

Sharon Thompson - delivered at Board of Supervisors Meeting - Open Comment Session - 4/26/2018

As a preface, I apologize for reading my comments. My fear is extemporaneous speaking right now might lead me to say things I prefer not to. So, I will read to stay on script.

I have three things to present during my allotted time.

First, I appreciate Bob's response to my email. I've reached a level of considerable disenchantment with the Board of Supervisors as of late and I had hoped that this email would provide stimuli to conversation regarding revenue streams for Lancaster County. Instead, I did not even receive acknowledgement of receipt from the other Supervisors. And, to anyone questioning my calculations of the large percentage of waterfront properties in Lancaster County being owned by non-residents, I will clarify my process. By utilizing available public information, I took a plot plan of the County, identified each waterfront property, both developed and undeveloped, found the registered owner and then identified their voting registration. Had there really been an interest or question, I would have thought a conversation would have followed. However, that appears to not be the case. And, the lack of interest again disappoints me in the level of desire by the Board of Supervisors to creatively think outside the box to find solutions to improve the revenue flow to the County, without penalizing the majority of residents.

Secondly, I would request that the Board of Supervisors take under consideration and begin the process to change the rules governing the Planning and Zoning Commissions for Lancaster County. I applaud

everyone who works on these committees. They do a valuable service. However, by allowing persons who have served on elected Boards (Board of Supervisor, School Board or both) to then serve on either of these commissions makes a potential conflict of interest arise that can easily jeopardize our County's best interest. Judgement on current and future projects may not be fairly evaluated if in doing so past actions of the member are shown to have been in error or, at a minimum, not the best course of action when viewed in hindsight. It is human nature to justify past actions—but that should not be a factor in looking at future endeavors. It is obvious during last week's public hearing that the influence of trying to preserve one's legacy is a motivator that could severely handicap future growth. Such conflicts should have been anticipated and avoided. Thus, I ask the requested changes be considered. I would suggest that other committees also be reviewed to assure that such potential conflicts do not and cannot exist.

Third, and perhaps the most important, is the manner in which the Board of Supervisors Improperly manage public comment. I am limiting my observations to the Board of Supervisors because I have found that this practice is not followed by the Planning Commission, the School Board and other Committees. They actually use public input as an impetus for give-and-take discussion. In what appears to be a bow to Robert's Rules of Order, the Board of Supervisors has made public comment an isolated agenda item. This is not the purpose of the Rules of Order. These are merely structured guides on orderly presentation of agenda items. To contain public comment to a one-way endeavor defeats the purpose and provides no benefit to the County. And, trust me, it truly frustrates your constituents. If you are uncomfortable in terms of potential chaos or confrontation then find another way to open yourselves to community discussion. Public round tables, meet and greets—I don't care what you call them. But, **your interaction with**

**the community should not end when you are elected.** You should be discussing your potential votes, your decisions, your non-decisions with anyone in the community who wants to understand your thinking behind it. I make this point because once elected you should represent all of Lancaster County not just your District.

I am sure you research and vet issues. But we don't hear that—instead we hear your decision without any benefit of the thought process behind it. And worse, no chance to challenge or discuss that process. As a consultant for 30+ years I learned that no matter how much experience or technical knowledge I had, no matter that often I was the subject matter expert, or the fact that I had done whatever we were discussing for many, many years—I learned that by listening to others opinions, answering their questions on my assumptions, hearing their take on a project—that I often found a better way. Often a very different way than my original approach.

In the current environment we are allowed our 5 minutes, there is no discussion, there are no true responses or answers—it is just on to the next. Then you, as Board members are allowed to question statements made, rarely offering an opportunity for rebuttal or explanation, provide your opinion again with no discussion and then –on to the next. Particularly in public hearings, it becomes frustratingly obvious that your actions often bely a decision made before any public statements are issued. I beseech you. Find a way to open yourselves up to discussion with your constituents. Your election as Supervisors was not a call to become benevolent overlords. We don't need guiding fathers. You were not elected because you are omnipotent and always know best. No, we elected leaders who should be willing to listen, discuss, justify and compromise. If you didn't understand that as your role, I think now is the time to give it some serious thought.

History will show you as either the leaders that guided us down a path to a revitalized Lancaster, by making hard decisions or the ones who failed to do so. The choice at this time is yours.