

Many say that the Comprehensive Watersheds Ordinance (CWO) is an extremely complicated, highly technical issue. But, really it's quite simple. The more development there is the more pollution there will be. And when too much development occurs in an extremely sensitive area, then that area will be destroyed.

It's also very simple to see what's going on at the city council. When councilmembers take their first vote on the CWO this Thursday they will probably become the first council to move backwards on water quality regulation. (The final vote is scheduled for October 17.) It's simple. There is a very tough, "no degradation," interim ordinance in place now. Max Nofziger has filed that interim ordinance with two strengthening amendments for approval. That plan, however, has little chance. At press time the council was hashing out a compromise between two plans, that of the Mayor's Task Force and that of the Planning Commission. Both plans are weaker than the interim ordinance, and perhaps weaker than the 1986 compromise CWO.

It's also fairly easy and simple to figure out that the council, like all councils in recent memory, puts the interest of developers and multi-national corporations ahead of the interests of the average citizen, and even the best interests of the future of the city.

The Public Speaks - For Three Days

Meanwhile, last week's public hearings themselves featured an array of talent, creativity and eloquence. Common themes were: reminding the council that they ran on environmental platforms; personal testimonies to how Barton Springs water quality has deteriorated in recent years; threats of recall; personal appeals to councilmembers that they look inside themselves and do the right thing; and appeals that councilmembers consider their place in history. Pro-CWO speakers vastly outnumbered the other side.

It would be impossible in these pages to do justice to the citizens who spoke, but we will quote from two on each side. Former Mayor Frank Cooksey's remarks are worth noting because he was there when the 1986 CWO was passed. Developers and Chamber representatives have been whining about what a great ordinance that is, and saying it hasn't been given a chance to work.

Cooksey said the people promoting the 1986 CWO now are "the very same people," who at that time were crying, "Oh my word, we'll have no jobs in Austin... you're no-growthers... you will destroy Austin's economy." Cooksey said that crew must have had a "road to Damascus experience," because their love for the 1986 CWO, "could not be related in the least to economic self interest."

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Simple Truths - But Days of Debate

who got the longest ovation, Jennifer Longenecker. Speaking before a packed house on Thursday night, 18-year-old Longenecker was admittedly nervous and choked back tears throughout her speech. Nonetheless her message built steadily to a powerful conclusion, "There's a natural spring in that pool that presses fresh water up. If you can hold your breath that long, you can get down there and you can feel it. That water is a beating heart and it beats the heart of Austin. If you allow development to go through it stops beating... If you let Barton Springs die, Austin dies, and development dies with that." Longenecker turned from the podium with tears falling from her face and received a long standing ovation.

The developers also had their stars. This reporter's personal favorites were Barton Creek PUD project manager Barry Allison, who urged the council not to give in to those who have "threatened and cajoled" them for months. Another star was custom homebuilder John Fenton.

Perryman \$10,000 to come into town and speak on his contention that a tough CWO

he was not an "environmental scientist" or "environmental engineer."

Then why was Perryman here? To testify on the economic impact, he replied. Then could he name one city in which environmental protection had a negative impact on the economy? Well, no he couldn't, but then he's not "an environmental scientist."

A few hours after his press conference, Perryman gave a similar performance during the Citizens' Communication segment of the meeting. After his speech his Chamber guardians hustled him out of the building, refusing to

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would have a dire effect on Austin's economy. Perryman, however, ran into some nasty research about his past and some rough questioning at a press conference.

The SOS (Save Our Springs) coalition charged that Perryman's past clients have included big tobacco, insurance and utility companies. SOS trotted out an old quote from when Perryman testified for South Texas Nuclear Project partner Central Power & Light of Corpus Christi. He said the Nuke "would not have a severe rate impact."

Perryman had trouble not only with the past, but with the present. In a press conference at Franklin Plaza, home of Franklin

allow him to answer more questions.

An additional interesting aspect of the Perryman press conference was the presence of New York political consultant Ritchie Fife. Since 1988, Fife has been a key force in several important local campaigns. In 1988 he was a consultant on the campaign of successful mayoral candidate Lee Cooke. Fife then played an important role in winning approval of the convention center. He also showed up in the Bruce Todd camp on election night of this year, but denied involvement in Todd's campaign. Fife also denied any involvement in the CWO issue. "I'm not employed by anybody in town. I wanted to see this council meeting," he explained.

COUNCIL WATCH

BY DARYL SLUSHER

Fenton said he considered himself an environmentalist because he was "bothered" as a child when his father threw cigarette butts out the window of the car, and because he is now bothered by litter that shows up on the lawn of his office. But, said Fenton, as a homebuilder he has problems with a tough ordinance. Fenton called for consensus and pleaded, "Can't we find a happy medium?"

"No," replied several people in the audience.

"You're idiots," retorted Fenton.

Visitors from Another Planet

Another developer star was Ray Perryman, the heralded economic genius from Waco. The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Board of Realtors and other local boosters paid

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Jim Bob's Louisiana Money Trail

While we're looking at intrigue and big shots, let's check in on our old buddy Jim Bob Moffett, partner in the Barton Creek PUD,

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City Hall Roulette

Some call the recent series of public hearings on the Comprehensive Watersheds Ordinance (CWO) an amazing exercise in democracy. Others see the events more as a maze of government and corporate manipulation, designed to stem the strength of citizen passion.

A few things are certain. First of all, only 360 of those who signed up to address the council actually ended up speaking. The no-shows are attributable to many reasons including: disgust with the process; reluctance to spend the weekend hours at city council; confusion over when one's turn would come; and a belief that

testimony would do no good.

The hearings stretched over more than two weeks, with the dates originally set for September 19 and October 3. Rules were set up that limited the hearings to 100 speakers on September 19, and another 100 on October 3. The rest were to appear during three special meetings: on Friday October 4 from 4:00pm until 10:00pm, on Saturday morning from 9:30am until 3:30pm and in a final round on Sunday from noon until six.

Friday night, Saturday morning and early Sunday afternoon are not hours that most Austinites - or people anywhere for that matter - consider a time for engaging in

politics. These are hours for relaxation, socializing and spending time with family. The free time during these hours is considered of almost religious significance to many Austinites.

The Friday night schedule led to many who had signed up not showing up. Also cutting down on the turnout was the 4:00 starting time. Some speakers had their number called while they were still finishing things up at work.

The high amount of no-shows led to the numbers being called faster. Consequently, many people who had been led to believe that they wouldn't speak until Saturday or Sunday were called on Friday. In fact, by the end of the evening Todd had called on all 630 speakers. He let those who showed up after their number was called speak, then announced that he would go through the whole list (of those who didn't speak on the first two

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fertilizer producer and mover of Indonesian mountains. Many have suspected that Moffett is behind much of the manipulation going on with the CWO. But so far the closest thing to proof has been the lunch (or breakfast) that he and his City Hall lobbyist David Armbrust shared with Councilmember Ronney Reynolds, a day or two before Reynolds called for a delay of the CWO in August.

Now Moffett's trail has been picked up again, as a big contributor to Armbrust's political action committees (PACs). Armbrust's PACs have long been a player in municipal elections, but municipal laws don't call for the PACs to reveal their contributors. The PACs, however, contributed to candidates in statewide races and thus had to report, to the Secretary of State, who they contributed to as well as who contributed money to them.

Since April 1990, right before his PUD came up at the city council, Moffett has contributed \$28,000 to Armbrust's PACs - Texas Committee for Responsible Government and Texas Horizons. The rate of contributions picked up considerably after Moffett's trouncing at the June 7 hearing. There are also other contributors from Louisiana, some of them with Moffett's corporate address. The Louisiana contributors are almost certainly connected to Moffett. That is, unless they have some other reason for being interested in Austin city government. In all, the two Armbrust PACs

have received almost \$40,000 in Louisiana money since April of last year, more than half the total contributed to both of the PACs.

The Secretary of State form also asks for the names of people who will decide how the PAC spends its money. The Texas Committee for Responsible Government listed Armbrust, PUD partner Robert Dedman, Freeport executive Jim Miller and B.M. Rankin of Dallas.

Texas contributors to Armbrust PACs include University of Texas president/Freeport board member Bill Cunningham; former UT coach/PUD partner Darrell Royal; PUD project manager Barry Allison; and professional golfer/PUD partner Ben Crenshaw. Cunningham contributed \$500 on April 3, 1990; Royal \$500 two days later and Crenshaw \$100 on April 26. Note that all those contributions were before the June 7 hearing, and before the rebellion. Allison gave \$1,000 in November 1990, months after the PUD hearing.

The PACs have given money to the mayor and all current councilmembers except Bob Larson. Also receiving \$1,000 when he ran for the legislature in 1990 was Planning Commission member Scott Roberts, a member of the pro-developer voting bloc. State candidates receiving support included successful gubernatorial candidate Ann Richards and Republican Rick Perry, who defeated populist Jim Hightower to become Agriculture Commissioner.

This information came very near press time,

so I will follow up next week with more information on contributions from Armbrust PACs and others.

The Battle Ends Soon, The War Goes On.

So what happens now? How bad is it? Does Austin have a chance in hell?

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At press time a dizzying series of negotiations were taking place, with the parameters being the Planning Commission recommendation and the Mayor's Task Force plan both weaker than the interim ordinance. There's no telling what might emerge from these negotiations. Some environmentalists are likely to break off and go for a compromise while others stick to support for the interim ordinance.

It's difficult to advise citizens on how to judge what comes out of the negotiations, but

the best idea seems to be to watch what the Save Our Springs coalition does. That group has been the most steadfast during the pressure packed CWO process.

This battle will soon be over, but not the war. There will be time for deeper analysis of the byzantine maneuvering, disinformation

tactics, and possibly deliberate confusing scheduling of public hearings. Despite all the confusion the situation is still quite simple: We began with a historically strong "interim" ordinance, and, barring a miracle, will be left compromising between two plans, both weaker than what we had. It's the same old thing that council after council has delivered. And, it's hard to escape the suspicion that this was all orchestrated in a corporate board room somewhere. ■