

El Paso County Planning Commission, Oct. 15

Initial plans for Grandwood Ranch recommended for approval

By Helen Walklett

At its Oct. 15 meeting, the El Paso County Planning Commission recommended for approval a rezoning and preliminary plan request for the proposed Grandwood Ranch development north of Higby Road. It also recommended for approval a waiver request associated with a forthcoming minor subdivision application off Highway 83.

Grandwood Ranch rezone and preliminary plan

The commissioners heard rezoning and preliminary plan applications for the Grandwood Ranch development at their Oct. 15 meeting. The 147-acre property is on the north side of Higby Road and about 1.5 miles northwest of the Baptist Road and Roller Coaster Road intersection. Access to the development will be at two points off Higby Road.

The owner, Sylvan Vista Inc., is requesting that the property be rezoned from RR-5 (residential rural) to RR-2.5 (residential rural). The concurrent preliminary plan application seeks approval for 48 single-family residential lots, with drainage tracts, rights-of-way, and two open space tracts. The applicant is also requesting approval for pre-development site grading. Water will be provided by individual wells.

The preliminary plan application does not include a request for a finding of water sufficiency and there are still details to be agreed upon between the county and the applicant concerning the extension of Furrow Road to Higby Road. The extension will be located within the proposed development and will be constructed by the developer. Therefore, the applicant is not requesting the administrative approval of final plats; these will be subject to the public hearing process before the Planning Commission and El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

The county states that the proposed development is primarily surrounded by properties zoned RR-2.5, although some property to the north is zoned RR-5. During the public comment part of the hearing, John Mills, the owner of the RR-5-zoned lots, argued that the lots on the northern boundary of the proposed development should be larger to provide a better

transition between it and his property. He stated he would like to see some type of compromise from the developer.

Responding, Gregory Shaner, executive associate at Matrix Design Group Inc., representing the developer, said the development would in fact provide a good transition between Mills' property to the north and the proposed Town of Monument urban-level development, known as Home Place Ranch, to the south. He said, "We will provide a good buffer to future urban development."

Nina Ruiz, planning manager, Planning and Community Development, told the commissioners the county had suggested a deeper setback on the development's northern boundary to help with transition but the applicant had decided not to go down this route. Shaner commented that the proposed lots are deep and there was no point in an additional setback as most people would instinctively want their house closer to the roadway to give a shorter driveway.

There are jurisdictional wetlands on the property and the applicant is in communication with the Army Corps of Engineers to determine if a separate permit or approval will be required. Ruiz told the commissioners that this determination had not yet been made but must occur before a final plat hearing could be scheduled. There is also a Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat on the property. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided a clearance letter stating that the development is not likely to adversely affect the species. Both the wetlands and the mouse habitat will be contained within the open space tracts to minimize disturbance.

Before the vote on the preliminary plan application, Commissioner Tom Bailey said, "I will say that the way this is coming forward without administrative changes in the future, for somebody that has concerns about this development, I believe that the process provides adequate safeguards so all of these issues, all of these concerns, are going to be addressed when it comes to the roadway, drainage, all those things."

"So, I just don't want anyone to feel like we're rushing into this and something is being pushed

down your throat," he said. "The process is very effective and especially in this case where the developer recognizes that there are some of these issues. The final decision doesn't reside here. It resides at the county commissioners, but it will come back to us and the commissioners again as we go further into the process."

The vote to recommend the applications for approval was unanimous. They will now be heard at the BOCC meeting on Nov. 10.

Johnson subdivision waiver

Also at the Oct. 15 meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously to recommend for approval a request by Delroy and Janet Johnson for a waiver of certain subdivision regulations under county's land development code to allow them to provide safe, private access to three proposed new lots on their property. If the waivers are granted, the Johnsons intend to file a minor subdivision application to enable them to create four lots on their 29-acre property on Highway 83, slightly north of its intersection with Old North Gate Road.

The subdivision would create three 5-acre lots, one for each of their sons. The Johnsons would remain in the existing residence on the fourth lot.

The first waiver requests that a private road be allowed to access four lots where normally it can only provide access to three. The second requests that this private driveway not be required to be constructed to county standards. This is because to do so would involve significant tree removal and land disturbance on the heavily forested property. The final waiver request asks for a reduction in the minimum frontage requirement because not all the lots would have direct frontage onto the highway.

Commissioner Brian Risley thanked the Johnsons for going through an extended or difficult process. He said, "I just wanted to extend my appreciation for you doing things in the right way and in the proper order."

This is now scheduled to be heard at the Nov. 10 BOCC meeting.

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Woodmoor Improvement Association, Oct. 28

Board approves replacement of Barn windows

By Jackie Burhans

The Woodmoor Improvement Association (WIA) board met on Oct. 28 to approve replacing windows in The Barn, prepare for the 2021 budget, and respond to an inquiry for a property owner. Board Directors Per Suhr and Tom Smith were absent.

Window replacements

Bert Jean, director of Common Areas, announced that a bid was available for replacing some of the 25-year-old windows in the Barn. Jean motioned to approve an expense not to exceed \$17,400 for replacing the four upper windows and three lower windows on the east side of the Barn. WIA is changing out casement windows for sash and slider style windows given the failure of the crank mechanism. The new windows will be Energy Star compliant with an R22 rating; per code the lower portion of the window will be tempered. The project is expected to cost less, but the request included a buffer in case of any overruns. The board unanimously approved the request.

2021 budget preparation

Director Connie Brown noted that she had received input for the 2021 budget, which will be discussed and approved at the next board meeting. The budget must be approved in November so that dues notices can go out by mid-December. The draft budget should be available ahead of that meeting at www.woodmoor.org under the Covenants section, at the bottom of the Board of Directors page.

Owner inquiry

During the owner comment portion of the meeting, the father of a resident in The Dunes said he was attending on behalf of his daughter, who was busy. He expressed concerns on her behalf about builders' issues and security. He said her builder, Aspen Homes, hasn't resolved complaints about a sump pump drain, a cracked driveway, and missing rebar.

President Brian Bush noted that The Dunes has its own sub-homeowners association under WIA but the gentleman said they had not been helpful. Ad-



Above: Construction is proceeding at The Beach at Woodmoor, between Lake Woodmoor and Lewis-Palmer Elementary School. For more information see www.ocn.me/v17n8.htm#wia. Photo by Allen Alchian.

ministrators Bob Pearsall noted that WIA does monitor construction of new developments but doesn't get involved in home defects. He said it sounded like a warranty issue and noted that homeowners have six years to take action against a builder. WIA, said Pearsall, doesn't have specific authority in this case but offered to call some of his contacts to try to help.

The owner's father also noted security concerns since his daughter lives right along Woodmoor Drive. He said she had had issues with people coming over

her fence and vandalizing her home and asked if WIA allowed privacy walls or screens. Bush noted that WIA does not allow privacy fences but that the Architectural Control Committee would be willing to look at any other proposed solutions. He also offered that the Woodmoor Public Safety chief, Kevin Nielsen, would be able to discuss security issues.

Board highlights

- Forestry administrator Matthew Nelson reported that he is processing the fire mitigation grant