

MEGGAN HERINGTON, AICP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

EL PASO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING RESULTS (UNOFFICIAL RESULTS)

Planning Commission (PC) Meeting

Thursday, August 20th, 2026, El Paso County Planning and Community Development Department
2880 International Circle, Colorado Springs, Colorado – Second Floor Hearing Room

REGULAR HEARING at 9:00 A.M.

PC MEMBERS PRESENT AND VOTING: Thomas Bailey (Virtual), Sarah Brittain Jack, Mae Emrick, Eric Moraes, Bryce Schuettpelez, Tim Trowbridge, and Christopher Whitney.

PC MEMBERS PRESENT AND NOT VOTING: None.

PC MEMBERS ABSENT: Blaine Brew, Michael Brewer, Jim Byers, Suzanne Casagrande, and Jason Wulf.

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Kilgore, Mindy Schulz, Erika Keech, Ryan Howser, Daniel Torres, Charlene Durham, Gilbert LaForce, and Jessica Merriam.

OTHERS PRESENT AND SPEAKING: Daniel Madruga, Erin Smith, Robert Aamodt, and Elizabeth Garvin.

1. REPORT ITEMS

Mr. Kilgore advised the board that the next PC Hearing is Thursday, September 3rd, 2026, at 9:00 A.M.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE HEARING AGENDA

NONE.

3. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Adoption of Minutes for meeting held on July 16th, 2026.

PC ACTION: THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED (7 - 0)

IN FAVOR: (7) Bailey, Brittain Jack, Emrick, Moraes, Schuettpelz, Trowbridge, and Whitney.

IN OPPOSITION: (0) None.

B. SF2418

HOWSER

FINAL PLAT

FALCON HIGHLANDS SOUTH FILING NO. 1

A request by Challenger Communities, LLC for approval of a 20.874-acre Final Plat creating 24 single-family residential lots and 5 tracts. The property is zoned PUD (Planned Unit Development) and is located at the east corner of the intersection of Antelope Meadows Circle and Bridal Vail Way. (Parcel Nos. 5300000817, 5300000588, and 5300000587) (Commissioner District No. 2)

NO STAFF OR APPLICANT PRESENTATIONS

DISCUSSION: Mr. Trowbridge asked about a new plat notation related to in-ground drainage. **Ms. Charlene Durham**, with Engineering, explained that the systems shown on the plat are not intended for surface drainage. They are designed to address groundwater conditions by collecting groundwater and allowing it to percolate back into the ground. She stated that the site is located within the Upper Squirrel Creek watershed, where groundwater is required to remain groundwater and not be converted to surface water. As a result, groundwater cannot be tied into the storm sewer system and must be kept separate. She noted that this type of system is new to the County's review process and that the applicant's engineer was available to answer more detailed questions. **Mr. Trowbridge** stated that the system was unfamiliar and asked whether the facilities would need to be installed at a low point on each lot. **Mr. Daniel Madruga**, civil engineer with Matrix Design Group, Inc, confirmed that a low-spot location is preferred but not required. He explained that foundation drains would be installed around each building to keep groundwater away from the foundations. Collected water would be directed to a sump and then pumped to a separate drywell structure, generally ranging from approximately 33 to 56 feet in diameter. Geotechnical investigation would occur prior to construction to determine groundwater conditions and inform foundation design. The drywell would contain gravel at the base and allow water to infiltrate slowly back into the ground. **Mr. Madruga** confirmed that the system functions similarly to a French drain around the foundation, connected to a sump pump and then to a standalone drywell. The drywells would not connect to the storm sewer or any other drainage system. Where possible, gravity flow could be used,

but most lots would require pumping. The intent is to move groundwater away from the foundation rather than allowing it to infiltrate immediately adjacent to the building. Approximate locations were shown on the plans, typically in rear corners of the larger lots, with final placement determined on a lot-by-lot basis based on lot drainage direction. **Mr. Trowbridge** asked whether homeowners would receive materials or instruction on maintenance, since the systems would be the homeowner's responsibility. **Mr. Madruga** stated that those details would be addressed by the builder, but that the structures include a lightweight manhole lid that can be opened for inspection. He noted that the systems have few moving parts and function essentially as a buried gravel infiltration basin.

Ms. Emrick asked for confirmation that the system is intended to address groundwater. **Mr. Madruga** confirmed that it is. He stated that groundwater depths vary across the site and are seasonal. Geotechnical reports and approximately two and one-half years of monitoring showed depths as shallow as 3 feet in some locations, though typical depths were closer to 7 feet. Higher groundwater readings were generally seasonal and declined in subsequent borings. He explained that fill would be placed on a number of lots to avoid cutting existing grades and bringing building foundations closer to groundwater. He also noted that basements would not be permitted on the site. Referring to a graphic, **Mr. Madruga** clarified that roof gutter drainage is not connected to the storm sewer system. That drainage is a completely isolated system that would discharge in the yard and infiltrate into the ground.

Mr. Moraes noted that the 2018 district water master plan identified a capacity shortfall and listed additional wells, including a Laramie-Fox Hills well, as a potential solution. He asked whether those wells had been drilled. **Ms. Erin Smith**, with Challenger, stated that recent discussions with Falcon Highlands and its district engineer, RESPEC, indicated a preference not to construct additional wells. The current approach is to upgrade existing systems as needed to access water already available in the aquifer rather than drilling new wells. She stated that capacity exists for the 24 lots included in the current request and has been available since the original application, which is why the request is limited to 24 lots. She noted that the remaining, larger Falcon Highlands South portion of the development would require additional water, whether from Falcon Highlands, another entity, or an intergovernmental agreement, and that those options are still being pursued.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: **Mr. Robert Aamodt**, a property owner in the district for more than 17 years and one of the original owners, spoke in opposition to the request. He recalled a prior hearing on increasing

density from 138 to 278 homes, which he stated was recommended against by a 5-2 vote due to water supply and groundwater concerns. He described the area as a swamp plain and expressed concern about adding a new groundwater collection system to already stressed groundwater conditions. Mr. Aamodt stated that recent roadwork exposed problems with the existing underdrain system installed by a previous developer for Filings 1 and 2. He said the system has been poorly maintained and that workers encountered groundwater approximately 3 feet below the street. He also described a period when his home sump pump discharged an estimated 1 to 2 million gallons per month after the underdrain became clogged, after years of little or no pumping. He cited settling, water damage, and sump pump failures as ongoing issues. He expressed concern that future homeowners would inherit responsibility for maintaining the proposed drywell systems and questioned what would occur if those systems fill, including whether the water would become surface water and affect the Upper Black Squirrel Creek aquifer and downstream agricultural users. Regarding water supply, Mr. Aamodt stated that serving the 24 lots currently proposed may not be a problem, but noted that an existing well was recently re-drilled to its maximum depth and would lose capacity if water levels decline further. Mr. Aamodt stated he is not opposed to development but believes there must be a check and balance so existing and future residents are not harmed. He noted that drainage facilities within the district have never been conveyed to the County as originally intended because they were not maintained to County standards. He requested that the Commission be mindful of prior assurances that additional development would not adversely affect groundwater or the existing water supply.

APPLICANT REBUTTAL: Ms. Erin Smith clarified that the drywell graphic was somewhat misleading. She stated that each system is confined to an individual lot, connects only to that home's foundation drain and sump pump, and does not connect to the storm sewer or any other drainage system. She explained that the purpose of the system is to keep groundwater as groundwater and not to collect surface water, which cannot be harvested in this area due to Upper Black Squirrel Creek restrictions. Regarding maintenance, Ms. Smith stated that she has a similar system at her own home just north of Falcon Highlands. She described it as simple and easy to access. Despite recent wet years, she said she has never observed more than about 2 inches of water in a 3- to 4-foot drywell. She noted that the structures include an overflow/access lid and that additional drywells can be connected if needed. She stated that it would take a substantial amount of water, beyond typical Colorado rainfall, to overwhelm the system.

PC ACTION: SCHUETTPELZ MOVED / BRITTAIN JACK SECONDED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEM 3B, FILE NUMBER SF2418 FOR A FINAL PLAT, FALCON HIGHLANDS SOUTH FILING NO. 1, UTILIZING THE RESOLUTION ATTACHED TO THE STAFF REPORT WITH EIGHT (8) CONDITIONS, FOUR (4) NOTATIONS, AND A RECOMMENDED FINDING OF SUFFICIENCY WITH REGARD TO WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY, AND DEPENDABILITY, THAT THIS ITEM BE FORWARDED TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION. THE MOTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL PASSED (7 - 0).

IN FAVOR: (7) Bailey, Brittain Jack, Emrick, Moraes, Schuettpelz, Trowbridge, and Whitney.

IN OPPOSITION: (0) None.

4. CALLED-UP CONSENT ITEMS

NONE

5. REGULAR ITEMS

NONE

6. NON-ACTION ITEMS

A. Land Development Code Update – Clarion Associates

MEETING ADJOURNED at 10:23 A.M.

Minutes Prepared By: Jessica Merriam