



## Athens News And Views

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That Ol' Comp Plan: By the time this Flagpole hits the streets, the public comment period on the **ACC comprehensive land-use plan** will be **all but over**. It ends Wednesday, Jan. 30 at 5 p.m., which makes for a **two-day extension** on the window of time originally available. The "comp plan" update has been about a two-year process with lots of public input, and towards the end the schedule has, unfortunately, become a little crunched. That's part of the reason that some of the subcommittee chairs who were asked to serve in the process **have been miffed** lately that they lacked opportunities see their hard work through to the end of the editing process as it goes up the chain from Planning Commission to Mayor and Commission.

Mayor Davison **had a point** last week when she told City Dope that the process is always a political one at heart, one with nothing set in stone, where the Mayor and Commission always have final say on the document (not to mention that state bureaucrats will edit the thing, too); she said also that its "vision" is clear and not disputed - **"the question is how to get there."** Her main concern is that the "getting there" is doable fiscally, operationally and otherwise.

That said, it's fair to say **there have been hiccups** in wrapping up an intensive public-participation process. In particular, it would seem that the subcommittees - in addition, perhaps, to the public at large - deserve **a little more**

**time** with the thing.

At any rate, City Dope is **reminded of something**: Many, many months ago at a kick-off meeting for the land-use plan update, after all the PowerPointing was over, local citizen Ron Evans stood up to **ask a pertinent question** of the officials proposing an extensive public-participation process. The last time this happened, Evans said, citizens put in thousands of hours only to see their work taken into a back room and and fixed up by well-connected folks with land at play on the land-use map. Are all these endless meetings, Evans asked, **really worth** citizens' time?

Now, that kind of cronyism is **not** what's happening **this go-round**, but to some extent Evans was prophetic that night. If all this public participation is going to be asked for, then it needs to be **put to use**. Such deep citizen involvement is an admirable goal - and one that this government strives for often - but getting to that goal takes care and skilled management of an unwieldy amount of information. (And care and skill have, for the most part, been the rule of the day.)

The Mayor and Commission will next discuss the comp plan at their work session Feb. 12.

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