

Consultant Love Affair

It can be tough to get the answers you want. But town and county officials have figured it out. Get the right consultant.

The technique was perfected on the Comp Plan, five-plus years of getting it 'just right.'

A decade ago the first Comp Plan consultant held an open meeting with a huge audience at the Episcopal Church. He brought individual handheld voting machines – very straight forward. Oddly, he was then fired.

To get the results you want, you need the right consultant! If the consultant has 'your' mindset and is leaning towards 'your' answer, well then you're half way there. Second, make sure the process is complex. If it's going to be tough to get the 'right' answer then you'll need a very complex survey.

Straight forward surveys are simple; you do a voter phone survey. It's cheap and efficient; pay six or eight thousand dollars and wait a month for the results.

But there's a problem. Say it's a housing survey and voters don't want a lot more housing; they're concerned with overcrowding. And say the Chamber, Town Council and County Commissioners all want more. What to do?

Get the RIGHT consultant! The monster 125-page "Engage 2017" report delivers the answers they need. It's on the tetonwyo.org website. Read it if you like obscure and highly

nuanced minutia. Chances are you won't be able to make heads or tails of it. Old axiom: "If you can't dazzle 'em with your brilliance, then baffle 'em with BS." And it's all paid for with your tax dollars.

This is how government backs into the answers they want:

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(1) Find a consultant experienced in slick studies. (2) Tell them what you think the community needs. (3) Interview the consultant carefully to be sure they are 'sympathetic' to the end goal.

(4) Create a massive survey designed to get the answers you want. (5) Use leading questions as necessary. (6) Make it so complex that most folks won't participate, but include the 'right' questions so zealots can weigh-in.

(7) Process the data and proudly publish it under the guise of Success! (8) Continue the overkill in the 125-page report because it makes the consultant lots of \$\$\$\$. (9) The overkill also lets the client cherry-pick the answers they want.

(10) Keep it going for a long time to make sure only the zealots are participating at the end.

Not every local official is involved in this shady business, but enough are that it works splendidly. And it's just the tip of the iceberg.

Voters don't want dense housing, and the 'Consultant Love Affair' is out to change that.

Appeal for funds: News in this column can't be found elsewhere. It's expensive to publish.

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