

Proposed Changes to the Historic Resources Code: Bias and Exclusion
by Planning and Sustainability Commission Members

- Tony Greiner

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I am a member of the Citizens Involvement Committee of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. The charge of that committee is to help the BPS and its various divisions reach out to community members, ensuring that they can participate and contribute to various proposals. As such, I was part of a group that spoke (online) at the August 11, 2020 PSC meeting. After us, the PSC agenda moved to a discussion of housing density. I stayed logged in to see just what the commission did and how it worked. I was surprised and unhappy with what I heard and saw.

PSC member Oriana Magnera was quite vocal about silencing those who disagree with her committee's vision for Portland. She made a statement that there are groups such as neighborhood associations that have too much power, and that the PSC should proceed "by keeping those folks [neighborhood associations and historic preservation groups] out of the process and preventing them from coming in at the end and fuck everything up."

Below is a screen capture of her saying this.



In a subsequent meeting, Oct 13, 2020, Ms. Magnera continued to assert her desire to silence those who disagree the committee, this time referring to groups concerned about changes in the Historic Resources Code. She said that those who are “angry” about the proposed changes would offer “racist testimony”

against it. In other words, if you disagree with her or the plan, you must be a racist. A screen capture from that part of the meeting is below.



PSC Chair Eli Spevak did not ask her to be more civil, or do anything to oppose Magnera’s plea to exclude divergent voices and diverse ideas from playing a role in zoning laws. Nor did he or any other PSC member challenge her assertion that objecting to the proposed changes is rooted in racism. This behavior is crude, insulting and anti-public participation.

When this was brought to the attention of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Magnera said she was upset as she had learned of a friend’s death shortly before the August meeting. However, she offered no reason for her continued advocacy of exclusion in the meeting two months later. She did not retract her statement that groups that disagreed with the Commission should be blocked out of the process.

The proposal that the Planning and Sustainability Commission drew up after excluding community voices is coming before you Nov 3. I hope you will agree that purposefully excluding members of the public in any city planning is unacceptable.

I think that because of the exclusionary behavior by the Planning and Sustainability Commission, the plan it created to revise the Historic Resources Code should be rejected by City Council before further time and effort is expended on it, and a new committee formed that will be open to all interested

parties, including people interested in historic preservation, a group specifically excluded from participation in the proposed revision.

Best Regards,

Tony Greiner