

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation
112 Newcrest Lane
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

February 2, 2001

Leah Dever, Manager
U. S. DOE Oak Ridge Operations
P. O. BOX 2001, M-4
Oak Ridge, TN 37831-8502

Dear Ms. Dever:

I would like to take a little of your time to express my reactions to Tuesday (Jan. 30, 2001) night's public meeting on Land Use Planning for the Oak Ridge Reservation. First of all, on the positive side, I was very pleased that you decided to hold a public meeting on this very important topic. And I sincerely hope that the planning process will proceed in the future and that it will include appropriate public input.

I was also very pleased to hear that DOE has decided to shelve the proposal (and the accompanying EA) to lease the ED-3 parcel for future industrial and commercial development. I applaud you for definitely doing the right thing in this case. As you know, I, and the Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR), sincerely believe that a thorough assessment of how such future actions by DOE would affect the entire reservation is needed before any further development is pursued.

With regard to the conductance of the public meeting on Tuesday, January 30, I feel certain that you have already received a number of critical remarks. Of course, many were expressed orally at the meeting itself, including the well-expressed remarks of the Executive Director of the Tennessee Nature Conservancy, Scott Davis, when he said that he felt that DOE ORO's approach to public input that night appeared "disingenuous." I am sure this was not intentional on your part. However, to begin the public comment period with a parade of nine consecutive speakers—with prepared speeches, dare I say, lectures—on the importance of using DOE's land for economic development was totally inappropriate and unfair to those attending. Clearly—from subsequent speakers' comments and the attendant applause—the majority of the 250 people attending the meeting favored conservation of DOE lands. Yet these folks were subjected to over an hour of prepared speeches from the opposite viewpoint, before they were even allowed to speak. The frustration and anger that this created was clearly expressed when the audience erupted into applause when the first speaker who opposed development finally was allowed to speak. And of course, she only made it to the podium, "by mistake," according to the facilitator.

This is clearly no way to solicit public input, nor to diffuse an already polarized audience, nor to begin a dialogue aimed at reaching a sense of community spirit and common ground. It also did not help to present a map, near the beginning of the meeting, of

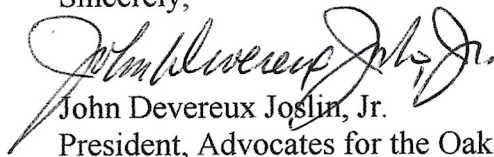
DOE's vision of the future of the reservation, with the entire west end of the reservation already painted in one color and designated as for "mixed uses" (which most interpreted as "development"). I am sure you did not intend for this to be anything more than a "straw man" for future discussion, but it came across to most of the audience, that DOE had already laid out their plans for the future. I believe that the obvious question, that therefore immediately arose in the minds of most attending, was "Why are we here, and how is the public's voice going to be integrated into any planning, if ORO has already made up its mind."

I am certain that this reaction was not one that you were seeking. Nevertheless, in the future I would be so bold as to suggest that it would be a good idea to express very clearly how public input will be incorporated into the planning process and the decisions that are made thereto.

With regard to the announcement of the subsequent FONSI for the transfer of DOE's "floodplain strip" on the Clinch River adjacent to "the Boeing property," I think you know that I, and the board and members of AFORR, strongly disagree with this action. I would like, at this time, simply to express our disappointment with this decision; and to express our total dissatisfaction with the quality of the final EA and the responses in that EA to the many excellent comments and suggested you received from state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations on the initial draft EA; and to declare our total disillusionment with ORO, at its failure in this case to assume its responsibilities under its own DOE regulations for the protection of wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. I would prefer not to go into more detail on this delicate matter at this time, but would like to discuss our concerns with you and others at a later date.

In conclusion, I congratulate you and thank you for moving forward with a noble first step towards long-range planning for the Oak Ridge Reservation and towards soliciting public input. I hope that future attempts to solicit input will be conducted in a fairer and more effective manner. And I look forward to a planning process that will result in the best uses of this land for the all citizens of the United States.

Sincerely,



John Devereux Joslin, Jr.
President, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation

CC: Carol Borgstrom, DOE Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance
Katy Kates, DOE Realty Officer, Oak Ridge Reservation
David Allen, DOE ORO NEPA Compliance Officer
Larry Clark, DOE Oak Ridge Operations