

Water and Sustainability: What it Means to Me

October 29th, 2008

My name is Tracy Williams. I am a lifetime resident.

I would like to thank all of you for how you have conducted yourselves during these past months. Your degree of professionalism, and your commitment to ensuring a balanced, honest and open discussion of this vital issue, has gone a long way toward creating a level of trust among those of us whose jaded views have been fostered by years of exclusionary politics.

I would also like to thank the staff and presenters, who assembled a great deal of information and effective presentations, while dealing with constrained schedules.

It is my hope that all of you will continue this same open, balanced process, not only as you draft your report, but into Phase II as well.

Early in the start of this study, we saw the special interest groups line up to demand a seat at the table. I know first-hand where that can lead. Time and again, we have seen the development community obtain numerous seats at the table by dividing their industry into its multiple parts of builders, small-builders, architects, planners, real estate interests, etc.

If we are lucky, neighbors and environmentalists receive one seat each. This unbalanced approach to critical problem-solving leads to the kind of distorted outcomes that helped to create our current financial crises. We cannot afford such a cavalier approach where water is concerned. Water is a life-and-death issue. It cannot have the bottom line as its sole driving force, nor can it follow the dishonest path of Tucson's recent graywater ordinance, which based its outcome on an incomplete picture of our wastewater's delivery system.

Sustainability needs to include the quality-of-life elements of clean, healthy, unpolluted potable water. The environment needs to be viewed as an equal partner, not only to facilitate this goal, but to become a beneficiary of it.

I do not want to sacrifice the Tucson I love on the altar of the bottom line or trade the Sonoran Desert for one that more closely resembles sub-Saharan Africa, complete with the Baghdad model of water delivery.

There are numerous, less-destructive ways to approach growth that do not rely on wholesale destruction of our desert and that are better suited to help us to achieve a more sustainable, equitable society.

We need your help and commitment to ensure that the remainder of this process does not follow the destructive, political paths of the past, but charts a new course toward a sustainable, inclusive model for problem solving.