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From: Grace Foy <grace.allison@gmail.com>
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To: PCD Hearings
Cc: Mike Foy; Mary Scott
Subject: Monument Ridge East - November 21

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This email is in regards to the El Paso County Planning Commission Meeting which was held on Tuesday November 21, 2024.

I am writing to express my dismay at the overall process and at the behavior of several members of the Planning Commission, including the Chairman, Thomas Bailey.

I attended this meeting online and watched it in its entirety. Additionally, my husband, along with several neighbors, who all took an entire day off work, attended the duration of the 6 hour meeting in person. Ahead of the agenda, we heard the discussion regarding the Schmidt rezoning, and Thomas Bailey told the audience that this is the time for discussion and that there is often conversation from citizens that there is “no point” in coming to the meetings because it will make no difference. He assured the audience that this meeting was our chance to voice our concerns as no decision had been made yet.

However, for the duration of the 6 hour meeting, the Chairman allowed the landowner and his representative from Vertex Consulting Services, as well as those speaking for the development, to speak without any time limit. When people came up to speak in opposition, the Chairman started the 3 minute timer and repeatedly and condescendingly reminded people that they should not repeat what others have said, to only say things that were within the 3 bullet points of land zoning criteria, to not repeat what they may have written in their letters, and to “get on with it.” Certainly his suggestion that we should just buy the vacant land to stop development was not helpful. Before we purchased our home, we thought that we did our due diligence to review the zoning of the area in advance, and were happy with what it was currently zoned for. However, we didn’t know that Commissioners, like Commissioner Bailey, would continually vote yes for rezoning despite valid arguments against it. Both the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners are known for voting yes for almost any and all developers. I went to this meeting in the hope that logic would prevail and that I would be proven wrong, instead I came away with a distaste for the entire process.

I understand that when there are 70-100 people in attendance, there may be time constraints, however this process and the Chairman’s attitude is exactly why more people do not participate and believe that the decision is already made. That is exactly what I came away with after the 6 hour meeting - that this was a waste of our time and that the board did not want to hear us and had already made their decision. Certainly when they allow Vertex Solutions, owned and operated by the former director of the El Paso County Planning Commission, Craig Dossey, (is this not a conflict of interest?), to speak not only interrupted for hours, but also to speak with exhaustive hyperbole and flat-out inaccurate statements, how can this process not seem like it is already swayed to the landowner/developer? Craig Dossey of Vertex Solutions should have been admonished by the Commission for his outright lies and his whining of “unfair” treatment in comparison to the Schmidt

development (which was ultimately disproved by the Planning Commission staff themselves). Instead, Craig Dossey was given hours to speak in addition to the last word ahead of the vote, and the citizens in attendance were unable to refute his untruthful assertions.

We know, from the public donation reports, that the County Commissioners themselves take money from developers, a practice that calls their neutrality into question. Considering that the Planning Commission is appointed by the County Commissioners, how can we believe that any of our efforts are heard? Do County Commissioners take donations from developers as well?

The Monument Ridge East development was directly opposed by the Town of Monument, the Misty Acre's Development Board, and Douglass County, and there were serious concerns from US Fish and Wildlife, CDOT, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Monument Fire, amongst others. If this, along with hundreds attending community meetings and sending letters, and 1,500 signatures on a petition is not enough to sway the vote, then what is?

I was buoyed by the logical thinking and support from Commissioners Morales, Whitney, and Trowbridge (the former of which rather unprofessionally left the meeting ahead of the vote?) who actually seemed to have knowledge of the specific area; something that should be a requirement of the Commission before they can make a decision.

However, some of the Commissioners made illogical decisions and statements, including that from Commissioner Jack who voted yes for high density development simply because "it's a dangerous intersection and it needs a traffic light"...a traffic light that is proposed for 2044. Do we need to approve high density development just to install a traffic light and to fix a dangerous intersection? Similarly, both Commissioners Jack and Bailey admonished the Town of Monument for not coming to an agreement with the developer in advance...clearly indicating that they had not read the Planning Commission Staff Report which included letters from the Monument Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem which outlined that they repeatedly tried to form a partnership for annexation with the landowner and Vertex Consulting, but these advances were refused. The landowner and Vertex Consulting refused to compromise and walked away. In fact, those at these meetings reported that the landowner and Vertex Consulting both refused to compromise and threatened to go to the County where they said that they would get what they wanted. It looks like that much may be true.

The Planning Commission Staff report, several members in attendance, and the Town of Monument requested the implementation of a PUD to reach middle ground. Commissioners Bailey and Jack both agreed that a PUD would have been a solution for this development....yet they did not call for a PUD as a motion and instead both voted yes for all 3 rezoning and planning requests on the docket.

The homeowners in the area of the Monument Ridge East area were well-informed, respectful, and ready to engage in what should be a civil liberty. Most homeowners in this area understand that the area will be developed and will grow, however we were asking for it to grow within the outlines of the El Paso County Master Plan and with more input like in a PUD. However, many of us came away from this meeting with a feeling that our attendance, our work to write letters, our efforts to circulate petitions, and to voice real and legitimate concerns were pointless. While many members of the Commission should better educate themselves with the Planning Staff report and the area proposed for rezoning, the attitude from Chairman Bailey was the most unbecoming and he should be admonished for his behavior and how he ran the meeting.

After all of this, can anyone in good faith say that the average citizen has any chance against any large landowner or developer, especially those that are in it for profit and can hire the former El Paso County Planning Director as their representative?

Two of the El Paso County land code development purposes listed are “Ensure appropriate opportunities for participation and involvement in the development process by all affected parties” and “Be fair to all ensuring due consideration is given to protecting private property rights of individuals and the rights of the community as a whole.” Unfortunately, neither of these were achieved in the November 21 meeting for Monument Ridge East.”

Respectfully,

-Grace Foy