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**Supervisors set top priorities for General Plan Update Implementation;
refuse to grant taxpayers access to consultant reports.**

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San Andreas. The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors unanimously selected 12 top priority items to begin implementation of the 2019 General Plan Update (GPU) after a study session on Tuesday, January 21. The comprehensive update of the zoning code, which will address 27 implementation tasks in the GPU, is expected to take the most time to complete. The other 11 discrete items will move forward on a parallel path with the zoning code update. This so called “hybrid” approach was recommended by Planning Director Peter Maurer.

However, in a stunning rebuke of government transparency and taxpayer rights, the Board refused to grant access to consultant reports payed for with taxpayer dollars. The study session staff report indicated that much of the work on the zoning ordinance update will be farmed out to professional consultants who often work for both local governments and developers alike. According to the staff report, about \$177,000 is already available in the Planning Department budget to begin this work. However, the County has taken the hard line position that even though taxpayers pay for these studies, the taxpayers should not be allowed to view the studies to see if the work is being done well.

During the study session, CPC facilitator Tom Infusino invited the Supervisors to change this policy. “Before the taxpayers are asked to shell out another \$177,000 for consultants, please let

us know if the taxpayers will get to review the work product of those consultants, or will taxpayers be expected to finance a shadow bureaucracy whose work products will be hidden from the public? Though the Planning Director answered other questions from the public, he did not respond to this question nor did the supervisors.

Later Infusino opined, “If taxpayers must pay for it, taxpayers must get to see it.” He noted that, in the private sector, your boss reviews your work to see if it is done well and if you should keep your job. In the public sector, the public should get to do the same.

The 11 discrete items on Supervisors’ priority list include updates to the Valley Springs and Copperopolis Community Plans, the vacation rental ordinance, the special event ordinance, and the zoning map. Traffic impact mitigations will also share center stage as the Public Works Department will produce new traffic impact study guidelines for project applicants, and will update the regional impact mitigation fees and benefit basin fees charged to new developments to fund needed roadway improvements. Impact mitigation programs for the conversion of agricultural lands and oak woodlands are also among the top priorities.

According Calaveras Planning Coalition member Muriel Zeller, “The GPU implementation glass is still mostly empty.” The CPC notes that there are still over 90 implementation tasks in the GPU that remain without any priority or deadline. These tasks deal with critical issues like fire safety, law enforcement funding, water security, traffic safety, noise reduction, community design guidelines, and scenic resource conservation.

The CPC is also concerned with the pace of implementation. Even with 11 discrete items being given the top priority along with the zoning ordinance update, the County made no commitment to complete these items in a year or two. If it takes longer, completing the over 90 remaining tasks might take 20 years or more. “Another 20 years is a long time to wait after a 13 year wait for the GPU,” said CPC member Joyce Techel. “I doubt that I will live to see that day.”