

MEGGAN HERINGTON, AICP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

EL PASO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING RESULTS (UNOFFICIAL RESULTS)

Planning Commission (PC) Meeting

Thursday, May 21, 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: Blaine Brew, Sarah Brittain Jack, Jim Byers, Jay Carlson, Maribeth Emrick, Eric Moraes, Bryce Schuettpelez, Tim Trowbridge, and Christopher Whitney.

PC MEMBERS PRESENT AND NOT VOTING: Michael Brewer (Virtual), Suzanne Casagrande, and Jason Wulf.

PC MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Meggan Herington, Mindy Schulz, Justin Kilgore, Daniel Torres, Maria Lancto, Bret Dilts, Erika Keech, and Jessica Merriam.

OTHERS PRESENT AND SPEAKING:

1. REPORT ITEMS

Ms. Herington recognized regular Planning Commission members, Ms. Becky Fuller and Mr. Jay Carlson for their service on the Board and presented each with a certificate of appreciation in recognition of their time and dedication.

Ms. Herington informed the Board that the annual election could be postponed until the next hearing due to the appointment of two new regular Planning Commission members scheduled for the Board of County Commissioner hearing on Tuesday, May 26, 2026.

Mr. Kilgore advised the board that the next PC Hearing is Thursday June 4th, 2026, at 9:00 A.M.

2. ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS – Chair and Vice-Chair

PC ACTION: SCHUETTPELZ MOVED / BRITAIN JACK SECONDED TO NOMINATE TROWBRIDGE AS CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION. THE MOTION PASSED (8 - 0).

IN FAVOR: (8) Brew, Brittain Jack, Byers, Carlson, Emrick, Moraes, Schuettpelz, and Whitney.

IN OPPOSITION: (0) None.

PC ACTION: SCHUETTPELZ MOVED / TROWBRIDGE SECONDED TO NOMINATE MORAES AS VICE-CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION. MORAES DECLINED THE NOMINATION DUE TO SCHEDULING CONSTRAINTS RELATED TO WORK COMMITMENTS.

PC ACTION: SCHUETTPELZ MOVED / BYERS SECONDED TO NOMINATE WHITNEY AS VICE-CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION. THE MOTION PASSED (8 - 0).

IN FAVOR: (8) Brew, Brittain Jack, Byers, Carlson, Emrick, Moraes, Schuettpelz, and Trowbridge.

IN OPPOSITION: (0) None.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE HEARING AGENDA

NONE

4. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Adoption of Minutes for meeting held on May 7th, 2026.

PC ACTION: THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED (9 - 0)

IN FAVOR: (9) Brew, Brittain Jack, Byers, Carlson, Emrick, Moraes, Schuettpelz, Trowbridge, and Whitney.

IN OPPOSITION: (0) None.

B. P263

LANCTO

MAP AMENDMENT (REZONING)

WELSCH AT HOWELLS REZONE TO RR-2.5

A request by Randall and Louellen Welsch for approval of a Map Amendment (Rezoning) of 5 acres from RR-5 (Residential Rural) to RR-2.5 (Residential Rural). The property is located at 11525 Howells Road and

is approximately 0.2 miles northeast of the intersection of Howells Road and Mountain View Drive. (Parcel No. 6214000071) (Commissioner District No. 1)

NO STAFF OR APPLICANT PRESENTATIONS

DISCUSSION: Mr. Trowbridge requested clarification regarding the surrounding zoning patterns and asked Staff to display the zoning map for the area. He noted that the surrounding properties appeared to remain primarily zoned RR-5 and questioned how many nearby properties had been rezoned to RR-2.5. **Ms. Lancto** responded that only a small number of individual properties had been rezoned to RR-2.5, including a few properties located to the northeast and southeast of the subject property, as well as one property rezoned to RR-0.5 to the southeast. Staff further confirmed that the referenced rezoned properties were located approximately one mile from the subject site.

PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION: Mr. Trowbridge stated that, although reluctant, he could not support the request because he did not believe it was consistent with the character of the immediate Black Forest area. Mr. Trowbridge expressed his opinion that the intent of the Master Plan was to maintain five-acre lot patterns within the surrounding area, despite the existence of smaller lot zoning elsewhere in the vicinity.

Mr. Whitney stated that he shared Mr. Trowbridge’s concerns regarding compatibility and the relationship between the Master Plan and existing zoning patterns and indicated that those concerns would also result in his opposition to the request.

Mr. Carlson acknowledged the concerns raised by Commissioners Trowbridge and Whitney but stated that public comments submitted in support of the request by adjacent property owners influenced his position in favor of the item.

PC ACTION: MORAES MOVED / BRITAIN JACK SECONDED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEM 4B, FILE NUMBER P263 FOR A MAP AMENDMENT (REZONING), WELSCH AT HOWELLS REZONE TO RR-2.5, UTILIZING THE RESOLUTION ATTACHED TO THE STAFF REPORT WITH TWO (2) CONDITIONS AND TWO (2) NOTATIONS, THAT THIS ITEM BE FORWARDED TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION. THE MOTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL PASSED (7 - 2).

IN FAVOR: (7) Brew, Brittain Jack, Byers, Carlson, Emrick, Moraes, and Schuettpelez.

IN OPPOSITION: (2) Trowbridge and Whitney.

5. CALLED-UP CONSENT ITEMS:

NONE

6. REGULAR ITEMS

A. LDC263**SCHULZ**

**LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENT
FIRE PROTECTION AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION**

A request by El Paso County Planning and Community Development to amend Chapter 1, Section 15, Definitions, Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3, Fire Protection and Wildfire Mitigation of the El Paso County Land Development Code (“LDC”) and, pursuant to, C.R.S. § 24-33.5-1236 and 8 CCR 1507-39, add Appendix E, Wildfire Resiliency Requirements to the LDC. The purpose of the amendments is to update the requirements for fire protection and wildfire mitigation and comply with State of Colorado requirements.

STAFF PRESENTATION

DISCUSSION: Mr. Whitney questioned the extent of local authority to grant waivers or modifications to applicants given that the requirements originate from State Statute. **Ms. Schulz** responded that the County has very limited flexibility in deviating from the requirements established by the Wildfire Resiliency Code (WRC). She explained that applicants may propose alternative materials or methods; however, the WRC establishes specific standards and documentation requirements, including testing and supporting materials, that must be submitted for consideration. Ms. Schulz noted that while alternative approaches may be approved in limited circumstances, the opportunity for modification is minimal.

Mr. Carlson asked whether the WRC requirements would apply only to the portion of a structure being modified under permit, or whether additional upgrades to unrelated portions of the structure would also be required. Mr. Carlson used the example of whether replacing a roof would also trigger requirements to upgrade exterior wall materials. **Ms. Schulz** clarified that the requirements apply only to the portion of the structure being modified. She explained that replacing a roof would require compliance for the roof only and would not require upgrades to exterior walls. Similarly, adding a deck would not trigger requirements to modify the roof or exterior wall materials.

Mr. Whitney requested clarification regarding the applicability of the Wildfire Resiliency Code to properties located within fire protection districts and questioned whether individual districts maintain

separate requirements. **Ms. Schulz** responded that all fire protection districts within El Paso County are subject to the same Wildfire Resiliency Code requirements and noted that all 18 fire protection districts in the County have already adopted the document.

Ms. Brittain Jack questioned why the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department (PPRBD) was not required to enforce the Wildfire Resiliency Code if both the County and fire protection districts were subject to State legislation. **Ms. Schulz** responded that she could not speak on behalf of PPRBD regarding its interpretation of the legislation but explained that the statutory definition of a governing body references cities, towns, boards of county commissioners, and fire protection districts. Ms. Schulz stated that extensive discussions had occurred regarding enforcement responsibilities and noted that there had initially been hope that PPRBD would administer the structural hardening requirements. However, following those discussions, the consensus reached was that enforcement responsibility did not fall under PPRBD's authority.

Mr. Moraes asked whether El Paso County representatives participated on the State board responsible for developing the WRC and wildfire hazard mapping. **Ms. Schulz** stated that local representatives included a member from Classic Homes and retired Colorado Springs Fire Chief Brent Lacey.

Mr. Moraes also expressed concerns regarding residential density and close spacing between homes within hazard wildfire areas. **Ms. Schulz** explained that fire protection districts review developments for compliance with fire code and WRC requirements and noted that El Paso County Planning intends to hire a fire protection professional to review projects located outside fire protection districts. She further noted that the WRC includes a potential "ground-truthing" process that could affect how certain areas are classified within the Wildland-Urban Interface.

Mr. Whitney raised additional concerns regarding residential density and close spacing between homes within wildfire hazard areas, questioning how future developments would be evaluated for compliance with the WRC. **Ms. Schulz** acknowledged that implementation details are still evolving and stated that additional revisions and clarifications to the WRC may occur as real-world scenarios are encountered. She further noted that developments not meeting WRC requirements would likely be difficult to approve. **Ms. Herington** explained that the current Land Development Code requires new subdivisions to be located within a fire protection district and stated that the County will rely heavily on local fire districts to determine compliance with both the International Fire Code and the WRC during

development review. She added that County Planning anticipates continued coordination with fire districts and noted that projects outside fire protection districts would most likely involve smaller-scale improvements rather than major new developments.

Ms. Emrick requested clarification regarding site management requirements within Class One wildfire hazard areas, specifically questioning whether existing trees smaller than 10 inches in diameter would be required to be removed. **Ms. Schulz** explained that existing trees may remain but must be maintained, noting that portions of the WRC contain inconsistencies regarding tree size requirements. **Ms. Emrick** also questioned whether existing shrubs located adjacent to homes would need to be removed. **Ms. Schulz** responded that, while the Code language appears to require removal, the County does not intend to proactively enforce removal of existing vegetation unless triggered by new improvements requiring compliance with current standards. **Ms. Emrick** further asked how compliance and enforcement would occur. **Ms. Schulz** stated that the County will primarily rely on affidavits from property owners to certify compliance with the WRC, and enforcement action is complaint-driven; code enforcement will not proactively seek out violations of the WRC. **Ms. Herington** asked whether fire protection districts were implementing similar enforcement procedures. **Ms. Schulz** stated that implementation methods vary among fire districts, with some districts utilizing inspections and others relying on affidavit processes, though all fire districts are responsible for enforcing the WRC within their jurisdictions. **Mr. Whitney** sought clarification regarding whether existing vegetation, including trees and shrubs, would effectively be grandfathered unless a property owner undertook new improvements requiring permits. **Ms. Schulz** responded that the WRC allows some discretion in how governing bodies implement the requirements and explained that, under the County's current interpretation, compliance with site management standards would generally only be triggered when new improvements or construction activities occur. She further stated that property owners would not otherwise be required to remove existing vegetation absent new development activity.

Ms. Brittain Jack asked how fire protection districts would fund additional inspection or staffing needs associated with implementation of the WRC and questioned whether the legislation accounted for related fees. **Ms. Schulz** responded that the WRC allows governing bodies to establish fees, though she was not aware of any districts implementing a specific WRC fee at this time. She stated that some districts are evaluating adjustments to impact fees or implementing site plan review fees due to the

increased review requirements for residential projects but noted that she could not specifically address how individual districts are funding additional staffing positions.

PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION: Mr. Brew voted in opposition to the item, stating that he believed the requirements represented an overreach of government authority and expressed concern regarding the impacts the regulations could have on property owners located within designated wildfire hazard areas.

PC ACTION: TROWBRIDGE MOVED / MORAES SECONDED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF REGULAR ITEM 6A, FILE NUMBER LDC263 FOR A LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENT, FIRE PROTECTION AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION, UTILIZING THE RESOLUTION ATTACHED TO THE STAFF REPORT AND THAT THIS ITEM BE FORWARDED TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION. THE MOTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL PASSED (8 - 1).

IN FAVOR: (8) Brittain Jack, Byers, Carlson, Emrick, Moraes, Schuettpelz, Trowbridge, and Whitney.

IN OPPOSITION: (1) Brew.

7. NON-ACTION ITEMS

NONE

MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:55 A.M.

Minutes Prepared By: Jessica Merriam