

From: Tosta, Timothy A. [<mailto:Tim.Tosta@arentfox.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2019 8:36 AM
To: Kohar Kojayan <kkojayan@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Creating a Publicly Accessible Database of Communications

Kohar,

As you know, I am a good government enthusiast. I also am not shy about offering my thoughts to improve processes or increase transparency when I encounter impediments to efficient and rational decision-making. I appreciate that you've graciously received a number of my observations and suggestions about the General Plan Update process to date. You can expect that I will have additional thoughts as things move forward.

That said, I am following up on my recent request for a more transparent and expeditious system, pertaining to the GPU process, for disclosing communications from the public to the City Council, Planning Commission, and/or GPU Subcommittee. I do not believe that the City currently has a system in place that, on a timely basis allows the public to review the emails and letters that the decision-makers receive, other than through attaching correspondence to staff reports. The problem with attaching correspondence to staff reports, however, is that the correspondence, first, must be received and reviewed by City staff prior to the release of the staff report. The staff may choose, at its own discretion, whether or not to include the transmittal. Then it is transferred to the decision making body, at which point it becomes accessible to the public. As a result, the public has no idea how, and at what volume, people are responding to any given issue, if not part of the staff report or how to respond to the transmittal if only conveyed with the staff report.

Thankfully, there are alternatives. Menlo Park is one of the few cities that I am aware of that provides a publicly accessible log of all emails delivered to the city council (<http://ccin.menlopark.org/>). The beauty of the log is that anyone with an internet connection can access the site and review what people are saying, even on the day of a particular public meeting. For example at 5 PM last evening, I could access an email delivered at 4 pm that day.

San Mateo should consider implementing a similar system. While Menlo Park provides all communications delivered to its city council, which is laudable, I acknowledge that San Mateo's resources are being stretched, so I suggest starting "smaller" by just providing the communications regarding the General Plan Update.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

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