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## ACRA board: Aspen Area Community Plan lacks vision

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ASPEN — The Aspen Area Community Plan, a guiding document that has been the multi-year focus of a rewrite, was criticized Tuesday by some Aspen Chamber Resort Association board members as lacking vision.

The ACRA board's executive committee met last week to discuss the plan, or AACP, which was last adopted in 2000 and is now being updated. Tuesday, members of the board called for the chamber to have a voice in shaping the document before it's too late.

The plan is in its final stages of review, and targeted for adoption by Aspen and Pitkin County this spring.

David Perry, Aspen Skiing Co. senior vice president and an ACRA board member, urged "pushing the pause button" on the plan in order to address what's missing — the community's future vision.

"What does a sustainable resort community in the 21st century really look like?" he asked.

Helen Klanderud, former Aspen mayor and a board member, said she felt the AACP update relied too heavily on "clicker sessions," in which citizens offered input on a series of questions by voting with a clicker device that tallied responses.

"My main objection to the plan — it really downplays, if it acknowledges at all, that we are resort community," she said. "Plus, it seems to be reactive rather than forward-thinking. I have some serious concerns about the plan as it now stands."

"Acknowledging that we are a resort community is critical, but it's not mentioned in this document at all," Perry said.

Donny Lee, representing the lodging community, also complained that the plan lacks a vision for where the community goes in the next decade, and local banker Charlie Bantis suggested the plan seemed to be more a reaction to past development pressure than a guiding document based on the economic realities of the future.

"We don't need to rush into this," said Warren Klug, board chairman and hotel operator, calling for a plan that takes the business community's views into account.

Mayor Mick Ireland and Pitkin County Commissioner Michael Owsley, both members of the board, assured the chamber that its viewpoint is welcome, but defended a process that has gone on for more than two years already.

**"It really is the Aspen way to let the process get near the end and then get around to it," Ireland said.**

"You know, there hasn't been a rush in the process," Owsley said. "I have to say, the ACRA just seems to be waking out of a slumber in this process."

Ireland agreed the plan needs to address the community's future, but defended the draft as an understandable response to a recent past of intense development pressure. The plan will continue to move forward, he added.

"To recommend we start over after two years — that is not appropriate," the mayor said. "That's not fair."

Ireland urged the ACRA to address what it doesn't like in the draft plan.

"Please be specific. If you think 100 percent affordable housing on site is too much, tell us that," he said, referring to one of the plan's mandates regarding worker housing development.

"I haven't heard anyone say, 'Shelve the plan and start over,'" Perry responded. "When I say pause, I'm not saying shelve."

Perry, who said he and other Skico executives have been involved in long process of drafting the AACP update, said he wasn't calling for changes to the plan so much as for material that isn't in it yet — the future vision.

"To me, it's kind of what the document doesn't do yet. I think that big piece has not been accomplished yet," he said.

The city is currently surveying 2,000 residents, chosen at random, about the plan, and urged the ACRA to forward the survey to its member businesses, as well. Board members, however, indicated they'd like the ACRA to compose a survey of its own.

"It wasn't really hitting what we feel our concerns are," said Debbie Braun, ACRA president, of the city's survey.

Ireland urged the chamber to include the city questions so comparison of the responses is possible.

Owsley suggested the chamber move quickly.

"You're going to have to slap on your clothes, find your shoes and start running," he said.

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