

January 15, 2021

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Reference: Grandwood Ranch 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. 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.

1. Since we recently reviewed this application in November 2020, the following paragraphs contain both new and old comments on this development.
 - a. We still strongly believe that a Planning and Community Development Department requirement for tracked changes, like you employ for Land Development Code changes, should be mandated. This would save substantial time for all reviewers, including the public, and be more efficient for agency commentators, staff planners, and for hearings.
2. We understand that as part of the rezoning and preliminary plan approval, the developer was required to “continue to work” with one of the RR-5 bordering neighbors to add setbacks or building envelopes near their lot – and that further discussions have only just begun as of this date. It appears so far that the developer merely included its November 2020 BoCC Hearing offer of a 75-foot setback on Lots 28 & 29 in the final plat as sufficient evidence of working with the neighbor. El Paso County should halt further development of this land until this conditional requirement is met and both parties are satisfied.
 - a. After reviewing the video of the November 2020 BoCC Hearing on the rezoning and preliminary plan, we saw that the developer apparently persuasively suggested that any homes built on Lots 28 & 29 of Grandwood Ranch would likely be placed toward the south end of the lots—to reduce the driveway lengths and to reduce need for landscaping support/retaining walls since the lots slope toward the southwest. A few counter arguments against that notion follow:
 - i. The highest elevations of these lots are on the northern border (near the RR-5 lots) and most people prefer a higher elevation and the grander views that this would provide;
 - ii. According to the September 11, 2019 Geology and Soils Evaluation Report, “moderate to gentle slopes on this site are not considered to be prone to slope instability”, thereby diminishing the need for a flatter (southern) location for the homes;

- iii. Lot 29 contains a sizable drainage easement along its entire western border, thereby narrowing the lot and potential location for the home; and
 - iv. The OWTS report, Figure 7, Septic Suitability Map, places the possible absorption field locations to the south in both lots, thereby mandating home location further to the north.
3. It is still unclear from either the Storm Water or Drainage reports whether mitigation of excess water draining into Lots 29, 31, 42, and 44 of this property will be sufficient.
- a. In support of this mitigation, please refer to the Sep 2019 Geology & Soils Evaluation Report (Page 6) from the Preliminary Plan application which was incorporated into the current Final Plat Grading and Evaluation Plan (Note 28 on page 3 of 9). It states, "However, surface runoff water from the surrounding area is currently being directed into historical 1st order drainage features that cross the project site. These historical surface water flows must not be interrupted or blocked by new construction of the proposed streets, homes, or driveways." We do note some drainage culverts located beneath roads which interrupt this surface water flow, but will this be enough to prevent flooding or creation of swampy-like conditions on homeowners' property near the road?
4. The updated Traffic Impact Study (TIS) no longer appears to be located on the EDARP site for this Final Plat. Assuming that it is still current and relevant, Page 12, states "The Grandwood Ranch project traffic is estimated to represent a 7.5 percent increase in morning peak hour traffic northbound approach traffic at the Highway 105/Furrow intersection and a 5.3 percent increase in the afternoon peak hour northbound approach traffic at this intersection." This translates (by our rough estimation using TIS figures) into increased delay times at that intersection of 7.15% in the morning and 9.25% in the afternoon.
- a. Despite the TIS's mantra that an intersection is projected to operate at LOS F or a signalized intersection is required "regardless of whether or not Grandwood Ranch is developed," this development will actually increase traffic and delay times which result in additional burdens on the local community. As such, the development should be required to fully pay its own way through appropriate fees and to place funds in escrow accounts for needed improvements as required.
 - b. The developer, through its TIS consultant, obtained a number of approvals for ECM Standard Deviation Requests. We urge the BoCC to re-look at these requests carefully, keeping in mind that safety is primary; the speed limits are routinely exceeded on Higby Road (see below); and that high school students are frequent drivers along Higby Road.
 - i. Wherever the east subdivision entrance intersection with Higby Road is finally located may create a blind entrance for traffic exiting the development and turning east bound. One would typically not be concerned about that problem on a road that stipulates a 35-mph speed limit.
 - ii. However, the TIS for Home Place Ranch completed by IDAX Data Solutions in May 2018 found that only 7.1% of the traffic on Higby Road was traveling at speeds under 40-mph (5-mph over the limit). 62% of the eastbound traffic was traveling between 45-mph and 75-mph. The average speed for eastbound traffic was 47.1-mph.
 - iii. The west subdivision entrance intersection, at Higby Road and Furrow Road, is on the slope just after Higby Road completes an "S" turn and is consistently icy in winter months, perhaps the only place, but perhaps not an entirely suitable place for an intersection.
 - iv. However, the same TIS for Home Place Ranch completed by IDAX Data Solutions found that only 4% of the westbound traffic on Higby Road was traveling at speeds under 40-mph

(5-mph over the limit). 82.6% of the westbound traffic was traveling between 45-mph and 80-mph. The average speed for westbound traffic was 50.2-mph.

- c. Finally, in our review of many TIS reports, we have never seen such long-term projected lengthy delays at an intersection before than at Highway 105/Furrow (more than 25 minutes long on Page 69)! The BoCC must keep this in mind and ensure all developers pay their fair share to fix this looming traffic disaster!
4. Under the Ponderosa Breaks Subarea 9 of the 2000 Tri-lakes Comprehensive Plan, it recommends improving north-south access roads, including Furrow and Roller Coaster Roads, to provide for both motorized and non-motorized traffic (the fact that this is not included in the 2040 Major Transportation Corridor Plan is irrelevant). We see no evidence that Furrow Road, designed in this development to extend from the existing Timberview subdivision south to intersect with Higby Road, contains sidewalks or bicycle lanes to satisfy that policy. (We believe that the Planning Commission also raised this concern at their hearing.) Since we understand that there are a number of walkers and cyclists in this adjacent neighborhood, the developer should ensure that safety, healthy lifestyles, and good neighborliness are encouraged by including sidewalks and/or bicycle lanes along Furrow Road.
5. Since rezoning, a preliminary plan, and early grading were all approved very recently, this development appears to be on a faster track than normal through the land use process. Although a quick procedure helps to save developer (and ultimately homebuyer) costs, NEPCO believes that this application still needs further close review by the Planning Commission/BoCC to determine whether it fully satisfies the Land Development Code Approval Criteria. This is true, especially in light of the safety concerns at the intersections with Higby Road, the lack of full coordination with neighbors for Lots 28 & 29, the road deviation approvals, the drainage issues, the incompatibility with the Tri-lakes Comprehensive Plan, and the lack of funding responsibility for lengthy development-caused traffic delays.

NEPCO requests that our organization be informed of subsequent actions related to this development and be a participant in the review and coordination process. Thank you.

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

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Greg Lynd
President, NEPCO