

East Meadow Update (3/24/19)

Friends of the Meadow:

Last week the UC Regents gave conditional approval to Student Housing West (SHW), including its East Meadow component. They added a requirement for more detailed cost figures, a condition which complicates final approval, and probably delays it for about a month. This addition was a compromise that emerged from unexpectedly hard questioning in the important Finance and Capital Strategies Committee meeting prior to the full Board's vote.

The Committee discussions can be accessed on the Regents website.

<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/meetings/videos/mar2019/mar2019.html#fin>
(go to: Past Meetings/March 13/Video/Capital Strategies Committee hearing. The SHW discussion begins at 2hr 50 min.)

The Committee Chair, Regent Makarechian, posed very pointed, skeptical questions to the Chancellor and UCSC team, questions that rather closely reflected the detailed critical letters sent by Alumni and Trustees, by former Campus Architect Frank Zwart, and by the Student Union Assembly (all posted on the EMAC website (eastmeadowaction.org)). Makarechian, an experienced real estate developer, expressed open incredulity in the face of a campus claim that the least expensive alternative would cost an additional 90 million dollars. He asked for a "true, deep study of the alternative sites" and for detailed cost estimates that should have been provided to him and were not. This information must now be sent to a subcommittee of three Regents (Makarechian, Park, and Cohen) who will review them and if satisfied, give final confirmation to the approval voted by the Board of Regents on 3/14.

Formal requests to the UCSC Administration and to the Regents for public disclosure of these cost estimates, with time to review them, have not yet been answered. Of course, without access to the numbers, it is impossible to independently evaluate the University's principal argument that its project is the only way forward. We are left, as before, with "trust us."

We don't expect the subcommittee's review to alter the approval decision. At the meeting, several Regents acknowledged that the East Meadow development had received an extraordinary amount of sustained, well argued, opposition from a wide range of important constituents in the UCSC community. They saw this as a cause for serious concern. But they indicated they would nonetheless approve SHW. The Board's general reluctance to second-guess campus administrations appears to have prevailed.

Given the near-certainty of final approval by the Regents, EMAC has been pursuing a litigation strategy. Its aim is to keep the bulldozers out of the meadow this summer and to compel serious attention to alternatives. We remain convinced that a more decentralized approach can deliver needed student beds by SHW's (very optimistic) completion date of 2023, and possibly earlier. The iconic gateway to the campus need not be ruined; Family Student Housing/Daycare

can be accommodated. What's needed is imagination and flexibility, not a rigid determination to push through a flawed project.

Administrative rigidity and lack of consultation are well documented in Frank Zwart's letter to the Regents (just added to our website) which details how SHW has departed from the campus's standard project development process and the design guidelines required in its *Physical Design Framework*. This document was accepted by The Regents in March 2010. For example: the campus Design Advisory Board finally reviewed the East Meadow site almost four months after the change had been finalized. In the standard design process, they should have been consulted as part of the initial decision. Zwart's letter contains other troubling details of the project's disregard for long-established planning procedures. The Design Advisory Board's unanimous opposition to the East Meadow site has, of course, been simply brushed aside.

We need to send a clear message that this inflexible, top-down planning style is unacceptable. UCSC is a community not a corporation. As we--students, faculty, staff, administration, and the City of Santa Cruz—negotiate our future through a new Long-Range Development Plan, this message is more and more urgent.

Please support our legal costs by using one of the options on the EMAC website. And to those who have already contributed, many thanks!

East Meadow Action Committee
Eastmeadowaction.org