

Meeting with Mayor Dyer

Closing Statement

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Mayor Dyer,

I know every person in this room is a strong supporter of the Constitution. Yet, the very first three words seem to be under the greatest attack today - those three words being "We the People". The United States government was founded on the principle that the will of the people rule the land, never intending that the people be subservient to the government.

A year and a half ago the Southeast Property Owners organized SEPO in order to stop Fresno City's plans to annex 9000 acres in Fresno of the best farm land in the nation and the world. Most of us have never been involved in the political scene. Because of the high level of corruption we are seeing on the Federal, State, and Local levels, we have come to the conclusion that every American needs to stand up and speak truth concerning the way our government agencies are functioning.

No longer is the beginning of the Constitution important - "We the People", but the Almighty dollar has replaced things of value. This annexation is about financial gain - nothing more. Only those who gain financially will win. Individuals and even Fresno as a whole will lose:

1. Lose Prime Ag land with the best sandy soil never again to be restored to agriculture
2. Water shortages
3. Increase in crime, drugs and homelessness with the influx of 1/4 million people.
4. Devalued property with the emphasis on affordable housing
5. Property owners forced to give up their rural way of life..

And my list could go on.

The way the Planning & Development Department is handling this, gives us reason to believe they have their own agenda and it does not include listening to the concerns of the people. I would like to give you a few examples to show why we have come to this conclusion.

1. The EIR was released in mid-July - a strategic time for the City when many people are on vacation and would have less opportunity to comment in the 45 day period.
2. The flyers giving notice concerning the Drop In Meetings were received on a Friday for a Monday's meeting - not even one business day's notice.
3. The first Drop In meeting was held in a small unairconditioned classroom at 6:00 p.m. on a 105 degree day at the Hmong Church. The overcrowded room and the intense heat caused many to go home early as the environment was not conducive to a fair interaction.
4. Whenever I have approached residents, 95% of the people have no idea of what is going on. If the City thinks this is such a good plan, why have they not been more open about this? Why has the information been mainly brought to the attention of residents through our banners, our mass mailing, our social media, and our intense word of mouth efforts?
5. The answers at the Drop In Meetings were not consistent. Our conclusion is that the Planning Staff are not all on the same page or they are deliberately hiding the truth.
6. The answers have been evasive. For example, at a Drop In meeting one of our members could NOT get a reply concerning her question on mandatory hooking up to the City water and sewer system. I then went to the same gentleman, asking the question differently. I asked "Is it true that we would be paying around \$50,000 for water hook up and another \$50,000 for sewer hookup?" His answer was

that I was in the general vicinity of the dollar amount. This presented the next problem - What if we don't have that kind of money? We were assured that we would be able to get a loan and if we sold the property, a lien would be placed on the property. We don't understand why "We the People" are being forced to pay for the developer or city's expenses when we are already losing property value as well as our homes. If this is the right thing to do, why won't the City openly talk about their plans to burden us with this huge expense? (This mandatory hookup is in writing in the Impact Analysis - General Plan Objective PU-5.)

7. The City knows there is not enough water as there is no plan in writing on how the water situation will be implemented. Yet, who gets stuck with the problem after a home is purchased and there isn't adequate water supply? Will the City reimburse property owners for homes that have a shortage of water access - especially since they haven't addressed a problem that is guaranteed to happen? Will homeowners be punished for the City's negligence?
8. Also, who gets stuck with extra bond taxes when schools have to be built and funded? - 17 in Sanger alone. Isn't it the same property owners being hurt in every scenario?

I could add more issues concerning the unethical way this annexation is being handled, but I think these help you to see why we have drawn the conclusion that we are not being listened to.

"We the People" have other concerns also:

This is our retirement. We have worked hard to own property

1. We have been told that we don't have to worry as this will be implemented far down the road. This is not valid argument as currently our property has already been devalued.
2. In our case the map shows our personal property will remain undeveloped. However, farmers will be forced out
 1. Cannot water a farm on a meter
 2. Cannot spray with housing surrounding us.

This has been a rural way of life - a life that residents deliberately chose.

1. Farmers are hard working people - the very type of people you want in a community. We should be encouraging FFA & 4H organizations. I would love to have our own grandchildren a 12, 10, and 8 year old who also live in the area, tell you about their goats, sheep, crafts, their Best of Shows and their Supreme Championship this year with their chickens. This is the life style we should be preserving.
2. We are replacing a rural way of life with 15 minute cities which are a catalyst for crime.

Mayor Dyer - you have an impressive record against crime. In fact, I am sure your election as a mayor is a result of your strong stance against crime. I would hope you would take as strong a stance against crime in this case also. The strongest stance you could take against crime would be to encourage the removal of the 9000 acres from the sphere of influence.

We realize that Fresno is growing. We want to emphasize that we are **not opposed to growth** but we are opposed to the way the City is handling this. If there were no options available, this would be different. But there are other options. Fresno City has documented that they wanted to protect farm land as well as infill areas in central Fresno. This is being overlooked as developers prefer land that is clear - as in the agriculture area. Neither Central nor SE Fresno will benefit from this land takeover. Only the developers will benefit because of the open agriculture land.

We may have come to the wrong conclusions but we are still perplexed in several areas.

1. Why does Fresno City want to go forward without counting the cost? Is this another High Speed Rail fiasco that Fresno residents will pay an enormous price for in the long run? The EIR over and over states the cost would be figured after the plan was in effect.
2. Why is there such a hurry to implement this plan? Why won't details be worked out prior to approval? So many facets of the EIR state that details will be given when the Plan is adopted. This is like the situation when Nancy Pelosi was pushing Obama Care and said we need to pass this bill in order to find out what is in it. Is this really what each of you believes in? - the way we should operate? Did you condemn Nancy Pelosi then, but it is ok now?
3. Are we considering the long term effects? Are we on the road to becoming another Los Angeles? Is this really the goal we want with Fresno?

These questions have caused us to come to more conclusions:.

1. We think you must be under extreme pressure from the state to go forward with this or
2. there must be tremendous financial gain involved in this project. Otherwise, all of this makes no sense as to how you are handling this.

We know you are just doing your job but in the process we are concerned that we are becoming a nation that the "end justifies the means."

So, why are we here?

1. We want Fresno Planning & Development Department and Fresno City to abide by the due process of law and follow the same rules that "We the People" are required to live by.
2. We don't want the city to cut corners.
3. We are asking that Fresno City listen to property owners and residents in the area and preserve land, protect private property rights and farms.
4. We are asking that you look at the situation as if you were the property owner. How would you like to be treated?

One beautiful aspect of the American government was that it was founded on the principle that we can take ideas and discuss and debate them until a conclusion is drawn. We are asking that you listen to "We the People". If the people really want this, we can **accept this** and move on. We are asking you, Mayor Dyer and Fresno City to **do what is right** and consider "We the People" over the Almighty dollar.

We also as a group want to thank you very much for allowing us to meet with you. It has meant a great deal to us to have this opportunity.