



rRemarks Data for April 15, 2025 Village Council Meeting

Agenda Section & Item: Mayor's Report - A. Recognition of Commissioner José and Commissioner Glover

Commenter: David Rose

Comment: Followup comment on the ESP approved at the 08 Apr 2025 meeting

Note: This is a comment of a general nature. I tried to select "comment of a general nature" on the google form but the system refused to allow that choice.

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When we live in Orwellian time in which words lose meaning (freedom of speech, due process, emergency, Congressional definition of what constitutes a 'day', and so on),

when our leaders disregard the law with impunity (see the list above),

when leaders and media routinely lie in the most outrageous of fashions (fabricating and/or hiding events, people, and objectives of actions and policies to suit their political purposes — known as 'controlling the narrative'),

when we face existential crises of multiple sorts, not least of which is the risk of self-destruction ...

thanks to the richest, most powerful members of our species puerile brandishing of nuke and other weapons and

their ongoing flagrant disregard of the laws of physics, chemistry, and ecology, and principles of human decency and moral social behavior,

that VC would persist in its ignorance and arrogance and refuse to engage my many comments over the years about its failure to take seriously its purported goal of environmental sustainability (ENVS) is hardly surprising.

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Last week we saw VC celebrate the passage of subparts of its latest comprehensive plan, including its so-called environmental sustainability plan (ESP).

The word 'sustainable' is the key word VC has defined to suit its political purposes.

Not to beat a dead horse too hard, I will note AGAIN that the draft ESP's definition is VC-centric, yet is said to apply to "Downers Grove" ... when the very next page states the word "Downers Grove" as the document uses it will refer to a place. In other words, the very first pages of the document's substantive content reflects ongoing VC, staff, and resident confusion.

That the rest of the draft ESP is inadequate is thus completely predictable. When the town is populated and led by people ignorant of the subject matter, how could there be any other outcome?

Hiring a new staff member and a consultant has not NOT overcome the inadequacy. It has instead sought to legitimize it.

The first instance of this legitimation was VC's self-assessment using the GRC protocol. VC decided VC was already — albeit haphazardly — doing a pretty good job meeting its goal.

The new ESP is intended to help VC and the community of DG "do better."

The ESP's metrics? As with the GRC: selective, politically convenient, and hardly likely to have significant ecological impact.

"Doing better" is not the same as "doing enough".

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CC Barnett claims the draft ESP strives for "culture change". Really? The draft is timid precisely because it lacks resident support for much in the way of culture change. VC's

lack of engagement of my many criticisms over the years reflects its refusal to examine need for genuine (necessary and sufficient) cultural and political economic change.

Key Q: Will voluntary participation by community members lead to ecological sustainability (ECOS)? [To remind: ECOS, not 'ENVS,' is the proper term and goal.]

Against what alternatives did the ECC and VC determine a voluntary approach via a community pledge is the preferred approach?

When one is dealing with socially-dubious but socially-engrained behavior — racism in the US is a handy example — does one imagine a voluntary approach is sufficient?

I contended to the ECC the situation is both dire and urgent, and doubted a voluntary approach was up to the task. The ECC dismissed my contention and skepticism out of hand.

ECC's self-admitted dabblers and the UVI staff member and consultant made no effort to examine the issue further. Which is precisely why I characterize the whole ESP effort as no more than a community involvement program.

As I pointed out months ago, this disregard was tipped off by the plan the lead consultant put forward in its work for a neighboring town. In DG's case, which is quite typical, the inadequacy is rooted — as it has been all along — in VC's ongoing inadequate definition of sustainability, including in the draft ESP.

Which is why I also cite the ESP as an example of the old joke in which a company asks its accounting job candidates: How much is $2 + 2$? Winning answer: How much do you want it to be?

In the case of ECOS, that attitude is a recipe for disaster.

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A newspaper headline I found online on 11 Apr 2025 blared:

"Fund managers quietly fear Trump doesn't have a tariff plan and that he 'might be insane.'"

"Quietly"?

It was Richard Nixon who adopted the madman approach to US diplomacy and leadership ... in an effort to bully other nations to do US bidding.

People want to believe in the superiority of their leaders' abilities — knowledge, temperament, integrity, wisdom, rationality, insight, foresight, etc.

Our current exalted leader's mercurial approach to decisions, to say nothing of his other traits, makes that desire exceedingly difficult. Except of course for his true believers, who revel in his arrogant thuggishness, unpredictability, hyperbolic, vacuous and/or contradictory pronouncements, crude political incorrectness in word and deed, and utter disregard for the law.

Do people really believe multi-trillion dollar swings in stock market valuations from one day (minute?) to the next reflect changes in actual wealth? Clearly, the idea is absurd. And that's a BIG problem ... because it casts doubt on the actual value of ALL wealth.

Financial analysts contend Trump's tariffs-against-the-whole-world folly has shattered the credibility of US exceptionalism and US reliability, evidenced by the simultaneous plunges last week in the Treasury bond market and the value of the USD even as the stock market cratered.

True believers on the other hand say, "trust in Trump's instinct."

Analysts and scholars who study such matters understand these events and our leaders' comments and actions as evidence of an empire in decline.

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At this moment in history, empire in decline overlaps the issue of changing our way of live to be ECOS, that is, of learning to live in a world of resource limits.

DG's current way of living is not ECOS.

I have mentioned more than once: difference in worldview determines how one tries to deal with the need to live within limits.

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for those with a non-zero sum worldview:

When the way of living in the rich nations is NOT ecologically sustainable, the goal is to reduce the level of consumption of the rich while raising the level of consumption of the poor while reducing the overall total level of resource consumption to a sustainable rate, and to do so willingly and peacefully.

The zero-sum worldview on the other hand maintains

if resource limits mean humans' overall total level of resource consumption cannot help but be reduced, one deals with it by starting from the bottom ... killing off the "lesser beings" using the usual mechanisms of disease, famine, and murder.

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The latter worldview predominates in the US including here in DG; which means genuine culture change entails re-aligning with a non-zero-sum worldview approach to ECOS.

For my proposal of an ECOS vision statement that aligns with a non-zero-sum worldview, see the e-remark I submitted to 17 Dec 2024 meeting.

https://agendadocs.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2024/12-17-24/rRemarks_12172024.pdf?_gl=1*sodkg3*_ga*Mzc1NDY1ODluMTc0NDY4MDE4Mg..*_ga_50YCDGRG70*M Tc0NDY4MDE4MS4xLjEuMTc0NDY4MDIwNy4wLjAuMA..

The draft ESP VC approved at its 08 Apr 2025 meeting comes nowhere close to producing the culture change needed.

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Example illustrating VC's and ECC's ongoing refusal to address the problem properly:

Neither VC nor DG residents have any idea the total resource load of the way of living in DG. So how, pray tell, does one gauge if any specific action or set of actions yields movement toward a sustainable load?

Specifically, for example, what's the offset for adding population to the village and the increased resource load that comes with it? Improved efficiency? Of what? Measured how? Reduced resource consumption by existing residents? Of what? Measured how? Arrived at based on an agreement decided upon by current residents BEFORE any new residents are allowed to move in?

The latter question clearly suggests: zoning alone, as presently handled through ordinances and the Planning Comm process, is not sufficient to address the ECOS challenge! [The Longfellow fiasco demonstrated the Plan Comm has no clue about ECOS as a factor in its deliberations.]

Which also clearly suggests the need for a dramatic culture change on the part of VC. How so? Inferring from VC's current disregard of the impact of population increase on parking and traffic within DG as a primary source of residents' complaints, a VC supportive of ECOS REQUIRES addressing the issue of offsets BEFORE VC permits increases to DG's population and physical footprint!!!!

Does not the same logic apply to VC's objective of adding businesses??

I pointed out precisely this issue of offsets in calling attention to VC's refusal to acknowledge the purported "greenness" of its shiny new facility will likely be negated by VC's decision to sell its property in order to add to the population in the form of a multi-story, multi-family building whose taxes will help defray the costs of the 'green' features on the new facility. If my hypothesis is incorrect, VC has provided no data demonstrating its incorrectness. Which means NO SUCH DATA entered and influenced VC's decision making!

Likewise, if the community ESP effort is voluntary, how is the impact of those who do not participate to be offset by those who do ... to reach the desired resource load? Take reducing CO2 emissions as an obvious individual target.

Why are the refuseniks allowed NOT to participate? Are there legitimate reasons? Again, is not the legitimacy of those reasons something residents must agree to, given they are the ones upon whom the burden falls to compensate for the non-participation?

NONE of these kinds of challenges are addressed in the ESP.

Furthermore, as implied above in my contrasting of worldviews, the same types of questions arise at every level of government, and apply across governmental geographic boundaries.

This is particularly true when the way of living within a municipality is as dependent on resources produced outside its boundaries as is true for DG and (probably) every municipality in the US.

In that regard, I should modify my “NONE” just above. The ESP’s one mention of offsets — vis-a-vis CO2 emissions — implies offsetting of any rising or stagnating of levels of resource consumption within DG will be expected to be handled through reductions in consumption OUTSIDE DG!!! A fine confirmation that DG’s worldview approach to ECOS is zero-sum, is it not?

Finally,

VC’s current focus in its “economic development” decisions is their impact on property and other taxes VC collects. Those taxes are in effect a tax on resource load.

VC’s objective in the recent past has been to increase the amount of tax collected to pay for both operating expenses AND for the inadequate collection of taxes in the past needed to cover foreseeable future expenses. Pension obligations is a past tax collection failure now garnering attention precisely because of the impact ‘catching up’ will have on future budgets.

Think of the failure to plan for a sustainable way of living as a similar problem. With the uncomfortable difference that one cannot grow one’s way out of an unsustainable way of living unless, as the discussion of worldviews suggests, the consequences of growth and the unsustainable way of living are shared inequitably!

Indeed, juxtaposing the objectives of meeting rising pension obligations and reducing total resource load to a sustainable level nicely illustrates the nastiness of our quandary at the local governmental level.

It’s particularly nasty because of the sunk costs thanks to the past failure to plan for a sustainable way of living that must now somehow be undone. That is, the challenge is not overcoming the lack of past investment, as with pension obligations; the challenge is overcoming the lack of ECOS of all the investments that WERE made — personal, social, and societal. It’s not just culture that must be changed, it’s also social and physical structures.

Which is to say: the task of undoing extends well beyond individual residents’ efforts to reduce their individual ‘footprints.’

Will's DG's cooperation with other municipalities of the GRC face these realities?

And to reiterate: NONE of these questions arise given VC's inadequate definition of sustainable/sustainability.

Ongoing ignorance within the village, the region, the nation, and the world is bliss. Until it isn't.

Because never forget: the sustainability of resource load is ultimately determined by the availability of the resources. [Notable resource limit: To my knowledge, the laws of physics do not permit perpetual recycling of non-renewable resources.]

Another subject the ESP completely ignores.