

Council undermines Public Campaign Financing option



The June 9 County Council budget amendment will effectively discourage public finance of County election campaigns.

This week the County Council cut \$1.25M from the \$1.5 budget allocation for the **Public Campaign Financing Fund**. This virtually eliminates the possibility of the fund being used by candidates who might challenge Council members in the upcoming elections. This apparent conflict of interest did not seem to be of particular concern to the four Council members who voted for the budget amendment. Watch the discussion of the budget amendment at this link: <https://youtu.be/bqWNlSGlsQM?feature=shared&t=3469>.

One candidate is using the system to run for County Executive, pledging to utilize the Public Campaign Financing Fund to remove big-money interests from our politics; The balance in the fund would allow only a handful of candidates to use it to run for County Council -- who would be the opponents of current Councilmembers in the next election. It would also prevent a second candidate from using the fund to run for County Executive -- for which two of the seven council members are likely candidates. The result essentially bars anyone else from using the fund to run against them.

Two years ago the Council established a Public Campaign Financing Fund and a bipartisan commission to recommend funding levels specifically to avoid conflicts of interest during an election year. This election cycle will be the first time the fund would be used. The cut will have a chilling effect on the new program. It gives more power to the large donors that currently dominate our elections and will serve to lessen the impact of citizen voices in our political system.

The Council has undermined the very structure it created. This decision sends a chilling message to potential candidates. It discourages participation, weakens public trust, and sabotages a program the Council itself passed just two years ago. Taking back our democracy from the developers and other corporate interests who pull all the strings should be among the very first things we budget for, not the last. This vote makes clear whose side the Council is on. It is the side of large-scale donors and development interests.

SPEAK OUT!. Contact your council member, or better yet, all of them at
<https://www.growthaction.net/council>

Legislation corner

GAN also reviewed other legislative bills that are now before the Council

Bill 48-25 – Tiny Home Community Development. This bill seeks to allow Tiny Home developments in many residential districts. It includes a definition of Tiny Homes, and minimum requirements for these developments, including that the development must be on a parcel of at least 2 acres, that lot sizes must be at least 2,500 sq. ft., that houses have a minimum width and footprint size, and that the development must be on public water and sewer. It also makes them permitted in Mixed-Use districts.

The model appears to be that the home is owned by the resident, but the community owns and maintains the land. This allows the home to be very affordable, which makes Tiny Homes a potential partial solution to the growing housing affordability problem. However, Tiny Home developments can result in density as high as 17 units per acre and should be restricted to appropriate areas.

The sponsor of the bill is open to amendments from GAN and other organizations as well as the Administration. GAN, so far, has recommended the following amendments:

- Tiny home developments must be a special exception in RLD, R1, R2, and R5.
- Requirements for special exception should include, but not be limited to:
 - They must be in Critical Economic, Town Center, Critical Corridor, Transit Oriented or Village Center overlay areas of Plan 2040.
 - They can not remove forest as part of the development process.

GAN is working with the sponsor of the bill, and other organizations to craft further amendments to the bill to keep the option of Tiny Home Developments available, but in areas where the density already is planned for and the infrastructure exists to support them.

Next GAN Board meeting June 25, All members are welcome to observe and comment. See calendar for link.

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