

arise. The community clubhouse, called a business event center by county staff, would be for the use of the residents and the sisters of the monastery and their guests and would have four bedrooms. It would also contain a garage for storing community cars. The development would have a community water system with one well and four advanced wastewater treatment systems.

Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez Jr. asked why the applicant was not maintaining 2.5 acres per lot, which would allow 20 homes instead of 27 on the parcel. He was not suggesting that 20 homes be built on 2.5-acre lots but rather that the number of homes in the clustered development be representative of the number that would be allowed in the 2.5-acre zoning. Gorman replied that the development was going to be very small and single story and that it supported the innovative water and wastewater system.

Commissioner Mark Waller commented that if the PUD were to be approved, it would allow significant density development and asked what there would be to stop the applicant coming back later with a request for further high-density development on the same parcel? Gorman replied that the covenants and declarations would make it difficult for this to happen and that it is the applicant's intent that the open space never be developed.

Vincent Crowder, property and building manager at the monastery, spoke to address the commissioners' concerns, quoting from the Black Forest Land Use Committee's submission that ended with: "The Land Use Committee does not see this as setting a precedent for more dense development but rather a rational view of the extreme conservation efforts of the Benet Hill Monastery." He said the proposed development more than complied with the spirit of the small area plan and that the covenants would require any changes to the development to be approved by all the owners of the HOA, the sisters owning a 1/27th share of it. Crowder also

explained that the nature of the innovative wastewater system, which disperses the treated water throughout two-thirds of the undeveloped part of the lot, would prohibit further development.

One person spoke against it at the hearing, raising concerns about the wastewater system discharging onto the land and possible fire danger. An adjacent property owner spoke via telephone in support of the application.

The commissioners voted 4-1 to approve the requests. Commissioner Gonzalez voted against them because of his concerns that the development was being clustered on 1.84 acres rather than 2.5 acres, where the latter would allow for around 20 homes rather than 27.

The applicant has requested the administrative approval of future final plats. This decision lies with the director of the Planning and Community Development Department.

WMMI update on its variance application

In August, the WMMI came before the BOCC to appeal an executive decision authorizing litigation against it after events were held at the property that were not allowed uses under its zoning. At the time, the BOCC voted to table the appeal until December to allow the museum time to pursue a recently filed variance of use application. See https://www.ocn.me/v20n9.htm?zoom_highlight=%22grant+dewey%22

At the Dec. 1 BOCC meeting, Michael Desmond, assistant county attorney, gave the commissioners an update on the museum's variance application. Although progress had been made, he said more needed to be made to conclude the matter and that staff felt six months would be enough time to resolve the situation. He requested that the commissioners deny the museum's appeal but stay litigation for six months while allowing the director of Planning and Community Development to extend the stay further if necessary.

Nina Ruiz, planning manager, Planning and

Community Development, said that staff had reviewed the application and had facilitated meetings between the museum and outside agencies to discuss matters including floodplain, wetlands, and potential Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat. She said the county had recently received a revised submission from the museum. This had not included a traffic study as the museum was still working with its consultant on this.

Grant Dewey, executive director of the WMMI, acknowledged that there had been some concern about the pace of the application, saying, "Please know that we are working on this almost daily to keep this moving forward."

The commissioners voted unanimously to deny the appeal but stay litigation for six months, with the possibility that this grace period could be extended further if needed.

2021 budget

At their Dec. 8 meeting, the commissioners voted 4-1 to adopt and appropriate the 2021 budget. Gonzalez voted against. He opposed the additional funding allocated for the I-25 Gap project, which he stated was not needed by the state to complete the project and which he felt could be better used to improve county-maintained roads. The other commissioners disagreed, stating that it was important for the county to be seen to work successfully in partnership with other agencies.

Proclamation recognizing Commissioner Waller's service

The commissioners recognized Commissioner Mark Waller's service to the county at their Dec. 15 meeting. In particular, he was commended for his work on the I-25 Gap project. He has been the commissioner for District 2 since July 2016 and leaves office on Jan. 12, 2021.

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

El Paso County Planning Commission, Dec. 17

Rezoning and final plat applications for Black Forest properties recommended for approval

By Helen Walklett

At its Dec. 17 meeting, the El Paso County Planning Commission recommended for approval a rezoning application by Rob Haddock to allow the construction of an office building in Black Forest near the intersection of Shoup Road and Black Forest Road. The commissioners also recommended for approval a final plat application for the Winsome development at the northwest corner of the Hodgen Road and Meridian Road intersection.

Haddock rezoning

The commissioners heard a request by Haddock to rezone his 4.77-acre property from A-5 (agricultural) to CC (commercial community). The property is on the west side of Black Forest Road, just to the north of the Shoup Road and Black Forest Road intersection.

Haddock, a long-time resident of Black Forest, is proposing construction of an 8,800-square-foot office building, with a 4,400-square-foot footprint, to facilitate collaboration between the executive staff of his family business, Metal Roof Innovations Ltd., who currently work from home. In total, 16 people would use the office, with up to half traveling for business or working from home at any one time. Six others would fly in at quarterly intervals for full team meetings. In spring 2020, Haddock began construction of a barn on the property, which is allowed under the current A-5 zoning. The intention is to repurpose it as a studio to support the business if the rezoning is approved. The manufacturing part of the business will remain out of state.

There was previously a veterinary hospital on the site, allowed via a special use approval in 1985. This was destroyed during the Black Forest Fire in 2013. Since acquiring the property, Haddock has removed all burn debris, constructed berms along Black Forest Road, and begun reforestation and revegetation of the property with the land now a recovering meadow. Irrigation water is contracted in from elsewhere.

The office building is designed to look like a

domestic residence. Haddock has proposed in his letter of intent that a restrictive covenant be put in place that will require all owners to maintain the residential character even if the property is sold and redeveloped by others in the future. The property is surrounded by single-family dwellings. There is a commercial area some 980 feet from the property to the southeast and south that has various commercial zonings. Businesses here include an animal hospital, offices, a retail shop, a gas station, several restaurants, a school, and a wedding venue.

There has been substantial opposition to the application. Rod Dickson, planner I, Planning and Community Development, said the county had received 47 letters in objection, with concerns raised over the visual impact of the proposed development and its incompatibility with the surrounding area. A petition with 517 signatures against the plans has also been submitted to the county. During the public comment part of the hearing, five spoke for the application and six spoke against. Terry Stokka, chairman, Black Forest Land Use Committee, said the proposal's impact would be very minimal and an improvement to the lot. Opposers asked if the commissioners had seen the petition and voiced fears that the application's approval would set an unwanted precedent. They raised concerns over increased traffic, water sufficiency, and the nature of the Black Forest area being changed, particularly if a non-community serving commercial operation was allowed.

Commissioner Eric Moraes noted that the rezoning allows for a number of possible uses. He voiced concerns that the property could be sold in the future and another allowed use under the CC zoning might be proposed, particularly as the county does not enforce covenants. He said he would have preferred the application to have been brought forward as a variance request. The commissioners voted 9-1 to recommend the application for approval. Moraes voted no.

It is now due to be heard at the El Paso Board of County Commissioners' (BOCC) meeting on Jan. 26.

Winsome development

Also at the Dec. 17 meeting, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend for approval a final plat request for the first filing at the Winsome development. The final plat consists of 164.4 acres with 47 single-family residential lots, three tracts for open space, drainage and utility purposes, and rights-of-way. The lots will be served by individual wells and onsite wastewater treatment systems. The property is at the northwest corner of the Hodgen Road and Meridian Road intersection and is the redevelopment of the McCune Ranch.

The entire property is 767 acres and the preliminary plan for 143 residential lots and one commercial lot was approved in July 2019. At the same



HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021!

WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST IN THIS NEW YEAR! I WOULD LOVE TO HELP YOU MEET YOUR REAL ESTATE GOALS IN 2021! CALL ME!

Please call me for more information!

ERA
REAL ESTATE
Shields

Val Ross-Coy
Broker Associate
(719) 237-8787
vcroy@erashields.com
val.erashields.com