and rangelands are more resilient carbon sinks than forests. From a cap-and-trade, carbon-offset perspective, conserving grasslands and promoting rangeland practices that promote reliable rates of carbon sequestration could help more readily meet our emission-reduction goals.

5) RIM and Benefit Basin Fees

We are pleased to read that the RPF will be released this spring.

6) Farmland Mapping and Open Space

As noted on page three of the staff report, the state's Department of Conservation was recently forced to produce the map of the farmland of local importance for Calaveras County based on outdated information from 2013. The state will update the map again in two years. In Calaveras County farmland of local importance includes lands under agricultural preserve contracts. The County GIS staff needs to use records of these contracts to identify a currently accurate list of lands under agricultural preserve contracts and then provide that data to the Department of Conservation. This data is used by the County to evaluate the long-term stability of its valuable and productive agricultural land base. This data will be useful during the Zoning Ordinance Update work on open space zoning. The correct Williamson Act enrollment data for the next Important Farmland map update would need to be for fiscal year 2020-21 to coincide with the

2020 map date. **We would like the GIS staff to collect and report the updated information to the Department of Conservation by January 2023. What do you think?**

7) Oak Woodland Mitigation

We look forward to working with the Agriculture Commissioner on local mitigation measures.

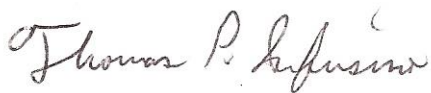
8) Resource Production Conversion Mitigation Program.

We agree with the staff report indicating that staffing limitations have delayed program development. We hope that the staffing limitations will be overcome. We look forward to working with the Agriculture Commissioner and the Planning Department on this program.

9) Please pick up the pace!

Thank you for your efforts to implement the 2019 General Plan to date. However, please note that the staff report indicates that over the last two years you have completed only a handful of the 90 implementation tasks not related to ongoing project reviews. The health, safety, and prosperity of our communities depend upon the Board of Supervisors promptly implementing the 2019 General Plan Update. Please do not delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thomas P. Infusino".

Thomas P. Infusino, Facilitator

Calaveras Planning Coalition

Attachment 1: CPC Letter to the Editor on the GHG Reduction Plan

Attachment 2: Project Applicant Guide to General Plan Consistency