

El Paso County Planning Commission, Sept. 17

Abert Ranch preliminary plan recommended for approval

By Helen Walklett

The El Paso County Planning Commission recommended for approval a preliminary plan request for the Abert Ranch subdivision in Black Forest at its Sept. 17 meeting. The commissioners also heard a presentation from Judy von Ahlefeldt about her proposal for a Prairie Necklace to connect areas of ungraded prairie in Colorado Springs and El Paso County.

Abert Ranch subdivision

The Planning Commission unanimously recommended for approval a preliminary plan request for the Abert Ranch subdivision. The 40.4-acre property, zoned RR-2.5 (residential rural), is located north of Hodgen Road, south of Silver Nell Drive, west of Stepler Road, and east of the Walden development. It is within the Northern Grasslands portion of the Black Forest Preservation Plan area. Once approved, the plan

would authorize the development of 10 single-family lots and 3.85 acres of right of way.

The lots will be a minimum of 2.5 acres, with those at the eastern boundary being a minimum of 5 acres.

Access to the development will be through the Grandview and Settlers View developments. Emergency access is proposed to the south through the Settlers Ranch development with the expectation that this would become a county-owned and -maintained right-of-way in the future. Stepler Road north of Silver Nell Drive is currently a gravel road that has exceeded its designed capacity. County has determined that the addition of the Abert Ranch, Settlers View, and Settlers Ranch developments warrant this part of Stepler Road being upgraded to pavement. The Abert Ranch developer's share of this cost is \$24,605.

Water will be provided by individual wells and there will be individual on-site wastewater treatment systems. The State Engineer's Office made a finding of water adequacy and the County Attorney's Office recommended a finding of sufficiency for water quality and dependability.

The request is the first preliminary plan application the commissioners have heard since amendments to the county's Land Development Code, most notably the subdivision regulations, came into effect on Sept. 1. The changes allow the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to delegate final plat approval to the executive director of Planning and Community Development, meaning such requests would be approved administratively rather than through the public hearing process. This can only happen if there have been findings for water sufficiency and adequate public improvements at the preliminary plan stage.

Earlier in the Sept. 17 meeting, Craig Dossey, executive director of Planning and Community Development, told the commissioners, "I expect you will see a lot more water sufficiency requests at the preliminary plan stage simply in the interest of trying to save time and money on the final plats. [It] cannot be stated enough that two hearings essentially on the final plat [are] costly, not only from a time perspective but also from the financial perspective of the developer for having to have their consultants at both hearings." He reassured the commissioners that if there were issues with a final plat request then it would not be resolved administratively but would go through the public hearing process.

The preliminary plan application is now due to be heard at the BOCC meeting on Oct. 8.

Prairie Necklace proposal

Von Ahlefeldt, a landscape ecologist and long-time resident of Black Forest, presented her vision for A Prairie Necklace. She proposed joining disconnected patches of ungraded native prairie grassland to soften the urban-rural interface of the city and county to gently transition development into permanent open space to serve "for the movement of animals, for people to enjoy, for snow to drift, and just to help define borders." Noting that Colorado Springs has been creeping closer to Black Forest over time, von Ahlefeldt said, "It looks to me that there's a necklace of prairie around Black Forest. The forest is a gem sitting in its own setting and so I think we're at a critical time right now with the planning that's been going on. ... I think this is our last chance to do something." Although it would be a long-term project, she feels action needs to be taken now to save key pieces of land in developing areas. The necklace would then grow over time as areas are connected as development progresses.

She stressed that this could be achieved only by the city and county's Planning Commissions, Planning Departments and the development community working together, and she urged for this to happen. Ahlefeldt can be contacted at blackforestnews@earthlink.net.

County master plan

Residents who wish to advocate for the Black Forest area may want to attend the Black Forest Area's Master Plan Advisory Committee meeting, Oct. 9, 1 p.m., Pikes Peak Regional Building Department, 2880 International Circle, Ste. 110, Colorado Springs.

Helen Walklett can be reached at helenwalklett@ocn.me.

Lucy Ellen Hatmaker Farrar



Oct 5, 1936 – Sept. 17, 2019
Happy Birthday, Dear Lucy!

Born in Knoxville, TN and lived in Maryville, Bristol TN, Saudi Arabia, London, England and in Monument, CO for the past 33 years. While in Maryville, she taught speech and coached the debate team at Maryville College, was a founding board member of the Appalachian Ballet Company, President of the Junior Childhowee Club, and active in local theater.

She was a generous and caring mother, sister, and grandmother. Lucy supported many charities and people in need throughout her life.

She is preceded in death by her son Robert D. Proffitt, Jr., brother Tom Hatmaker (Maryville, TN), and former husband Arthur Bushore (Bristol, TN).

Lucy is survived by husband of 36 years, Charles R. Farrar and her children Karen and grandson Austin (Monument, CO), Stephen and wife Arnita, granddaughters Layla and Maya (Cupertino, CA), Kevin and wife Kimberly, grandson Kevin and granddaughter Kelsey (Maryville, TN), former daughter-in-law Connie Proffitt Salazar (Monument, CO) and granddaughter Megan Proffitt Hadden (Broomfield, CO) sister Libby Cothorn and husband Garnett (White House, TN), She is also survived by her stepchildren Suzanne Kellison (Hot Springs Village, AK), Charles Richard Farrar, Jr. and wife Charlene (Gonzales, LA) and Mark Steven Farrar and wife Kayla (Houston, TX).

The family held a private gathering in Monument, CO. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Pike's Peak Hospice, 2550 Tenderfoot Hill Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80906 or ALS Association : RMC, 10855 Dover St., Suite 500, Westminster, CO 80021.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be inter-

preted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

See also the message to readers on page 1.

The letters this month are arranged in alphabetical order by the submitter's last name.

It's all about the kids!

Or is it? In the Feb. 3, 2018 issue of OCN (page 7), D38 board President Matthew Clawson reportedly said that after seeing the interior of Grace Best, he would not want his children attending there. And "bringing it up to code would be very expensive." Then why is the Grace Best School building being used for programs such as the Home-school Academy, special needs transition students, the Robotics Club, farmers markets, etc.? What has our board president done, over the past four years, to ensure that Grace Best is safe for all community members utilizing the facility if it's not up to code? Was President Clawson more interested in getting plans to build a new school than getting plans to fix up Grace Best for a fraction of the cost?

Is this really proven conservative leadership we trust?

Ivan Anthony

Vote "yes" on question 4A

Question 4A is clearly stated. By voting for the Lewis-Palmer District 38



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LETTERS (Cont. on 20)