

In Our View: Put Alt. 4 Out to Pasture

Madore's land-use plan shown to be unworkable, so council must move on

By

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Clark County must move forward on a 20-year comprehensive growth plan — and that means leaving David Madore's proposal behind



Last month, the then three-member county council approved a plan including Alternative 4, which Madore had unilaterally devised at the urging of some rural property owners while eschewing input from county staff. The council also approved a \$45,000 contract with Mercer Island-based R W. Thorpe and Associates to review assumptions Madore had used in creating his plan. Email records show that Madore had initiated contact with the firm and then brought the idea before the council, where he typically could count on Tom Mielke to provide a majority for whatever whim Madore had embraced. Mielke obliged.

On Wednesday, Thorpe and Associates delivered a report to the council, which now has five members following a voter-approved expansion. The firm concluded that four of Madore's eight assumptions were invalid, two were partially valid, and two were valid. The board voted to reconsider its preferred plan — which could mean throwing out Alternative 4.

To the uninitiated, all of this might sound like the minutiae of political infighting. Yet it reflects a level of mismanagement and dysfunction that had reached disturbing levels on the council. It is one of many examples in which Madore pushed through poorly conceived policies with blind acceptance from Mielke. Since two new councilors were seated three weeks ago, the five-member board has overturned nearly a dozen policies that were passed late last year.

The cost of the Madore regime — in terms of money and credibility — was damaging to the county. In this case, officials wasted time considering Alternative 4 and expense in hiring an outside company to review Madore's assumptions. But perhaps the most disturbing revelation from Wednesday's planning meeting was the councilor's lack of contrition.

Madore argued that Thorpe and Associates did not "show their work" in disagreeing with his assumptions. This is a specious argument from a councilor who ignored input in creating his plan. It also reflects Madore's seemingly increasing inability and unwillingness to consider differing opinions — even when they come from experts in the field.

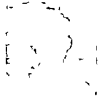
Finally, in disputing the report, Madore proclaimed, "I would request that you apply valid logic." This would be comical if it were not so hypocritical. Madore's governance has been devoid of logic and thoughtful consideration for some time, reflecting an arrogance that resulted in a series of actions the current council has spent considerable time untangling.

As we mentioned, it is time for the council to move forward on its growth management plan, and it will be interesting to see how desperately Madore clings to a proposal that has been rejected by the county Planning Commission and has been called into doubt by land-use experts, county staff, and three of the five councilors. Madore still can find an avenue to advocate for rural landowners, but that will require cooperation and compromise with his fellow councilors. Mielke, meanwhile, is almost certain to unthinkingly follow Madore's lead.

Alternative 1, which would make no changes to the current 20-year growth plan, provides a solid foundation from which to begin — but it would not adequately adjust for the fact that the population of the county is rapidly growing. Some changes are necessary, and the new council will need to act quickly with deadlines approaching. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that county leaders should finally relegate Alternative 4 to the dust bin.

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Chris Prothero · Columbia Basin College

Synopsis. Now that Madore can't ramrod fraudulent information down the county's throat, logic and reason will prevail Madore has a tizzy, Meilke still has no idea what's happening.


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Michele Wollert

Most disturbing to me (and many others) about David Madore's unilateral hiring of his self-selected expert, RW Thorpe and Associates. this was a non-competitive "emergency" contract It was not put out to bid One councilor selected this firm and, thankfully, it seems to have backfired on his expectations that they would rubber stamp his Alternative 4 assumptions.

Why did David Madore choose RW Thorpe over all other choices? Could it have been at the recommendation of the Freedom Foundation, for which they previously performed consulting work? I really do not know Whatever the answer to that question, it is reassuring to know that the experts who sign their names to RW Thorpe's work showed Mr Madore that their opinions are independent and not for sale.

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