

March 12, 2021

NEPCO
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Reference: Sterling Ranch Filing No. 2 (Phase 1) Final Plat

NEPCO is providing the collective input from its membership that includes approximately 9,500 homeowners, 45 HOAs, and 20,000 registered voters within and around Monument, Colorado. The purpose of NEPCO, a volunteer coalition of Homeowner Associations in northern El Paso County, is to promote a community environment in which a high quality of life can be sustained for constituent associations, their members, and families in northern El Paso County. We collectively address growth and land use issues with El Paso County Planners and the Town of Monument, as well as addressing HOA issues of common interest among the members. NEPCO achieves this by taking necessary steps to protect the property rights of the members, encouraging the beautification and planned development and maintenance of northern El Paso County.

Since our last three reviews of Sterling Ranch “developments/phases” (August 2018, July 2020, and December 2020), El Paso County has generally ignored our pleas to view this project’s water use as either unjustified, excessive, or disproportional to the offsite impacts. We still feel strongly that this development is an unwise precedent for the future of land use and water use planning in El Paso County. Given that El Paso County has now approved rezoning to RS-6000, along with a number of final plats for various filings and phases, we offer our last bolt.

1. In our view, this development seems be incompatible with a great deal of nearby RR-5 zoned property to the east and southeast of this development – at least according to the El Paso County Tax Assessor’s Office property search website data. Although El Paso County allowed a toehold to urban density when they approved the original Sterling Ranch proposal years ago, now that approval is being used as a cudgel-like basis to force additional urban density as one moves further north northeast. More Powers Boulevard-like density is not appropriate in this area!
2. This development allows more than 24 times the water use the community was reasonably expecting! What should have been at most, 2 homes on 8.3337 acres of buildable land (final plat summary, sheet 1), expands to 49 homes!
3. In accordance with EPC Land Development Code, Section 7.2.1.D3(f), Criteria for Approval for a Final Plat, we do not believe that the proposed subdivision is in general conformance with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Master Plan, in particular the following provisions:
 - a. Policy 3.1.6 – Support the systematic monitoring and careful administration of the bedrock aquifers to avoid over-allocation of groundwater;

- b. Policy 3.1.8 – Promote water supply systems and augmentation arrangements which maximize the effective use of near-surface ground water supplies without jeopardizing existing water rights or established wells; and
 - c. Policy 3.1.9 – Discourage the severance of all water rights from overlying properties unless an alternate water supply can be guaranteed. This supply should be adequate to support uses consistent with the adopted master plan for the area.
4. In support of this opinion, we use the developer’s own words from his Letter of Intent, Page 7, that the 2060 water supply for Region 3 is projected to be 8,284-acre feet per year and the projected demand is 8,307-acre feet; and that in the year 2060 the Sterling system is expected to serve 7,310 single family equivalent homes requiring 2,580-acre feet per year. This means that the Region 3 water supply will be over-allocated and that the Sterling Ranch need is almost one third of this demand! In addition, in order to meet future demands, the developer admits that off-site resources will be required – encouraging the severance of off-site water rights from their overlying properties – at least in the next several years.
 5. Unreasonable growth will hurt current and future residents’ (including nearby NEPCO residents) reliance on a stable/slowly growing/planned infrastructure for utilities, roads, water resources, and population increases.
 6. Will this development include street lights? All lighting -- commercial, municipal, and residential -- should be required to be Dark Sky compliant. The location, 12 miles east southeast of the Air Force Academy Observatory and consisting mostly of shortgrass prairie, should set the standard for night sky friendly lighting by minimizing glare while reducing light trespass and skyglow in our night skies.
 7. Updated Traffic Impact Study: We strongly encourage El Paso County to closely scrutinize changes in access to Vollmer Road from the development, along with existing traffic volumes at Vollmer intersections. Use of terms like “nothing significant requires an update” (when turning movements will result in some localized shifts) and “indicate only minor impacts” (when traffic counts were conducted during pandemic-related restrictions and then compared with a year earlier—when less development was present) do not add to transparency.
 8. Noise Study: Apparently a noise study was conducted by LSC which concluded that no noise mitigation was needed. Nevertheless, the developer states in his Letter of Intent that a noise wall as depicted by LSC will be constructed. Our only criticism here is that a 6-foot-high concrete wall does nothing to prevent noise at the typical height of a bedroom window in a two-story home! And taking decibel measurements at a height of 5 feet near the setback of a lot downslope from the relevant road only amplifies this mismatch in relevant “ear” placement.

Thank you for the opportunity afforded NEPCO to engage in this process to work with El Paso County to ensure we have planned, responsible growth. NEPCO requests that our organization be informed of subsequent actions related to this development and be a participant in the review and coordination process.

//SIGNED//
 Paul E. Pirog
 Vice Chairman
 NEPCO Transportation and Land Use Committee

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 Greg Lynd
 President, NEPCO