

From: Dianne Whitaker
Date: Friday, May 24, 2019 at 10:53 AM
To: "eric@ericrodriguez.com" <eric@ericrodriguez.com>
Cc: Eric Rodriguez <erodriguez@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Why an Architect on Planning Commission

Eric –

Earlier this week, a San Mateo resident posed the following question to me: “Related to your upcoming vacancy of the PC seat - I would love to ask why you think your skills as a licensed architect were helpful to you as a Planning Commissioner.

Historically, we've had an architect on the PC, and I think it is crucial to continue that.” My response follows.

Sorry for the delay in responding to your email. You posed a *very good* question, and it took me a few days of effort to collect my thoughts and figure out how to best (and succinctly) articulate them.

About 90 percent of the items that come before the Planning Commission deal with the built environment. Architects are highly qualified (although not exclusively) to evaluate these proposals as a result of our education, training, and work experience. One skill that is highly advantageous, is being able to read and understand architectural drawings. In conversations with several of my fellow Commissioners over that last 9 years, they have expressed discomfort regarding their ability to read and understand drawings. As a result, they have often relied upon me to ask the questions and make the comments regarding ‘design’ (i.e. building and site layout, materials, aesthetics, context, etc.). Architects are also in a somewhat unique position because we work with Zoning Codes, Design Guidelines, Specific Plans, and Building Codes on a daily basis, across multiple jurisdictions; something the average citizen/resident may only do once, during a home or office remodel project.

Do not get me wrong, I feel the ‘average citizen/resident’ as a Planning Commissioner brings a lot of value to the discussion. I have always felt the strength of the San Mateo Planning Commission is in our diverse backgrounds and interests: we each see the proposed project through a unique lens. It has been suggested several times that San Mateo should have an Architectural Review Board (Commission); one composed of only design professionals. I do not support this concept: you will never get five design professionals/architects to agree on anything having to do with design!

And yes, you are correct. As far back as I can remember (about 1989), there has been at least one Architect on the Planning Commission, beginning with George Dolim, followed by Paul Gumbinger, Jack Matthews, Robert Gooyer, Torin Knorr, and myself. The good news is that “we” have identified a well-qualified Architect who had indicated *she* will be applying for the open seat on the Commission!

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