
Re: Combining Planning and DRB

Planning staff and Planning Commission,

I see the combining of these groups as a net loss to the community. That the quality of decisions will suffer and the long term effect on our town will not be justified by what seems like a relatively insignificant amount of staff time. Both groups make decisions that effect our town for decades.

Sebastopol's town core and surrounding neighborhoods have an older classic look very worth preserving. Character that is widely appreciated by our community. Pictures of Main Street are always used in published representation of our town. Many who have moved here say this is what first attracted them to Sebastopol.

Few architects and developers have come before the DRB (and Planning) with projects that fit well within our town. Their more common goal is to make a standout building, a show piece. Architects are generally good at architect talk for convincing others. Experienced DRB members see through this, and know the elements needed to preserve the character of our town.

As to the advantages of having a "one stop approval process," In real life developers seldom need this. Planning compliance is a first step in the building process. The look and details of the project comes later.

Combining Planning, Design Review Boards and Tree Boards into one group will be asking much of new members, both in time and knowledge. Good decision makers will be harder to find. Plus, it takes years on a board to be an effective decision maker from the Arts Committee to the City Council.

It takes time to understand issues, to do the job well. It takes time to become an effective board member. To learn what is important, what is reasonable, to understand and work with you board colleagues takes years. Add in much longer meetings and likely fewer qualified volunteers will be available.

The City's financial woes will eventually be mitigated, while poor decisions of these groups will last decades longer. Example: The north end of off Hwy 116 has a hodgepodge of commercial building; colors, shapes and sizes that have no harmony and have little appeal.

While I am a long time member of the Design Review Board I write as a member of our community. I do this for I have watched our town develop over many years and want to see it develop in the best possible way.

Lynn Deedler