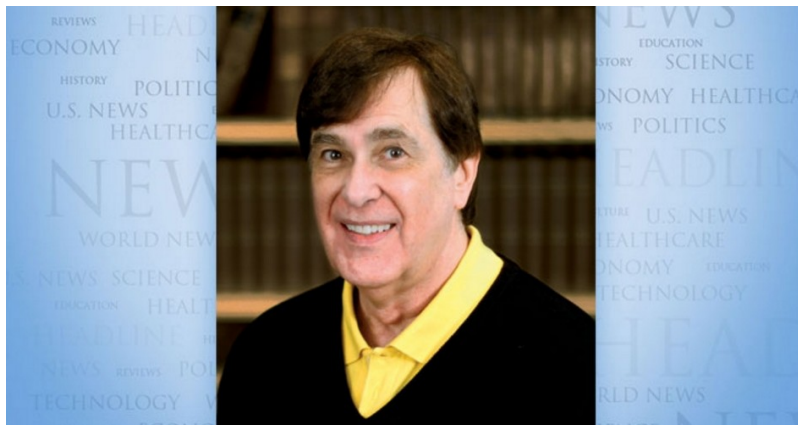




The American Planning Association and Its “Faulty” Handbook

With great fanfare, the American Planning Association (APA) reported results of a recent survey the group conducted, (*Planning America: Perceptions and Priorities*) showing that the anti-Agenda 21 “crowd is slim.” Said the report, only 6% of those surveyed expressed opposition to Agenda 21, while 9% expressed support for Agenda 21 and 85%, “the vast majority of respondents, don’t know about Agenda 21.”



Typically, APA is using the survey to formulate the image that opponents to Agenda 21/ Sustainable Development are just a lunatic fringe with no standing and of no consequence in the “real” world. They continue to portray Agenda 21 as simply a 20 year old idea, and just a suggestion that planners and local governments might consider.

However, a closer look at the full survey, plus some additional APA reports reveal some interesting, and in some cases, astounding facts.

First the survey:

It was designed to show support for *Planning*. This has become an obsession with the “planning community” because Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development have become the center of protests by property owners and those who feel government has grown too big and powerful. So the APA has launched a series of efforts to fight back. These include conducting a “boot camp” to train their legions of planners across the nation on how to deal with anti-Agenda 21 protestors.

According to the APA, the findings of the Survey reveal that: Only one-third believe their communities are doing enough to address economic situations; Very few Americans believe that market forces alone (the free market) improve the economy or encourage job growth; 84 % feel that their community is getting worse or staying the same; Community planning is seen as needed by a wide majority of all demographics; and of course, that 85% of Americans just don’t know enough to hold an opinion about Agenda 21.

Those are pretty astounding findings. Looks like these “honest” planners have their fingers on the pulse of the nation. And as the APA constantly reminds us in their materials, “there is no hidden agenda,”(as in Agenda 21).

Astounding perhaps, until you look at the actual questions asked in the survey. For example, Finding #4: Community planning is seen as needed by a wide majority of all demographics (79% agree; 9% disagree; and 12% don’t know). Wow!

But here is the actual question that was asked: “Generally, do you agree or disagree that your community could benefit from a community plan as defined above?” The definition provided in order to answer the question was this: “Community planning is a process that seeks to engage all members of a community to create more prosperous, convenient, equitable, healthy and attractive places for present



and future generations.”

Asking the question in that manner is akin to holding up a picture of Marilyn Monroe along with one of Rosy O'Donnell and asking which one would they want to date. Give me the pretty one please - says 79%. In fact, in some actual planning meetings they do just that - hold up a picture of downtown depicting decaying, dreary buildings verses one of a shining, beautiful utopia, and they literally say, “which one do you want?” If the answer is (of course) the pretty one, then, YES, the community supports planning! Talk about a “dumbed down” process.

Moreover, as the American Planning Association adamantly denies any connection to the United Nations' policy of Agenda 21 and its planning programs, how strange it is then, that the APA definition of planning is almost identical to the definition used by the UN to define Sustainable Development. Compare: “Development that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The UN further defines Agenda 21: “Effective execution of Agenda 21 will require a profound reorientation of all human society, unlike anything the world has ever experienced.” Such a forced policy would certainly “engage all members of a community” whether they want to be or not. The UN calls it a “redeployment of human resources.” Other than semantics, there is no difference in the APA's and the UN's definitions of planning.” The planners' definition uses an interesting term, “equitable.” The UN also uses such a term in describing Agenda 21 - “Social Equity.” And that is translated into another term: “Social Justice.” It means “redistribution of wealth.” Is that what the “local” planners have in mind for their community development?

It's obvious that the APA is playing word games with its surveys and definitions of planning. No wonder such an overwhelming majority answer in the affirmative to such questions.

And, yes, maybe a lot of Americans don't know what Agenda 21 really is. However, if the APA asked real questions that gave a solid clue as to the planning they actually have in mind, I'm quite sure they would get a much different response - whether the person answering had ever heard of Agenda 21 or not. For example, here are some sample questions that could help the APA take the real pulse of the community - if they wanted to be honest:

- How do the citizens feel about planning policy that dictates the size of their yard and forces high density developments where one practically sits on top of their neighbors? Do they still support such “Planning?”
- How do the citizens feel about planning that enforces the creation of public transportation with a limited number of riders - yet could cost taxpayers so much money that it would be literally cheaper to buy each potential rider a brand new Rolls Royce, even when the chauffeur is thrown in for good measure? Do they still support such “Planning?”
- How do they feel about planning that enforces limits on energy use and forces up energy costs? What if that included forcing residents to replace their appliances with more energy efficient ones to meet “Planning Standards?” Do they still support such “Planning?”
- How do the citizens feel about Planning that forces cars to “share the road” with bicycles and foot traffic, even as Planners narrow the streets, deliberately making it harder to drive? Do they still support such “Planning?”
- How do the citizens feel about Planning that forces tax payers to pay for plug-in stations for electric cars that hardly anyone wants or uses, for the specific purpose of forcing people to buy them? Do they still support such “Planning?”



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- How do the citizens feel about Planning that creates non-elected boards, councils and regional governments to enforce their policies, which actually diminish the power of the officials they elected, severely reducing citizen input into policy? Do they still support such “Planning?”

Ask the questions in this manner instead of trying to whitewash them into sounding like innocent, non-intrusive local ideas for community development. Ask the questions so that they reflect the consequences of the plans, and then see if the 85% now are so eager to ignore the effects of Agenda 21.

The reality is that Americans across the nation are now openly protesting such policies as they are being enforced in communities everywhere. They are directly tied to the stated goals of Sustainable Development, the official policy of Agenda 21. And that is why a twenty year old “suggestion” has become the focal point of attacks on “local” planning.

Planners are shocked that people are opposed to such attacks on their private property and their pocketbooks, and they are doing everything possible to label such Americans as “fringe conspiracy theorists.” The survey is part of that effort.

In fact, the APA survey follows a barrage of news articles, obviously contrived by the public relations firm hired by APA, to again, paint its image as just a group of honest planners trying to do their jobs while being unjustly attacked by fringe radicals. Such convenient reports have suddenly appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wisconsin Watch*, *Mother Jones* and the Southern Poverty Law Center, to name a few. It’s interesting to note that most of these stories name me as the perpetrator.

As mentioned, the APA has organized a boot camp to train their planners how to combat us nasty protestors. Through its new training, the APA downplays revealing details of the plan, instead, suggesting ways to make their presentations merely “conversations with the community,” using empathy, and terms that are non-technical.” Obviously APA believes the protestors are just simpleminded and unable to see their wisdom. One shouldn’t be so upset over losing control of their property, their business or their farm. There’s a higher good at stake here, after all.

And so, to accomplish that task of dumbed- down “planning,” (and in fact, hiding its real purpose) the APA is going to great lengths to change the words. For example, the APA has issued to its members a “Glossary for the Public” that suggests what words should no longer be used in public meetings when discussing planning, because they make the opposition see “red.” So the planners should not use words like collaboration and consensus, or public visioning, or even “Smart Growth.”

The Glossary provides specific language and tactics to be used to defuse protests. “Stay on message,” it says. “The following phrases may be useful to help you frame your message in a way that is positive and inclusive, when transitioning to a local example, or to stay on message during public meetings where critics may attempt to distract from the agenda or topic at hand.” And here is the language they suggest: “Plans and planning are time-tested ways for communities and neighborhoods to create more options and choices for their residents...” In other words, we’ve always had planning, so what’s the problem?”

Such “public” meetings that the APA is so worried about being disrupted are not public at all. They are “consensus” meetings, run by professional facilitators, trained in psychology to use stealth to direct the audience into a pre-determined direction for a pre- determined outcome. Anyone asking questions outside the well-controlled box is labeled a protestor. And we are protesting that! It is not how things are to be done in a free society, especially when your own property is at stake.



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Yes, there has been planning throughout the history of America. Many communities have come up with efficient ways to deal with water use and waste disposal, and to assure that factories weren't built next door to private homes, and so forth. And no one is protesting that!

Our fight is with "planning" that is specifically designed to curtail energy use, drive up costs, control private property and development and building - literally dictating a change in our lives and even changing the very structure of our system of government.

One of the tools the APA uses to enforce planning is through the International Code Council (ICC), an international set of standards based on a one size fits all set of regulations. The ICC also develops the International Energy Conservation Code, a model for energy efficiency code. And it develops a standard for Accessible And Usable Building Facilities. Each of these codes is aimed at cutting back energy use, controlling private property use, and, in short, enforcing sustainable development. Where was the concept of sustainable development first introduced and perfected as an agenda for development? Oh yes, in Agenda 21. There is no room for discussion, reason or consideration for exceptional local situations. The APA brings these codes and others into the community planning as a pre-packaged deal inflicting the community with (yes) foreign regulations. And yes, dedicated Americans protest that this is not local government or planning, but the enforcement of an international (UN) agenda.

We further find similar pre-packaged regulations coming from federal agencies, including the EPA (which openly admits that some of its grant programs are designed to impose Agenda 21) the Forest Service (which admits that its policies on forest conservation are coming from the UN's Brundtland Commission on Global Governance), as well as polices from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Transportation, to name a few.

And so it goes. Government in the U.S., at all levels, is happily moving forward with such plans, using the ground troops supplied by the American Planning Association in every community. It's happening fast, and is all-pervasive. And as people are being run over by such plans, some are trying to slow down the runaway freight train by standing in the tracks and yelling stop! They of course are the ones labeled as fringe nuts.

However, as the APA does everything it can to so label our movement, a shocking new report provides new evidence that the sustainable polices advocated by APA in the cities - the policy known as Smart Growth - is wrong headed and really pretty dumb. And where does such a report appear? Here's the real shocker. It was published in the Journal of the American Planning Association in an article entitled "Does Urban Form Really Matter." It is an analysis of Smart Growth polices in the United Kingdom which shows that the "compact city" controls don't work.

Says the report, "The current planning policy strategies for land use and transportation have virtually no impact on the major long-term increases in resource and energy consumption. They will generally tend to increase costs and reduce costs and reduce economic competitiveness." Continues the report, "Claims of compaction will make cities more sustainable have been debated for some time, but they lack conclusive supporting evidence as to the environmental and, particularly, economic and social effects."

There you have it. Right out of the pages of the APA's own Journal, the very policies that they are forcing on communities across the nation, are wrong. Forcing mass migration into cities where people are to live in high density buildings, or homes on lots so close together that the dog can't squeeze between houses, have no effect on the environment. But as I have stated in articles and speeches across the nation, such "planning" creates an artificial shortage of land, causing housing costs to go up. It



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doesn't cut down on energy use or protect the environment. It's a useless intrusion in the lives of honest Americans.

And that is exactly why we are protesting Agenda 21. It is wrong. The premise is wrong. The facts as presented by the APA and other planners, are wrong. It is wrong for our nation. Wrong for property owners. Wrong for future generations.

In the 1970s, author Richard Bach, who wrote the classic book, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, also wrote a second book entitled, *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*. In the book, a Messiah, as he was forced to come up with answers to the problems of life, consulted the "Messiah's Handbook." All he had to do was open the book and it would miraculously turn open to the very page containing the answer he sought. He stumbled through his adventures, following the handbook. But finally, in the end, as he consulted it a final time, the page read simply, "Everything in this book may be wrong."

There is only one right approach for a community to come together to discuss and solve common problem: open discussion, honest debates and votes, and above all, a full concentration on the protection of private property rights as the ultimate decider. The American Planning Association needs a new handbook!

Tom DeWeese is one of the nation's leading advocates of individual liberty, free enterprise, private property rights, personal privacy, back-to-basics education and American sovereignty and independence. Go to americanpolicy.org for more information"



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