

Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

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We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

When Is a Land Use Plan a Local Plan? Not When the Planner Is Hired by the County

by Michael Byrne

Freedom Matters applauds elected officials who act to protect property rights. The sad truth is, those rights need protection from (of all things) *other* elected officials! Consider the case in the township of Berry, in northwest Dane County. This town, along with neighboring towns Mazomanie, Springfield, Roxbury, and Middleton, were all enlisted (some say coerced) into accepting "assistance" with land use planning to prevent "uncontrolled development" along highway 12. Allegedly, this development would occur because highway 12 was scheduled for expansion by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT).

In a deal arranged by appointed officials at WisDOT and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to mollify a certain elected official, planners were hired to "assist" the towns in "protecting" their land. All through the process, the towns were told their plans would be their own local creations. Yet, local officials and property owners had no voice in choosing the planners. Worse, we suspect landowners were not informed that the intended outcomes would result in confiscating millions of dollars in property value from them.

In addition, the taxpayers of a cash strapped state and nation can wonder at the wisdom and constitutionality of using tax dollars to deed property over to private organizations, and thereby to destroy the capital base of towns and counties. In a time when the state has no idea where it can get the money to pay for legally obligated expenses amounting to billions of dollars these folks are planning to spend millions to prevent the very kind of economic growth that generates badly needed revenue for all levels of government.

Ironically, that growth will now occur elsewhere, and probably farther away, and those new commuters will

still rush up and down Highway 12, confounding these "saviors" and their strategy. One fact stands out as indicating the real motives behind this "planning." The plans will control growth in the entire area defined by the town's borders, regardless of where the highway runs, and it runs through only a far corner of some of these towns. Thus, these plans are not really to protect the highway corridor; they are meant to control the entire northwest quarter of the county.

As the planning unfolded in the five towns involved, we at Freedom Matters saw that the plans were quite similar in design, text, promotion, and orchestration. The process ostensibly relied on a year or more of meetings held to brainstorm what the town "wanted" the plan to look like. How odd, then, that the resulting plan was the same in every town. The plans relied on surveys, Yet no survey was honest enough to say "these plans take away your property," or to say, "your heirs will lose."

No plan implied that house sites were a prerogative of the owner and that one of the joys in life is the chance to plan one's own property and home. Instead a small group of elitist people, who felt they had a "right" to plan the destiny of all landowners, moved to implement their belief in a society where the collective of "people" decide how each of us will live. They call it "planning." Well, government comprehensive planning is socialism. Nor is it local. It is *central planning*.

Fortunately, in the Town of Berry, some saw through this scheme, and acted to blunt it. When the plan at last came to a vote in Berry, it all came down to the final meeting. There, the board removed the siting guidelines for new houses, and other restrictions.

We applaud that. We consider it a good start. We won't give up hope that in America, the land of the free, a couple can still build a home that they plan, teach their children, and let them live next door to each other on the family plot of ground if they wish. Since over 95% of America is open space, and millions of acres still wilder-ness, we believe America can still afford freedom.....

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