

Pat, as a follow up to our earlier conversation I wanted to emphasize a couple of key points. My co-chair Mike Levengood and I question the wisdom of sharing individual views regarding potential findings, because that is all that they would be at this point, only preliminary individual views. The 42 members of Engage Gwinnett agreed when we first met that we as a group would come to consensus before we make any final recommendations, and we agreed to include minority views in our written report. We would like to permit our fellow citizens to share their views with member of the Engage Gwinnett Committee and for the reasons we mention below we wonder whether an article based on responses to your poll of our members is the best way to engage Gwinnett citizens in this process.

We thank you for covering the work of Engage Gwinnett. We would like you to note in your article that the members of the committee plan to listen to, and receive comments from our fellow citizens in Gwinnett County regarding our findings of our work groups during four public meetings in the upcoming weeks. We know that they we will benefit from the views of our fellow tax payers about our initial observations, and that we will schedule in April another public meeting to listen to and receive comments from fellow Gwinnett citizens regarding our final group recommendations before we present a written report to the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners for their consideration.

Some of the question you are asking the members of Engage Gwinnett to offer an opinion about, are ones that we hope to gain information about from our fellow citizens in Gwinnett County. If you publish an article regarding the personal opinions of some of the members when we have not completed the process, you may unintentionally create an impression that Engage Gwinnett has reached final decisions, when it has not. To a degree this is almost like asking the audience of a play at intermission to tell you how the play is going to end, or like asking the members of a jury to tell you who should win the case before hearing all of the evidence.

If Mike and I sound protective of the Engage Gwinnett process, it is because we are. We have worked hard to establish a constructive way for the members of Engage Gwinnett to consider all opinions openly and transparently and in a manner that our fellow citizens have a right to expect from us. We have created and have tried to manage a “first time ever” public engagement process that we hope will provide useful advice to public servants who have the duty of making decisions about the nature and level of services that Gwinnett Government will provide in the future and how to pay for them. It is our hope that the process or one like it may be used in similar situations where there exist real differences of opinion regarding such important issues. Thank you again for your support in helping us accomplish our goals.

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