

File# RVP231

Project Name Lazy J RV Park Rezone

Description: Rezoning from A-35 to RVP

Applicant: N.E.S.

EA Number: EA238

To the El Paso County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today against the rezone of A-35 to an RV park. Let me start off by saying that, first and foremost, I am here as a community member, but I have also been blessed to be elected as the President of the Peyton 23Jt School Board. I do not take it lightly that my job is to represent my voting shareholders. As a community, we are not against the building of commercial properties in our area - if it brings a benefit to the town of Peyton. As a matter of fact, I am aware that commercial building would greatly increase the funding to our school and help us to improve our buildings and increase staff pay. However, rezoning this long standing agricultural property to that of an RV Park would not benefit our community at all. As a matter of fact, it would be a drain on our resources with no financial benefit. The very little revenue that an RV park brings into the community is not enough to pay for the drain on our sheriff, our school district, our park, our trail, our roads, our volunteer fire department, and our emergency medical services. In addition, this specific rezone would not be in the best interest of our community and brings plenty of safety issues.

We have confirmed with the town of Calhan in reference to their RV Parks that since there are no improvements to the land, the only revenue paid by the owners will be based on the vacant land. Having temporary structures such as RV's on the property do not add to the assessed value, therefore no additional funding is paid to the state or county. Also, owners have a second rezone request to make the remaining 5 acres of the original 40 acre agricultural lot into residential land. This means that the home, the only real improvement on this land will be zoned residential and therefore this land will not have to pay additional commercial taxes that would benefit our community. The owners seem to be making sure that this RV park will only benefit their pockets while only being a detriment to our area.

This rezone is a major disservice to all resources. What we are fighting today is the rezoning, not the pretty RV Park that they are presenting. Once this land is rezoned, there is no going back. The owners do not have to continue to follow the park rules they are promising us. When they need to make money on their investment how long will it be before they allow long term living in the park? All of the glorified ideas they have put into their Letter of Intent do not have to be followed after it is approved or once they decide to sell the park. If that happens this park could easily turn into low income living with even more of a drain on our resources.

Our schools are already in need of roofs, waste water treatment facilities, higher salaries, building upgrades, and additions. However, there is not funding for that to happen. We are currently searching for grants and governmental assistance to improve our facilities. Our district receives very low commercial income already and this RV park will not offer any additional contribution. As discussed with the town of Calhan, temporary housing like that of an RV Park brings more obligation to our already

overworked and underfinanced school district. It would require more specialized teaching staff and add to our counseling work load. As the letter from the school board states, “kids living in transient communities often require special services and our school district does not have the resources to accommodate that.” This RV Park would not provide any per pupil funding or county funding that would help the school district to break even. Would it be right to make these accommodations for non-tax paying residents and take away from the students whose parents have been paying taxes and involved in this community? Please hear me, it is NOT that we don’t want to help any student that comes our way, we just need to know that we will have the financial resources to care and provide for those students that do come our way and this property being zoned RV Park does NOT provide the necessary resources, to the contrary, it will only add to our list of our financial deficits.

Next is the concern of the RV zone being so close to the school bus stop. We are a close and tight-knit community where parents still feel safe allowing their children the independence to walk to the bus stop to wait for the bus. Unfortunately, when you add in enough campers to fill 110 camp sites that do NOT belong to this community, you are risking the safety of these students. Although the owners state that they will vet the RV’s coming to stay and they will have to be newer and in good shape, there is no vetting the people in those RVs. The safety of our children is number one.

This property has direct, unobstructed views to our elementary and jr/sr high school. That means that anyone staying at this RV park have the ability to see our children. Think about if you would want anonymous, transient strangers to have the opportunity to watch your children arrive, attend and leave school on a daily basis. Our schools are supposed to be safe havens for our children and we should not make decisions that jeopardize them or allow them feel as if they could be targeted. Worst case - someone could spend a week at this RV park watching a child, tracking them, pick them up and be gone out of town immediately. No address, no traceable information, nothing. What then? Will these property owners be held responsible or you for choosing to approve their plan to make a buck? When you combine over 110 strangers and 1 sheriff in a 500 mile radius, this is NOT keeping our children safe and I challenge you to explain how this is in the best interest of the safety of the students in our community.

Another comment made by the town of Calhan was that, although they get no tax revenue from the RV park zone, the Calhan police department spends most of their time at the RV Park dealing with various issues of those staying there. There is nothing else to do in this area. The nearest public park is over 6.5 miles away from this rezone, and our trail system consists a dirt trail that follows Highway 24, not a real attraction to tourists. As much as I love Peyton there is not enough to do here to keep travelers busy and out of trouble. I will reiterate, once this is rezoned to RV Park, there is no going back and there is no telling what the future holds in regards to the rules the owners set or how long they own it.

In addition to the students waiting at the bus stop there is a major safety issue with these huge, nice, new vetted RV’s traveling down a little two lane highway like Peyton Highway. There are hills just before the entrance. Imagine driving over a blind hill to find a giant RV weighing up to 30,000 pounds in the middle of the road trying to get into a narrow entrance. What if they miss their turn? Where will they go to turn around? The safety of everyone traveling in the area is in jeopardy with not being able to be seen while driving, riding their bikes, walking to the bus stop or just walking to a friend’s house. Why do the residents including kiddos have to change their way of life to stay safe amongst these heavy RV’s on the road? This road is too small to accommodate extra traffic much less these large vehicles.

Not only does the increased traffic effect safety of the people on the road, there will also be a major strain on our county roads department to continue to keep up with maintenance and damage that the additional heavy traffic this park would cause. This isn't just a few extra cars, this is numerous heavy RVs and trailers. Last year rain washed out the drainage ditch and driveway in front of the bus barn at the school. It was not until months later, in a last stitch effort to get buses to kids and after many calls that the county was finally able to fix the school district's ditch and driveway to allow the bus access. The School district is a county entity and it still took this long for the county to have time and resources to fix a public entity. This RV park would add more work to the already overworked county road crew, school maintenance team and cause more of a drain on the community, financially and manpower wise. The priority in road repairs in and around rural Peyton should stay within the tax-paying community. It should not be set aside to accommodate non-tax paying visitors.

It is also important to note that if there is a federal emergency, Zachary Usher, Deputy Director, Individual Assistance of FEMA assured me that "When necessary and requested by a state or tribe, FEMA does sometimes lease space at RV parks to support temporary housing needs." Yet again, another impact on our community without funding to help us support the needs of these people. If FEMA takes over the park there is nothing out here to support these folks already struggling without a home. This leads to more temporary students with no per pupil funding however, they will still be in need of additional educational support, food, security and transportation which is yet another strain on our community with no financial support.

There are plenty of other concerns and issues that we have with this rezoning; lack of water, negative effect on neighboring wildlife, property value decreases of longtime family acreages, and increased response times of emergency services. With my limited time, I am going to let the rest of the community hit these many points.

As the President of the Peyton School Board, this rezoning only brings negative impacts to our school district and our local students. They will provide zero funding to our school, but add unnecessary strain to our schools, staff and maintenance team. The rezone puts our children, our most vulnerable, into unsafe territory with the increased traffic and increased number of strangers that cannot be vetted just based on the RV they drive. There will be no funding from this rezone to provide to our police force, our road crews, or our educational staff. If you approve this rezone request, it cannot go back to Agricultural property. We should learn from what Calhan has gone through and keep this property for conservation of farming, ranching and rural cultural services. Even our Board of County Commissioners just passed a proclamation on June 7<sup>th</sup> to celebrate El Paso County's Colorado Proud Western heritage, recognizing the rich cultural history and the traditions that define the spirit of our community. Don't take away more agricultural land so that a couple of people can make more money and put a strain on a great little rural community.

Sincerely,

Katie Harms

Community Member and President of Peyton 23JT School Board