

Excerpted From Virginia Sherlock's email, 8/29/2023

A crowd of more than 120 residents turned out for this evening's Martin County Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Report workshop at the Blake Library.

And the common theme that ran through the evening was: Change the people we elect as County Commissioners. Don't change our Comp Plan.

The workshop was conducted by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council which is consulting with County staff in the EAR process. Local governments are required by law to evaluate and review their comprehensive plans every seven years to determine whether changes are needed to update and improve the plans.

The Martin County process will extend through early next year. This evening's workshop was the first public meeting in the process to collect ideas and suggestions from residents. There will be another one in January. TCRPC has already conducted more than 30 interviews with individual residents, and an on-line survey will be available on the Martin County website beginning this Friday, September 1, for all residents to provide input and opinions. The survey will be posted through the end of the year.

Suggestions from the audience at this evening's workshop -- which required staff to bring out extra chairs for a larger-than-expected crowd -- included:

- Limit the influence of developers on County growth and development. Commissioners should pay more attention to residents than developers and lobbyists when deciding whether to approve changes to our Comp Plan.
- Keep changes to our Comp Plan minimal. We don't need massive changes. Address growth in a holistic manner, not on a project-by-project basis.
- Prevent traffic from "choking" our roads. Consider how traffic will be impacted before approving new development.
- Protect agricultural lands and working waterfronts. Protect the urban services boundaries and develop a strategy for the western lands.
- Require more green infrastructure and protection of wildlife and natural resources.
- Provide incentives for affordable housing but - more importantly - monitor and enforce affordable housing requirements to encourage working people and younger people to become residents of Martin County.
- Limit development within established areas. Don't change the Comp Plan to allow new development just because a developer comes in with a proposed project.
- Few changes are needed to our Comp Plan. Don't allow staff or developers to "sneak in" changes which are duplicitous when a change may be required by

state law. Don't allow commissioners to alter the Comp Plan solely to benefit developers.

- Concentrate on density and height limits, which need strong protection.
- Monitor and enforce rules to ensure developers actually comply.

And many speakers said: "Vote responsibly. Change the people in power. So long as you continue to vote for the Commissioners who are constantly changing our Comp Plan, nothing else will change."

Residents who attended the workshop were engaged, articulate, and virtually uniform in supporting strong protections in the Martin County Comprehensive Plan which current commissioners are steadily eroding.

And please add your vote to those of residents who want commissioners who respect citizens and the Martin County difference.