

(Date)

(Notes for accessory transmittal to City Council regarding the docket process)

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council seek clarity and address possible inconsistencies in the process to docket proposed comprehensive plan and code amendments. The following will summarize our concerns.

Criteria for making recommendations to the Council:

MICC 29.15.230 does not specify criteria that the Planning Commission should use in forming its recommendations from the preliminary docket to the Council. We have used the criteria in section E. for guidance, criteria which are specified in 230.D.1.d for Council use in approving the final docket. The Commission is not in a position to use some of the criteria, since they turn on such considerations as whether the City can provide resources, staff, and budget or whether the proposed amendment can be addressed in an existing work program item. Attempting to apply these criteria could cause the Commission to discourage the Council to approve proposed amendments for the final docket when we may not have the background to make such a recommendation. This could contribute to a negative reception to a proposed amendment, which is unfair for the proponent.

Code confusion:

MICC 19.15.230, 240, 250, and 260 all address comprehensive plan and code amendments. While it may be possible to reconcile these code sections, it seems pretty difficult.

Areas of difficulty or confusion:

- 1) It seems unclear when comp plan amendments or code amendments or both are being treated by the code;
- 2) Section 230 is titled "Comprehensive plan amendments and docketing procedures", but halfway through it begins to include code amendments in the docketing requirements and criteria, yet by the time the decision criteria are presented, the code again addresses only comp plan amendments;
- 3) Criteria for making decisions may be unclear as to whether:
  - a) they are for comp plan amendments or code amendments or both;
  - b) they are for use of the Planning Commission or the City Council or both;
  - c) they are for use in evaluating the preliminary docket, the final docket, or for making a final decision on the proposal, or some combination of the preceding.

Comments:

The comprehensive plan and the code are related but different tools to implement city government. Only the comp plan amendments are governed by the GMA and countywide planning policies, to our understanding. Amendments to each might best be governed by different code sections, with processes and criteria suitable to each.

Criteria for evaluating proposals should be different for the Planning Commission and the Council. The Commission's specialty is the comprehensive plan and the code. We can meet proposals at the gate and try to consider their potential to further the goals of the comp plan and code or change these tools in a way that might be beneficial, and share our findings with the Council.

The Council sets priorities, budget, and the work plan, matters that should not affect the Commission's recommendation since we do not know the Council's positions on these considerations.

Criteria should welcome new ideas and approaches as much as possible consistent with the comp plan's goal of public involvement in all aspects of decision making. Some of the existing criteria in section 230.E. may be somewhat needlessly discouraging. For example, it may not be necessary to exclude ideas that pertain to an ongoing work program. If the idea is good, folding it into the ongoing work program should be considered. If that's not feasible, it could be docketed for a subsequent year. Also, it may not be necessary to exclude a docket item that has been considered in the last three years. A new approach to the proposal may be important and change receptivity. It's a high bar to required changed circumstances in the City in order to take another crack at an issue. Valuable time may be lost to address an issue of some urgency.

We hope that these comments inspire some improvement in the important annual docketing process. Thank you for your consideration.