

Marc Sewell  
108 Summit  
Llano, TX 78643  
marcs@simonlabs.com  
325-247-2508

March 28, 2015

Tim Irvine  
Executive Director  
Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs  
P.O. BOX 13941  
Austin, TX 78711-3941

Subject: TxCDBG Planning Grant Application for Llano, TX Submitted March 9, 2015

Dear Director Irvine,

I filed a [complaint](#) regarding the subject [block grant application](#) and received a [nonresponsive, disrespectful response from the City](#) that further demonstrates their lack of desire for citizen involvement in affairs that directly affect our city and property - the underpinning of my original complaint.

My underlying complaint is that the City of Llano attempted to hide the purpose of the TxCDBG planning grant application from citizens to preclude them from participation. The true reason for the grant, to develop a Comprehensive Plan, was only divulged after the Public Hearing on the grant, during the vote to submit the grant. In Llano, citizens must submit a speaking request form before the meeting and are only allowed to speak before the discussion by council which is where the true objective of the grant was disclosed. Thus, citizens were neither notified of nor given opportunity to comment on the grant proposal prior to the Public Hearing and council vote. Also, the grant application was not available prior to the meeting for review as is required.

As you and many Llano citizens know, the Comprehensive Plan is a [statute-required](#) activity to be done prior to any changes to the zoning ordinance. Currently in Llano, there has been a 1½ year-old zoning ordinance overhaul underway that will be influenced by the new Comprehensive Plan. Citizen participation is crucial and desired by Llano citizens.

The Texas Department of Agriculture knows how important citizen participation is as demonstrated by the Citizen Participation Plan requirement for the grant which requires that "Citizens must be encouraged to submit their views and proposals."

Also, the [TDA Office of Rural Community Affairs Comprehensive Planning for Small Texas Cities Manual](#) says "The comprehensive plan combines the community goals and objectives with the inventory of city resources. Small cities and towns are often **fortunate to have residents with expertise related to planning**. Retired professionals, teachers at local schools and colleges, and

professionals who commute to nearby cities can make valuable voluntary contributions." It goes on to say:

**"CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Citizen involvement in the planning process is important.** Involvement increases understanding of the benefits of planning while decreasing the **uncertainty about the negative effects of planning on personal freedom and property rights**. In turn, increased involvement contributes to political acceptance and success of the planning process. In addition, residents can aid the planner through their knowledge of the community. Often, citizens with professional expertise can contribute their talents to the technical aspects of planning, thus reducing the need for consultants. Finally, involvement in the process assures that citizens are given a chance to become aware of the practical matters surrounding implementation of plans. Plans are most successful when the citizens feel an ownership in the final product. Their realistic perspective helps keep the planning process on track and down-to-earth. **The benefits of citizens' participation are substantial."**

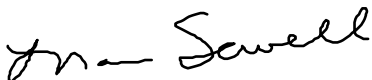
Llano is fortunate to have had thirteen citizens who met and volunteered to finish our Comprehensive Plan update, but City Manager Lewis never set up the committee. More would sign up now that this issue has been publicized.

The specifics of my complaint go beyond lack of citizen involvement to errors and omissions in the actual application. One in particular is that the application was submitted after the deadline and there is no record of documented "extenuating circumstances" as required. This contradicts City Manager Lewis' assertion that the application was submitted in accordance with TDA rules and requirements. Clearly not, and this deserves an explanation.

Thus, I assert that my formal complaint deserved a detailed response that would demonstrate that the application should be rejected or at least amended and presented to citizens with a revote by Llano City Council on whether the grant should be resubmitted.

I therefore request that the application be denied until my complaint issues are properly answered and resolved. Surely, there is better use of the funds than to usurp a citizen performed task by paying an uninvolved consultant.

Sincerely,



Documentation:

- [Letter to Council requesting a revote](#)
- [Texas Department of Agriculture Grant Proposal](#) - does not mention a Comprehensive Plan
- [Formal Grant Proposal Complaint](#) to the City of Llano
- [Response to my Complaint from the City of Llano City Manager](#)