

## OUR VIEW

# This is not the time to rush

The city council and the planning commission scheduled a joint session for Dec. 2 to hear public comments on proposed land development regulations. The council could, after listening to the public, nod politely, call a vote and approve the new regulations.

That would be a disservice to everyone involved.

It would suggest that this is the action of a kangaroo court, banging the gavel on a half-baked plan.

That's just not the case.

The regulations have been in the works for years. After Hurricane Ike, one of the goals for rebuilding Galveston was to simplify the codes for developing property. And the codes were torturous. A developer would find a rule in one code that referred to another

code, which would refer to yet another code.

The planning commission was given the job of simplifying the process — and it has done that. The proposed regulations are clearer, simpler and shorter. That is a significant achievement.

Any effort of that size and scope is going to have critics. People are going to disagree about the proposed rules.

The council ought to let the people who disagree talk. And it ought to do more than just pretend to listen. Council members ought to see whether the critics' arguments are persuasive.

This process is strong enough to withstand that kind of criticism.

Some people are urging the council to bang the gavel and to get on with it.

But the idea that every citizen should have taken off work to attend every meeting of the planning commission to keep up with these evolving regulations isn't convincing. The proposed regulations are still voluminous. People who don't have the main points committed to memory shouldn't be considered second-class citizens.

Now that the job of revising the rules is just about finished, ordinary people have a reasonable expectation that the council will discuss the main points in public. They also have a right to hear the controversial points challenged and defended.

The council shouldn't rush through the public hearings.

• Heber Taylor



As city planners look at changes in land development regulations for signage in commercial areas, some

groups would like to see stricter regulations for digital signs. JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

## Cities should set minimum wage

Do Texans want a smaller and more efficient government that supports a more transparent economy?

If they do, then the Texas Legislature should allow municipalities to set their own minimum wage.

Conservatives will take issue with that idea and have reasons that seem worthy of merit. But their reasoning is shallow. Allowing municipalities to set their own minimum wage will be friendlier to the taxpayer and low-wage workers if legislators act as pragmatic businessmen and not bureaucrats.

The most often heard challenge to raising the minimum wage is that the free market should set wages. But the market for low-wage labor is already poisoned due to legislated transfer payments (i.e. entitlements — Medicaid, food stamps, housing subsidies, etc.) that supplement wages.

Another issue is the financial condition of the market participants. Businesses often have working capital and access to legal labor substitutes — labor willing to work below minimum wage.

Those negotiating for their wages often lack any working capital (savings) and are therefore at a competitive disadvantage during wage negotiations — therefore again violating the purity of a free market. There are many other reasons a free market does not exist for low-wage labor.

Conservatives will claim, accurately, that entitlements skew the labor market and should be done away with. I agree. Let's do away with them by aligning the expenses and revenues of government, labor and business.

Republicans, being compassionate and pragmatic, will embrace the idea that a minimum standard of living is a moral imperative. Accordingly, Republicans should stand on another one of their core principles — efficient government. Align labor's benefits and costs.

Republicans should place the burden of a minimum standard of living on the businesses that benefit from the labor they employ and release the taxpayer from subsidizing those wages.

By not aligning expenses and revenues

### Guest column



Norman Pappous is a member of the Galveston City Council.

government has interfered in the labor market, raised taxes, and created inefficient bureaucracies — three things that Republicans constantly voice outrage at.

Consequently, and most importantly, government has co-opted economic power from the low-wage labor they are supposedly seeking to help. Let's look at the other end of the wage spectrum for guidance.

Aligning expenses and revenues is done as a normal course of business on Wall Street where productivity dictates year-end bonuses. A base salary reflects a certain standard of living and if the employee's productivity results in profits, they share in the bounty.

Let's follow the Republican ideals of a responsible local government, reject Democratic federalism, and apply that model to Texas' municipalities.

Galveston could set a minimum wage that reflects the community's minimum living standard. Galveston's labor would be compensated by the businesses that benefit from the labor's productivity.

The minimum wage would result in a community where no Section 8 is needed, where no food stamps are issued, where not one GISD student is labeled as a free/reduced school lunch recipient, and where a parent can work 40 hours a week and have enough time left to raise productive, well-adjusted children.

Think about all the state/federal entitlements that could be defunded and result in taxpayer savings.

I guarantee you that Galveston's City Council could arrive at a minimum wage figure that is more accurate, and fair, than what is determined in Austin or Washington.

Is this a perfect solution? No, but it's better than what we have.

Will this policy result in higher prices? Likely, but it will also result in pricing that accurately reflects the cost of production. Right now that cost is hidden in our tax bills.

## A fair tax plan includes everyone

Now that the November elections are over and Republicans have the majority in the House and Senate, both sides are looking for issues they can agree on and find solutions for.

One of the issues everyone, Republicans and Democrats alike, agree that desperately needs reform is our hopelessly complicated and unfair Federal Tax Code. This is on both parties' list of high priorities for legislation.

The income tax began in 1913, with only 400 pages, and only 0.5 percent of American income earners paid any income tax at all. That has grown to over 73,000 pages in 2012, with hundreds more added every year, encouraged and mainly written by lobbyists representing special interests seeking tax advantages.

This tax code has become so complex and

### Guest column



Bill Fullen lives in Galveston.

burdensome that even tax accountants and Internal Revenue Service agents regularly misinterpret the rules and regulations.

Every year, Congress tinkers with and "simplifies" the Tax Code, mainly to get large contributions from lobbyists and special interests for re-election expenses. This federal tax code is impossible to fix. It needs to be eliminated and replaced with a tax that is both simple and fair.

There is only one plan that would accomplish this and that is the Fair Tax plan. A 23 percent national retail sales tax that will eliminate all federal income taxes

on individuals, as well as businesses and at the same time, abolish the feared Internal Revenue Service, which has grown much too powerful and has been riddled with scandals, corruption and political targeting used to suppress certain groups and individuals.

The Fair Tax was conceived right here in Houston, decades ago, and millions of dollars have been spent refining and researching the plan. It has been enthusiastically endorsed and supported by taxpayers, and many politicians all across America, who have taken time to read and educate themselves about it.

Ironically, today's current income tax scheme was originally introduced by a conservative Democratic senator named Joseph Bailey, also from Texas.

Wouldn't it be nice to never have to fill out another income tax form

or, more than likely, have to pay someone to do it for you? No dreaded letter from the IRS informing you of an impending audit and how great it would be to be allowed to keep 100 percent of your hard earned payroll checks?

Wouldn't it be nice to know that drug dealers, illegal immigrants, tax cheats and billionaires, with legions of tax accountants, would have to pay their fair share? Wouldn't it be nice to know exactly how much federal tax you are paying every time you purchase something at retail, instead of all the hidden (embedded) taxes you pay every day and don't even realize it?

If you did, politicians would certainly think twice about raising taxes in order to spend more money they don't have, to buy themselves more votes in the next election? Find out more at [www.fairtax.org](http://www.fairtax.org).

### ROBERT LYNCH

Suggested height limits along the seawall

» Coming Thursday



## From the files of Texas' oldest newspaper

From the archives of The Daily News for November 19:

» In 1914, Texas Farm Women obtained attention from state federated clubs.

» In 1914, port elevators worked on a 14 hour schedule to maintain export

facilities.

» In 1964, a \$19 million development called Marina City, to be built on the east end of Galveston, was announced by developers of the project.

From Staff Reports