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Consultants:

Doublespeak spoken here!

By Anne C. McAfee

Joe Riddell, an attorney who holds a BA degree in physics and a master's in mathematics, testified at the January 31 public hearing on the proposed Barton Creek ordinance. As a concerned citizen, he had carefully analyzed the scientific and engineering data submitted to the City Council in two reports prepared by consultants Espey, Huston & Associates.

The exchange between Councilmember Betty Himmelblau and one of the consultants following Riddell's testimony may shed some light on the value of the consultants' advice.

Riddell's testimony is given here in a much abbreviated form:

Riddell: The Reports are full of tenuous assumptions which are frequently stated in the text. But the conclusions are stated as if the *assumptions* are *known* facts. The Report claims to know what we really can only estimate or guess about. The Reports are somewhat shoddy and hurried. They have mistakes and omissions. Even if you accept some of their data, their data do not justify some of their conclusions.

Chapter 5 of the Phase II Report omits all five of the tables that the text of the Report refers to, even though the text of the chapter keeps referring to them.

The pollution from sewage lines was *underestimated* by a factor of 1,000. I brought this to the attention of Espey, Huston about three weeks ago, and they checked their numbers and confirmed that they were wrong. But I have yet to receive their other corrections. I am real disappointed that it will be next week before they have corrected the table that is obviously off.

One particular pollutant, total nitrogen, they cranked through a formula, and the formula is wrong. . . . They looked at pollution on an average basis. And when they computed it, they just mixed in all the pollution and stated that the Springs flowed out at 50 cubic feet per second, uniformly. However, for example, the flow of the Springs this past year varied from 25 cubic feet per second to

more than 100 cubic feet per second. The model (used by the consultants) is real simplistic, and it doesn't take into account the fluctuations in *Spring flow* and the fluctuations in *pollutant load* after a given storm. The Report just looks at it on a year-long basis. It would be nice to know, on a particular day when we are swimming, that the water is not polluted.

Now you take their data on an annual basis under their five (intensities of) development scenarios. The increased pollution of fecal coliform (animal and human waste) in stormwater concentrations would increase by 210% to 459%. For a one-month storm, the increase in fecal coliform would increase by 82% to 405%.

Why is that relevant? It is relevant because right now, under certain conditions, the swimming in the creek may be a little risky because of fecal coliform pollution. And if we get urban runoff, swimming in the creek is going to become risky *more frequently* and for *longer periods of time* from a health standpoint.

Himmelblau: Can I ask Joe some questions? . . . I wasn't aware until you mentioned it that there are some mistakes in the data. And this makes me feel very shaky about what I spent a lot of time reading. . . . I would like to say "thank you."

I wish I had brought my Report. I have a lot of questions written in the margin, and I would like to thank you for your work. . . . Mayor, could I ask the people from Espey, Huston to comment on the

errors in the data, please?

Joe Beal (Espey, Huston representative): Mrs. Himmelblau, we realize that there are errata within the Report. We have prepared a set of errata that we are reviewing internally right now that we do intend to submit to everyone who has copies of the Report.

It turns out that the "errata" prepared by Espey, Huston had to be submitted in a surprisingly large volume.

Errata. That's Latin for "somebody goofed!"

Task Force . . .

(continued)

tions can be avoided by utilizing "control strategies." These control strategies become giant loopholes which raise major questions about the potential effectiveness of the ordinance. If a developer wanted to develop at a typical four units per acre (8 times the base density proposed) he would have to utilize enough control strategies to hold the annual pollutant load down to the amount expected with 2-acre lots. Control strategies include detention ponds, street sweeping and porous pavement, for example.

Another weakness of the proposed ordinance is that it would apply only to new subdivisions. Certain types of development (shopping centers, condominiums) do not require any subdividing, so they would not have to comply with the ordinance. The ordinance also fails to provide any protection to most of the tributaries which flow into Barton Creek.

ALERT BULLETIN

Tuesday, Feb. 19

8 p.m. — *Discussion of City Bond Election*. Opposing viewpoints aired on Cable Channel 10

Thursday, Feb. 21

6 p.m. — *Public Hearing on Barton Creek Ordinance*. City Council Chamber, 301 West 2nd

Saturday, Feb. 23

7 a.m.-7 p.m. — *City Bond Election*

Wednesday, Feb. 27

7 p.m. — *Public Hearing on Metropolitan Roadway Plan*. City Council Chamber, 301 West 2nd

Thursday, March 6

* — *Council Action on Barton Creek Ordinance*. City Council Chamber, 301 West 2nd