

Other Written Citizen Comments on draft revised Policies Plan received July 16 to August 6, 2008 (will be updated as comments are received).

July 20, 2008

John Lamb
Blount County Planning Dept.
327 Court St., Maryville, TN 37804

I commend our county Planning Commission for undertaking the laborious process of updating the Policies Plan to better reflect the desires of the majority of citizens and provide a reasonable framework to guide our county's growth. On the whole, I am pleased with the proposed revisions to the Policies Plan. And I was very heartened by the comments from citizens who attended the public input session on July 15. It's nice to know that others feel we can build a better future by taking steps now to preserve what we can of our rural and natural heritage.

Our county needs stronger regulations to protect our rivers and streams. The Little River is a priceless natural resource, which supplies the drinking water for most Blount Countians. We have a tendency to take our clean water for granted until there is a crisis. I hope the Planning Commission will carefully research the subject of local water quality, abide by all rules and guidelines set by state and federal authorities, and be pro-active by establishing adequate distances for stream buffering throughout our watersheds. The county should also work with the Little River Watershed Association to educate farmers and other landowners about Best Management Practices to protect the River and its tributaries.

Another natural treasure in our county that needs protection is Chilhowee Mountain. As a volunteer naturalist working for the National Park along the Foothills Parkway, I can attest that this special ridge is geologically unique and home to several rare plant species. It is also a breeding area for warblers and other songbirds, and serves as an important feeding stop for many migratory birds. There has been a lot of talk lately about preserving our "viewsapes" for the tourists to come and see, which is fine. But I worry more about protecting the actual mountain and its forest ecosystem from ridgetop development. Building homes on steep slopes is not environmentally smart (erosion, septic problems, fire danger, etc.). Wouldn't it make more sense to develop living spaces we can be proud of within our urban growth boundary, grow food in our bottomlands (keeping the river/stream banks buffered with native trees), and gaze with pride and gratitude upon our beautiful forested mountains?

Sincerely,


Marian D. Fitzgerald

July 20, 2008

Note to John Lamb -

I want to go on record as endorsing the additions & changes to the Revised Policies Plan proposed by the Raven Society.

- Historic preservation should have been specifically included all along. An oversight?
- I am in agreement with TRS insistence on limiting higher density development to areas with sewer within the Urban Growth Boundary.
- We need to find affordable, creative ways to preserve our natural treasures and retain greenspace in our County.
- We need to require that necessary infrastructure (roads, sewer, schools, etc.) be in place before permitting new developments of significant size.
- We need guidelines that will encourage high-quality development of benefit to all our citizens, and will discourage random suburban sprawl and landscape ugliness.
- The Planning Commission should require - or at least encourage - the use of more pervious surfaces to decrease runoff and protect the watershed.

The Raven Society's suggestions are thoughtful and reasonable, and I hope the P.C. will seriously consider their incorporation into the Revised Plan.

Sincerely,
Marian D. Fitzgerald

July 21, 2008

Blount County Planning Commission
327 Court Street
Maryville, TN 37804

Dear Commissioners:

I am sorry that I was not able to attend the planning meeting on July 15th. I would like to offer my thoughts on the problems you are facing in trying to keep Blount County beautiful.

I strongly urge a control over the development of our green spaces: mountain views; water ways; farm lands; and similar areas that provide the rural atmosphere of Blount County. We desperately need to protect our environment for the present and future generations. Do we want our children's children to only experience the beauty of our country through documentaries on their big screen TVs? When a ridge top is flattened or farmland is covered with black top it is gone forever.

Lots of ideas on development are about the dollar – usually the dollar of the developer. How many more empty shopping malls and convenience stores do we need in this county? There is a large amount of vacant, usable buildings in Blount County that could be utilized. That “recyclable” building concept could also apply to residential housing. There are many, nice homes in good areas that are for sale. Is there really a valid need for more clusters of subdivisions spread out over our county?

Tourism is a very important factor in our economy, as you well know. In my work, I am in a position to talk with 50 to 100 tourists and local people each day, and the vast majority of both groups want our land kept green and natural, with very careful and selective development. The tourists come to our area purposely to find the openness, naturalness, and beauty they don't find in their own area (due to development.) There is a place for commercial development, as in Pigeon Forge, but that is already in place in Sevier County. The people I talk with are eager to find and keep the natural beauty and uniqueness of this side of the mountains. They find themselves renewed here and are eager to return. What we offer them is the next 10 or 20 years is up to you.

Several years ago we had an all-inclusive study called “Nine Counties-One Vision.” One of the major points brought out by the people taking part was to keep this area rural. More roads, more poorly controlled development, and more used up land will defeat that expressed desire.

I appreciate your consideration of my thoughts. You do not have an easy task ahead of you, and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Elaine M. Kant

Laura Harrill via E-Mail

John, it was good to see you at the Citizen Input Workshop on July 15, 2008. I sat and listened to the citizen comments on the recommendations and did not speak myself. Please use this communication to share with the members of the planning commission as my endorsement of the planning document. Contrary to the small number of citizens at the meeting on Tuesday night, we know the people of Blount County had numerous opportunities to be heard and to give input when the Environmental Health Action Team had town meetings all over the county. We did record their suggestions and concerns and use their passion about issues to help formulate the final recommendations from the Environmental Health Action Team to leadership in Blount County and the cities of Alcoa and Maryville. Thank you for incorporating those recommendations into the planning document. There are very integrated issues of public health and land use, water and air standards. Cluster development is one of the win-win suggestions where walking is encouraged and less use of cars is a result. People can walk to get a gallon of milk. They can play in green space and they can ride bikes in a safe environment. Childhood obesity is at an all time high, All of the plans adopted in 2008 can make a difference in encouraging activity of families, not just children. Please know that I endorse the whole document and it's individual parts. I applaud your efforts. Keep up the good work!