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Dane County, Wisconsin

Preserving Property Rights

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Our republic limits government to securing individual unalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. These rights are eroded by legislatures, and by courts complicit with them. To encourage wise jurists and journalists to help, *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore that republic.

A Series of Unfortunate Events: the Dane County Comprehensive Plan Survey

by "Lemony" Bob Bowman

"Kelo to you." That sums up the county comprehensive plan that the county leftists want. They work to confiscate rural landowner rights, like the Kelo Court took urban rights. They claim support in a planning survey done by Chamberlain Research Consultants on 500 random voters. They err.

They undercut the survey by messing up its methodology. Most questions in the survey are junk. County committees in charge of planning rejected them. County staff, without authority, went ahead with the junk questions. This command failure resulted from a power grab started last summer by the county board left and aided by the county executive, trying *post facto* to take over planning. The ensuing legal standoff has county planning in a shambles. A bull-in-a-china-shop left is sieging a duly-seated board organization, abetted by a county executive who, like Herod, bailed out. Thus, the left is messing with and messing up more than the survey.

However, the survey is the issue here. Its first failure was its use of junk questions; i.e., ones not constrained by reality. Land use surveys by On-Common-Ground found such questions to yield false answers. Only questions that pit alternatives or costs against each other have real-world validity.

Second, the survey's random sampling failed. Chamberlain sampled by random phone calls. What an illusion. Biases multiplied from the start, and were not controlled.

The result? A sample biased to *whites* (89%), *urbanites* (84%), *college graduates* (59%), *rich people* (51% earn >\$65,000 a year; 23% >\$95,000), *old people* (45% are >45 years old) and *women* (59%). Conversely, the survey **under-represents** minorities, rural voters, those with no college education, poor people, young adults, and men. Minorities and rural voters aside, biases differed significantly from the 2000 census.

A third serious failure was discovered by the survey. Despite two years of left-led planning, a planning that the law requires involve the public, **81%** of the public still was **not** familiar with it, and **62%** had not even heard of it at all. How can voters give input, if most are kept in ignorance?

Fourth, the survey's **most serious failure** was to sample only **72 rural voters**, while sampling 418 urbanites. Thus the sample has too few ruralites to assess rural opinion. That's terrible, for the county *Comprehensive Plan applies only to rural areas. It has no authority over urban areas.*

Clearly, it is most critical to assess the people ruled by the plan. The sample loaded the dice by making urban views

entirely dominant. Urban opinion is more likely to favor the confiscation of rural landowner rights.

It violates one-person, one-vote, to let one group rule another. Yet, Wisconsin violates it, by letting urban voters rule rural voters. It is like letting Illinois enact Wisconsin law by giving it a controlling vote in the Wisconsin legislature, and claiming this is fair because Wisconsin voters still have "representation." That's the egregious game this survey plays.

Despite all of the above, the urbanites rescued the survey. The **5 goals they voted highest** were (a la Chamberlain): (1) planning land for future growth, (2) managing water resources, (3) keeping established businesses and industry in Dane County, (4) creating quality employment and business ownership opportunities, and (5) attracting new businesses.

Wow. Four of the five highest goals for the comprehensive plan were for growth, jobs and keeping and attracting businesses. Also, 80% voted for equal development in all municipalities, not just in Madison. Bye-bye, leftists.

The **5 highest planning priorities** voted by the survey were: (1) water resources, (2) roads, (3) highways, (4) health care, and (5) gas and electricity. On **transportation priorities**, respondents ranked local roads the top priority for transportation resources (67%), and bus service second (47%). Passenger rail ranked at random; even urbanites do not favor this elitist boondoggle for Dane County.

On **land use**, respondents voted the county's most important role to be zoning (34%), followed by "coordinating" local governments (31%). Respondents favored adding resources to protect water (76%) and subtracting resources for historic sites (64%) or mineral resources (75%). Also, they favored more planning for growth (84%), more managing of conflicting land interests (75%), and more providing of parks (63%). Caution: the costs that respondents were willing to pay for any of these were not tested.

On **Housing**, the survey favored development and developers. On **Community Facilities**, it favored more resources for health care (58%) and for the sheriff (48%; Falk, take that). On **Intergovernmental Cooperation**, it favored less county duplication of services.

In summary, the public's top goals throughout are economic ones, including growth in businesses and in jobs, to be planned for all communities; they favored focusing resources on roads and buses; and aside from water management, they put environmental concerns as secondary. Despite 80 years of socialist hype and activism, the informed citizen, even in Dane County, is pro-business, pro-growth and pro-prosperity. As the bottom line, these primary economic goals can only be fulfilled if the county comprehensive plan ensures the local protection of market forces and landowner rights.

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