

## Adam Zack

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**From:** joe symons <joesymons@me.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 21, 2018 3:28 PM  
**To:** Comp Plan Update; DL - Council  
**Subject:** Comment on public hearing re Vision Statement 18 May 2018

I have been a participant in public testimony on various topics in San Juan County for close to 3 decades.

I have never written about my experience as a citizen giving testimony, until now.

I was the first person on the list of citizens to testify regarding the Vision Statement topic.

At the conclusion of my remarks, which were predicated on 2 separate written comments submitted earlier in the week, Councilman Jamie Stephens criticized me, and by implication, any subsequent testimony that the public might offer, by claiming that I was off-topic.

Given that I was the chair of the Orcas committee to rewrite the Comp Plan beginning in 1992 during which time as a committee we spent a year writing the county's vision statement, and given that I successfully challenged the county for egregious violations of GMA, in particular regarding the internal inconsistency of the Comp Plan with the Vision Statement, I find his comment uncalled for, inappropriate and rude.

It had a chilling effect on public participation. I include below a section of an email I received

I thought your testimony was relevant, appropriate and timely. And just about wanted to cry when Jamie essentially told the people who had given their time, effort and interest to testify what we could and could not say in our 3 minutes. It took all I had to stay composed. The irony is that was part of my testimony about how they do not respect the process, bingo!

Subsequent post-hearing comments with various citizens who testified made the same observation about Councilman Stephens' comment.

Considering that citizens who do not live on San Juan Island have to spend essentially 3/4 of a day to get to and from Friday Harbor, and have 3 minutes to speak, their testimony should be heard with appreciation, not denigration.

As I noted in my testimony, I asked SJC, in August 2017, to restore to operation A/V equipment that was purchased by an Orcas resident, installed and made operational on all ferry served islands years ago, to permit remote public testimony. I reminded the county manager and other IT personnel again earlier this year. The service has not been restored and no status report has been relayed to me.

Going forward, I urge Council to respect public input and censure its members for statements that are harmful to public participation. I am surprised and disappointed that neither of the other Council members spoke in support of public testimony and against the opinion of Councilman Stephens. The playing field is not level; comments like his reveal disregard for public opinion while reinforcing the citizen experience that our representatives are uninterested in engagement, listening and considering.

Joe Symons

Olga, WA

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carpe diem