Dear City Council Members and City Manager,

Better direct communication with you

First, I appreciate the quick action taken to facilitate the public's ability to communicate in a timely way with the City Council. My understanding now is that when the public sends an email to cityhall@albanyca.org each of you receives it directly, and it also goes to the City Clerk. To me, this process makes more sense than the previous system in which members of the public had their email messages forwarded to you by the City Clerk. You will receive our messages in a timing that matches our ability to write to you.

However, I have two remaining concerns. Several Albany residents have encouraged me to write to each of you separately, and they have even provided me with the email addresses of those of you whose email I did not have, stating that if I write to all of you at one email address, there may be an "inadvertent violation of the Brown Act." My concern is that the general public may not have friends who have each of your individual email addresses, and therefore may be in violation of the Brown Act simply by using the method for communicating with you provided to them via the City website. Please clarify this situation. How is writing to all of you with a single email address (cityhall@albanyca.org) a potential Inadvertent violation of the Brown Act?

Also, if the general public does not want to write to all of you, but just to one, is there a way to do that? As of this afternoon, Council Member Nason is the only member who has a separate email address listed on the City website. (Also, Council member Pilch does not have his own web page.)

Strategic Vision

Note: When both my husband and I open attachment 8-1C Strategic Plan Update III in three different browsers, the righthand side of the first page is cut off, so we cannot see all of the codes.

Thank you for your work on using a strategic vision to establish priorities for the City and your work. There is a great deal in the 2015 Update that I appreciate, and as this vision is enacted, the City will be a better place for residents and businesses and will have improved to a greater extent for some of Albany's most vulnerable. I have specific comments on Items 2-2 and 2-3.
While I am glad to see Goal 2.2 and metrics 2-2.a and 2-2.b included as high priorities in your plans, I do not see how 2a or 2b serves as a metric for necessary outreach to homeless persons in need of housing and social services.

Regarding 2a, as I understand it, the City's tax measures and franchise agreements are tied to being housed (either as property owners or tenants), so it is a reasonable metric for seniors and others in need in Albany, but not for persons who are homeless. Perhaps in addition to tallying the number of applications received, there is a way to tally the number of inquiries from persons experiencing homelessness for housing information and/or housing support services and reporting the kinds of information resources they were provided.

Regarding 2b, I would like to see either the word "future" deleted or the words "current and" added in front of the word "future". There are already tax measures and franchise agreements in place that make the current tax burden on low-income households inequitable. While it is tempting to look only to the future, I urge you to at least develop a draft policy that addresses making both the current situation as well as future taxes/franchise agreements more equitable. In that way you can explore and examine the dimensions of both before adopting a policy on this matter.

I am glad to see the content of Goal 2-2 and metric 2-3a. Given that the current parking regulations serve as a huge barrier to the creation of both scattered site and more traditional affordable housing and simple housing for seniors, I am delighted to see the Metric specifying drafting potential changes to residential parking requirements by Fall of this year. Bravo!

I am also pleased to see the status updates on Housing Element implementation included in the Comments/Funding & Staff column of 2-3

In closing, I want to thank you for your consideration of my perspective and to each of you for your service to our City. The matters that come before you are numerous and most are complex. The tools and resources you have to address them are not always ideal or sufficient. And yet, you continue to strive for ways to make Albany work for all residents and local businesses.

Appreciatively,

Alexa Hauser, Albany resident
Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to support the detailed and thoughtful letter sent to you by Alexa Hauser (below). On my computer the lines did not stop at the edge of the page. In case you had the same experience, I have reformatted it.

In addition I would like to see an amendment to goal 4-1 "Encourage Economic Development through a welcoming culture for a variety of businesses and development models (including housing) in the commercial districts." Also 4-1-f. I would like to see some mention of prioritizing low-income housing in these areas, since this may be our best shot at getting some built in Albany.

Within item 2-4. is there a way to encourage building owners to retrofit soft-story buildings? I am very concerned that without regulation, these homes will see more fatalities than they should when the Big One hits.

Thank you for your work. Alexa's letter follows below.

Catherine Sutton

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