

Town meeting

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Mayor and Members of the Town Council,

We would like to express our strong concerns over the process followed at the Dec 4 Town Meeting on the Shared Use/Bike Path. In our many years of living in Washington Grove, we do not believe we have seen another issue that has divided the town as deeply as this one has, and the highly questionable process at the Town Meeting has only served to sharpen the division.

It is not the final outcome that is the problem. It is the manner in which this outcome came about. Rather than having a transparent process in which people could freely examine the options, and perhaps have a chance to vote on more options, the meeting was co-opted early on by a resolution that precluded all other choices. This blatantly pre-choreographed maneuver forced not only a restriction of choices, but also ran roughshod over residents' attempts to express any opposition (frequent citing of Robert's Rules served admirably to ensure this).

Consequently, like many others we know (including some who favored the final outcome), we left the meeting feeling like we were witnesses to a travesty of democracy, a process engineered to maneuver the outcome and slam down opposition rather than arrive at an honest democratic decision.

For those intent on pushing through the Bike Path connection at Lower Brown, the day was won. But at what cost? We fear that the cost was a great deal higher than what was gained. Integrity is the backbone of effective leadership, and the all-too-apparent pre-planned and highly controlled process leading to the decision made a mockery of integrity. The bike path connection to Lower Brown was won, but trust was lost.

At the least, the Town government now faces increased and even more crucial obligations. Will you now step up and ensure that the county fulfills its obligations with the town's needs at the forefront? Will you now ensure that the design of the path and the work is completed with the needs of residents of Lower Brown Street at the forefront? Will you protect our neighbors on Lower Brown from any deleterious effects after the path is completed?

If not, then the arduous task of restoring trust will be that much more difficult, and even impossible.

Respectfully,

Janet Lottero
Gary Hayward