

"Louis H. Felthouse"

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To

cc

Subject DR process

Director Rahaim:

I was very pleased to attend the Planning Department's Southwest Quadrant presentation of the proposed Discretionary Review process modifications last Wednesday. It was clear that staff has worked very hard to develop the proposed modifications and I am delighted that they include both features to reduce frivolous DR Requests that do not substantiate the extraordinary circumstances require to justify a DR, establish a more consistent method of interpreting and applying the Residential Design Guidelines to proposed projects and reducing the valuable time of the Planning Commission currently wasted on frivolous DR requests so they can focus more on policy issues. Thank you and your staff for the tremendous effort developing the proposed modifications and for devising modifications that will vastly improve the process in a fair and just fashion.

I hope that you will be able to find a candidate for the position of DR Hearing Officer with the poise, experience and knowledge level of Larry Badiner. I am not nominating Mr.. Badiner as he has too much on his plate as Zoning Administrator to be burdened with yet another Herculean task but perhaps someone like Bob Passmore, the former Zoning Administrator.

I have one additional comment regarding the DR process that was not included in the proposed modifications. The fee for requesting Discretionary Review is too low and facilitates frivolous DR requestors ability to delay a project and cause economic hardship to project sponsors by protracting the process, adding costs to the sponsor for the professional services from architects and land use attorneys to provide the services necessary to support a project thru the DR process. The cost to the Planning Department to administer the DR process is in excess of \$3,200.00. DR requestors with the means to pay the full cost should be charged the full cost just as a project sponsor who's project requires a mandatory DR like for a dwelling unit merger. Community groups and DR requestors whose income and property holdings under an amount where the full fee would be a hardship as determined by the Planning Department should be allowed a reduced fee to make the process available to everyone in San Francisco. I have seen too many projects unfairly disrupted or completely derailed by the nimbys,(not in my back yard), of the world who pursue personal agendas inconsistent with the Planning Code and Zoning regulations and know the current system well enough to use Block Book Notations to be noticed on all projects, DR to slow project approval or extort cash from project sponsors to withdraw DR request, Board of Permit Appeals to add further delays and cost to project sponsors and finally the Board of Supervisors to challenge exemptions from environmental review and continue delays and costs to project sponsors. I truly believe that if the fee was raised to the full cost it would deter some of this type of outrageous abuse of the system.

I applaud your efforts to reform the DR process and hope that you will consider the fee issue.

Sincerely:

Louis Felthouse

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