

Impervious Surface Fee Stakeholder Working Group

Consensus Definition and Process

Overview: As requested in the October Stakeholder meeting, during its December 10th meeting, the County and consultant team presented information to the Stakeholder Working Group on how consensus is defined and applied to input provided by Stakeholders. As a part of the presentation, some information on majority vote was presented. Majority vote, if consensus cannot be achieved, is a fall back position for the group. While majority vote may be an option for affirming conclusions, it is the least desirable option. Unfortunately, discussion about majority vote consumed a lot of time. This communication is being sent to remind Stakeholder members about the key points of the consensus topic.

Review

The County prefers and expects the use of a consensus decision-making process. Consensus encourages interaction and discussion among the group, and it explores a range of options and concerns of each participant. Consensus does not mean unanimity – it provides for a spectrum of agreement, not a simple yes or no response. The spectrum provided in the meeting is provided as Figure 1 below. The proposed spectrum uses six levels of agreement, ranging from strong support to strong opposition and insufficient information to provide input. The goal of the group is for all to be in the range of 1 through 4 on the spectrum – if all are here, consensus is reached. During the meeting, the County and consultant team proposed that consensus would be defined as everything to the left of the green line shown.

Consensus means participants feel they were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and feel heard as future direction is considered.

Voting or majority rule is the fallback process for the group. During the meeting, stakeholders asked about whether votes would be restricted to participants in a particular meeting on a particular day.

With respect to both consensus discussions and majority voting, in the interest of maintaining balance in the group, each member organization will have one vote on any topic, regardless of the number of participants from that organization.

In addition, The County feels it is essential that if voting is required, member groups who are not able to be present will be able to provide their votes after reviewing the materials from the meeting.

Figure 1. Range of Support for Discussion Items with Demarcation for Consensus (to left of line is consensus)

