

El Paso Board of County Commissioners, March 10, 17, 19, 24, and 26

Temporary meeting rules adopted during COVID-19 outbreak; construction at Struthers Road/Gleneagle Drive intersection nears completion

By Helen Walklett

The El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has made changes to its meeting rules to allow it to proceed if in-person meetings are not possible during the COVID-19 outbreak. During March, the

county also provided an update on the roundabout construction at the Struthers Road/Gleneagle Drive intersection. At regular meetings in March, the commissioners approved a minor subdivision request for a property in Black Forest, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the 2020 Black Forest slash and mulch program, and the transfer of developers' fees to school districts.

Meeting rules changed amid COVID-19 outbreak

At its March 19 meeting, following discussion at its March 17 meeting, the BOCC adopted temporary meeting rules to allow all or some commissioners to attend meetings remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak. Commissioner Cami Bremer attended the following March 24 meeting from home via Skype. She and Commissioner Stan VanderWerf, along with many senior county staff, also remotely attended the March 26 emergency COVID-19 BOCC meeting, which discussed the statewide stay-at-home order.

Due to potential restrictions related to the COVID-19 response, anyone wanting to participate in a BOCC meeting is asked to contact Kristy Smart, clerk to the board, at KristySmart@elpasoco.com in advance. At this time the county is also streaming BOCC meetings on Facebook Live through its "El Paso County, Colorado" page. Members of the public can type a question in the comment field and a member of the staff in the auditorium will then ask the question on their behalf.

The El Paso County Planning Commission (EPCPC) postponed its March 17 meeting and initially stated that meetings would be postponed indefinitely. It now will hold its April 7 meeting in the BOCC hearing room at 200 S. Cascade Ave. at 1 p.m., and the agenda includes the items postponed from March 17.

Struthers Road/ Gleneagle Drive roundabout construction

In a March 25 press release, the county advised that

construction work at the Struthers Road/Gleneagle Drive intersection is nearing completion and thanked the residents and businesses in that area for their patience and understanding.

The statement continues, "The El Paso County Department of Public Works' goal was to improve the corridor for the traveling public by constructing a roundabout and associated approaches, as well as an underground drainage system and pedestrian improvements at the intersection and along the north-east side of Struthers Road. Due to unforeseen issues we encountered and unpredictable weather, the project has had a few setbacks, however we are now on the last leg of the project with the light at the end of the tunnel fast approaching. We still expect to have the majority of the project wrapped up in the next couple of weeks, with only minor landscaping left to do."

Work to replace the four-way stop at the intersection began in late June 2019 and funding was provided by county.

Poenitsch minor subdivision request

At their meeting on March 10, the commissioners unanimously approved a request for a minor subdivision by Tom Poenitsch and Christy Mullings to create three single-family lots on an 18.86-acre parcel of land zoned RR-5 (residential rural). The property is at the northwest corner of the Herring Road and Shoup Road intersection. The EPCPC unanimously recommended the application for approval at its Feb. 18 meeting. See https://www.ocn.me/v20n3.htm?zoom_highlight=poenitsch.

Discussion at the hearing centered on access to the proposed subdivision, which the county has granted via Herring Road. Dale Gardner, the adjacent neighbour north of the property, spoke in opposition to the application, saying, "I don't understand why Planning is insisting the 70-year access from Shoup is no longer acceptable when there are presently 28 property access drives in that short one-mile distance [from Black Forest Road and Herring Road]." Gardner said he believed the application was in violation of the county's code. He also expressed concerns that the proposed access road on the property was now shown on plans as crossing the wetland area with no culvert shown and asked the commissioners not to approve the application until the site plans reflect full conformance with all requirements and permits.

Eric Watts, of Oliver E. Watts Consulting Engineer Inc., on behalf of the applicant, said that they had wanted to continue access via Shoup Road but had been told before submitting the application that access would need to be via Herring Road because the county intended to stop future access onto Shoup Road due to its higher road classification. Craig Dossy, executive director of Planning and Community Development, clarified that the access decision was made for safety reasons as the county worked to get as many of the new access points onto minor roads where speed limits and traffic numbers are generally lower.

Gabe Sevigny, planner II, Planning and Community Development, stated that the applicant would have to ensure conformance with the approved drainage report, and this would ensure that matters such as culvert sizing and placement were addressed at the site application stage. As he had done at the Planning Commission meeting, he addressed concerns raised by the neighboring property owner that there was an intention to run a business from the property. Sevigny again said that any such plans would require a future application which would go through the full approval process.

Black Forest slash and mulch program

At its March 19 meeting, the BOCC unanimously approved the 2020 memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Black Forest Slash and Mulch Committee (SAMCOM), the non-profit that is responsible for the daily operation of the Black Forest slash and mulch program.

The program, which began in 1994 and is staffed entirely by volunteers, accepts slash (tree debris including branches, leaves, needles, etc.) from residents that is ground into mulch that is available free of charge to the public. Educational programs and

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