



About Board Discussion Sessions – Hot Springs Village

Description

[TOM BLAKEMAN](#), March 6, 2022

There's been some commentary recently about the Board Discussion Sessions. ? Apparently, one was held and only two property owners showed up. So, one Board Member posed the idea of "why bother to have them at all" (paraphrasing here). It could all be done by email [in secret].

These "discussion sessions" had originally come about to replace the once held "working sessions" that the board used to hold six or eight-plus years ago. Those "working sessions" had been canceled by a secretive board and leadership in power at the time which controlled things here for several years. The sessions were brought back only a few years ago as "discussion sessions" because our population did want more transparency in the aftermath of the Comprehensive Master Plan, aka the CMP, and a few other major and costly debacles.

That secretive, some would say "rogue" board had also canceled the once traditional property owner comment opportunity, prior to voting on matters, at every board meeting. Too much pushback at "their meeting" it seemed. They also started rigidly enforcing the "3-minute" rule for public comments at the end of board meetings. Not to mention that any such communication at these board meetings was strictly a one-way street. Property owners asked or commented, but generally got no answers- just a stonewall.

The new "discussion sessions" were intended to foster give and take communication between property owners and the board in an open forum. When these new sessions were begun though, only three board members were allowed to be present. This was because none wanted to take the chance that the session could or would be construed as a "board meeting" where some decision or other might be taken. Oooh, scary thought! Staff was not present at these sessions either. Their 'valuable time' simply couldn't be wasted on such trivial pursuits.

The problem with these new sessions was that the few board members present often "copped out" that they shouldn't comment on various topics because it was a "staff issue" and they didn't (or, more appropriately, couldn't) know anything about it. Other board members tended to blivate on and on

and on about basically nothing. The only significant discussion session I recall was about the Balboa Golf Course and Clubhouse (held to a standing-room-only crowd of about 100 in the DeSoto Club). Eventually, though, most property owner interest waned (too much bloviation, too little substance) and attendance fell off dramatically. Then, not too long after that Covid hit so any public sessions were not possible for a while.

Flash forward a bit, and following the seating of a new supposedly more “open” board, the sessions apparently resumed. I believe the idea was to have an actual agenda published in advance and the board have actual give and take conversations with property owners about issues of interest to the public and those scheduled to be “new business” before the board soon. These meetings were also impacted by Covid so many were virtual. This writer mistakenly thought that written input would be taken by the board beforehand and commented on or discussed at the virtual meetings. Or, that someone on the board would be monitoring a live text stream during the session and responses made. Didn’t happen for me that way (I tried). So, I lost interest in these sessions early on – why bother?

What strikes me as odd is that lately, it seems that substantial and ultimately costly projects are being floated for the first time at discussion sessions and then, almost magically, they are presented at the following board meeting as current business and voted on. All of this without much, if any, official public vetting, polling, or much of anything else. Somebody correct me if I’m mistaken (and I know you will) but I believe this is how the new trash truck deal, the FRATF, and a few other things came to be.

Now, back to the case at hand. Again, I may be mistaken, but I do not recall seeing any topic list or agenda of any kind for this most recent discussion session. I guess it is no wonder then if nobody shows up. Perhaps an advertised agenda which included issues like “nickel and diming” with excessive fees, or like ‘why are we contracting and/or leasing almost everything?’, or some other interesting topics, would have generated some attendance. Or are we now coming full circle back to secrecy? Maybe the new GM will have a fix for all this. We’ll see.

?Note from Cheryl: Even though there may be low turnout at the actual meetings, the meeting is watched via live streaming and also hundreds may view the recordings. In addition, sometimes over a thousand folks prefer to read the transcripts we provide. This number does vary, depending on the subject matter. It is obvious that interest is higher than what it may appear to be.

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