

December 8, 2024

Dear El Paso County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners,

On November 21, I attended my first El Paso County Planning Commission meeting, regarding Monument Ridge East. Although it was very informative, it was also very disheartening. The Planning Commissioners all spoke about their process, and in many cases, even asked questions for the benefit of the audience. I very much appreciated those questions and their explanations on how and why they vote a certain way. For example, there was the discussion regarding “strong recommendations” vs “requirements” in the Colorado Parks and Wildlife letter. It really helped explain the voting criteria and the constraints they are bound by. And many of the Planning Commissioners thanked the audience for attending and being involved in the process. However, after seeing this process, it felt like a forgone conclusion and pointless for community members to attend or provide prior written comments.

Craig Dossey and Vertex Consulting lied to the Planning Commission’s faces, and the public hearing process does not allow challenge to his comments. He’s allowed to talk for hours, while the public can only speak for 3 minutes each. And then he can rebut our comments with outright lies while we’re chastised for not remaining quiet, and are allowed no further comments. Where is the accountability in this process when the developer or its consultant provides false information? Many times the audience was told to remain quiet, but those outbursts were because Mr. Dossey was lying or providing incorrect information. Even Kylie Bagley and Meggan Herington from your own Planning Department were visibly upset at Vertex’s lies and misinformation. He claimed they tried to negotiate with the Town of Monument, yet the town has video footage of Vertex walking out the door mid-meeting, refusing to negotiate. He showed aerial photos from Google Earth of what Misty Acres Blvd looks like “right now”—yet those photos were from June 2014 when the Misty Acres development was in the process of being built. The audience was loud because we were in shock. We are the ones who have been driving those roads long before the developer purchased that land, yet we are the ones being silenced when we try to call him out on his lies or misinformation. I don’t expect the Planning Commission to know what every parcel or roadway in the county looks like at a given time—that would be impossible. So the Planning Commission has to rely solely on what is presented to them. Where’s the accountability in this process when the Planning Commission is presented with 10-year-old Google Earth images and told they are current? Where’s the accountability if he presents the County Commissioners with the same misleading outdated aerial photos?

After all the information was presented, but before the Planning Commissioners’ discussion and voting, the chairman called for a short break. During this final break, Thomas Bailey, the chair, walked over to the developer and Vertex representatives as if they’re friends and was overheard saying, “Don’t worry, the votes are on your side.” If they are friends or business acquaintances, how is that not a conflict of interest? Should he have recused himself from the vote? Where is the integrity on the Planning Commission? I also don’t understand how some Planning Commissioners voted against rezoning RM-12 but then immediately voted for the Preliminary Plan, which encompassed the RM-12 they just voted against.

Residents in attendance got the definite impression that some Planning Commissioners’ votes were decided long before the meeting started and public comments were heard. And for the ones who did ask questions and had an open mind, how can you possibly vote properly when you’re shown outdated photos, misinformation, and are lied to?

My neighbors and I walked away wondering what the point was of even attending the Planning Commission meeting. I'm not attending the County Commissioner meeting this week on the same Monument Ridge East agenda items because I don't feel that county residents are listened to. What is the point in speaking when the developer/consultant just rebuts our valid concerns with lies? This process is broken, and your county residents walked away disappointed and disheartened in the process the Planning Commissioners spoke so much about.

Thank you,

Christie Beverly

High Pines Neighborhood in Northern El Paso County