



LandWatch
monterey county

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October 24, 2016

Dear Mayor Rubio,

There is a growing consensus that the City of Seaside's environmental review of the proposed Monterey Downs development has been grossly biased in favor of the developer. I am writing to urge you to address the substantial problems that many of us have observed over the past several months and restore the public's faith in your administration.

At its last public meeting on Monterey Downs, the Seaside City Council gave the project applicant approximately one hour for a marketing and sales presentation on the alleged benefits of the project to the community. Many of the benefits the applicant described were unsubstantiated, misleading, or flat-out wrong. LandWatch and other community organizations had understood that the goal of the meeting was to understand the project's impacts in the context of the California Environmental Quality Act.

LandWatch respectfully requests that at the November 10th public meeting on Monterey Downs the City set aside an hour for a thorough presentation of the project's negative environmental impacts and proposed mitigations as documented in the final environmental impact statement. Only through an equal and unbiased presentation will the City Council and the general public have an opportunity to understand fully the costs of the project, which to our mind have been broadly misunderstood and obfuscated. Indeed, to date the Seaside City Council, the Seaside Planning Commission, and the general public have not had the benefit of hearing about the very significant unmitigatable traffic, water, noise, and other impacts, especially those that we believe place the city at significant legal risk.

In addition, we ask that Willdan Financial Services present an updated economic analysis based on whatever the project happens to be at the time of the hearing. Because Monterey Downs has been a moving target—a facility for horse racing operation one day, one for horse training the next—it's hard to understand how the city can possibly rely on the original economic projections to justify "overriding considerations." For example, the Willdan study identifies 950 equestrian jobs associates with the Phase 6 operation of the racing track, without any supporting analysis. Now, despite elimination of racing, the applicant apparently claims there would be 700 equestrian jobs related to a training track, again without analysis. The updated economic study and the proposed statement of overriding considerations should be provided well in advance of the next meeting so the public has time to read and understand them. In addition to the City's presentation, we ask that a panel of knowledgeable citizens and outside experts be allowed to ask questions and seek clarification on the city's positions or interpretations.

During public meetings the City should commit to fair and equal treatment of the public, with the same opportunities and privileges as the applicant, unlike the last meeting when the applicant had their own table, microphone, and hour-long PowerPoint and sat near the council while the public was 40 or more feet back and had limited audiovisual support.

We request that all visual presentations be clearly legible throughout the entire room—something that hasn't consistently happened in past meetings. This may require dimming ceiling lights and using fonts and images in the presentation of sufficient size and contrast so the presentation is legible throughout the room.

Your willingness to address what LandWatch and others see as inequity and favoritism will certainly factor into how Seaside residents and the greater Monterey County community judge your legacy as a public servant, and will ensure that the objectives of the California Environmental Quality Act – full public participation before public decisions – are achieved

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael DeLapa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "DeLapa".

Michael DeLapa
Interim Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County

cc: Seaside City Council
Craig Malin, City Manager