

Jessica Merriam

From: Paula Linhares
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2026 12:36 PM
To: mzehrbreedlove@yahoo.com
Cc: PLNWEB
Subject: FW: Submission for Public Record

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Ms. Zehr-Breedlove,

By copy of this email to our Planning and Community Development department (PLNWEB@elpasoco.com), I will share your request to include your communication below in the public record for P261 and P262.

Respectfully,



Paula Linhares

Constituent Services Specialist
El Paso County | Administrative Services
Office: 719.520.6423
PaulaLinhares3@elpasoco.com

From: Marti Zehr-Breedlove <mzehrbreedlove@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2026 9:53 AM
To: Carrie Geitner <CarrieGeitner@elpasoco.com>; Lauren Nelson <LaurenNelson@elpasoco.com>; Holly Williams <HollyWilliams@elpasoco.com>; Cory Applegate <CoryApplegate@elpasoco.com>; Bill Wysong <BillWysong@elpasoco.com>
Cc: Jackie Allred <JackieAllred@elpasoco.com>
Subject: Submission for Public Record

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Board of County Commissioners,

I am sharing two articles that were published in local media outlets and I am requesting that these be included in the public record for P261 and P262 files.

The question is: Why?

The Colorado Springs Gazette 30 Jul 2026

MICHAEL RA MIREZ, CREATORS SYNDICATE Marti Zehr-Breedlove

Three minutes. That's the amount of time El Paso County residents have traditionally been given to address the Board of County Commissioners during public comment. In past hearings, residents have also been permitted to voluntarily give their time to designated speakers when they prefer not to speak themselves, allowing communities to present organized, thoughtful testimony.

On July 23, that changed. Moments before a highly anticipated quasi-judicial hearing, residents learned they would be limited to just 90 seconds each and would not be permitted to give their time to others. There are also no publicly available written procedures explaining how residents may submit presentations or organize testimony during these hearings.

The chair was within her legal authority to make that decision. But that's not the question residents are asking. The question is: Why? Why make this decision for this hearing? Why limit public participation when applicants are afforded substantial presentation time and an opportunity for rebuttal? Why are the rules for citizen participation left to be determined moments before a hearing?

The board's own Rules and Procedures state that "The chair shall ensure that a full and fair due process hearing is provided to all participants in the hearing." Fairness is about more than legality. It is about transparency, consistency and predictability. The public came prepared. Residents spent weeks reviewing the Master Plan, studying the approval criteria and preparing factual, evidence-based testimony. They did exactly what we hope engaged citizens will do.

The Tri-lakes community rose to the occasion despite the last minute change. But citizens deserve to know the rules before they walk into the room. The question isn't whether the chair could make this decision. It's what she will do moving forward to ensure that every resident understands the process and can participate meaningfully.

<https://gazette.com/2026/07/30/letters-why-the-change-in-procedures-no-road-work-done-in-subdivision/>

The BOCC Hearing Story Isn't the Vote, It's the Community



by [Marti Zehr-Breedlove](#) July 28, 2026

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MONUMENT
— INDEPENDENT —
YOUR LOCAL TRI-LAKES NEWS SOURCE

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



The BOCC Hearing Showed the Vote, It's the Community

By Marti Zehr-Breedlove · Monument, Colorado

THE MONUMENT INDEPENDENT
monumentindependent.com

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The week that mattered in Monument, Palmer Lake and the Tri-Lakes — the meetings, the money and the decisions — in a few minutes each Thursday. Free, from The Monument Independent.

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The Day Democracy Showed Up in Tri-Lakes. The Tri-Lakes community was told at the last minute that its carefully organized presentation time would be cut and that there would be no giving of time to speakers. Instead of walking

out or becoming angry, dozens of ordinary citizens stepped up, adapted in less than an hour, and delivered one of the most remarkable examples of civic engagement many in the room had ever witnessed.



Tri-Lakes residents gather in the El Paso County commissioners' chamber at Centennial Hall during the July 23 land-use hearing. *(Submitted photo.)*

When the Rules Changed, the Tri-Lakes Community Rose to the Occasion

What happened at Thursday's El Paso County Board of County Commissioners hearing was bigger than a land-use decision.

For weeks, residents from across the Tri-Lakes area had organized a thoughtful, fact-based presentation on the P261 and P262 rezoning applications. Community members spent countless hours researching the Master Plan and Land Development Code, organizing speakers, and developing a streamlined presentation that represented the collective voice of hundreds of residents.

The plan was simple: a handful of designated speakers would present on behalf of the community, utilizing time voluntarily given by residents in attendance.

Then, moments before the hearing began, residents learned that speaker time would not be pooled as anticipated, that their time had been cut from three minutes to 90 seconds, and that every individual wishing to speak would need to do so separately.

What happened next was extraordinary.

Instead of becoming frustrated or walking away, the community adapted.

During the lunch recess, more than 40 residents gathered in small groups throughout the hearing room. No one ate lunch. They spent their time rewriting presentations, practicing testimony, timing one another, and encouraging neighbors who had never spoken publicly before.

People who had come only to support others suddenly found themselves preparing to testify before the Board of County Commissioners.

There were residents undergoing medical treatments and recovering from surgery who stood before the Board and spoke.

Residents with a genuine fear of public speaking stepped outside their comfort zones and shared their perspectives with determination and bravery.

Spouses who had simply planned to sit in the audience volunteered to take the microphone.

New neighbors who had never met one another just hours earlier became teammates.

Residents from every corner of the Tri-Lakes community, many of whom had never participated in local government before, came together with one common purpose: to respectfully and professionally ensure their voices were heard.

Perhaps most remarkable was the leadership that emerged in the moment. Community members quickly organized small working groups, calmed anxious participants, and empowered first-time speakers with confidence and encouragement.

Within 45 minutes, an entirely new public presentation had been created — not by political operatives or professional advocates but by ordinary citizens committed to participating in their local government.

Regardless of where one stands on development issues, what occurred that day was a powerful reminder of what civic engagement looks like at its very best. These residents are the heroes in this story.

This wasn't a story about opposition to a project. It was a story about neighbors becoming team members and engaged citizens.

The Tri-Lakes community showed up informed, respectful, resilient, and united. They proved that meaningful civic engagement doesn't require professional experience or political influence — only people willing to step forward when their community needs them.

In a time when so many Americans feel disconnected from local government, this community demonstrated something worth celebrating: democracy works best when ordinary people show up.

Thursday's hearing may have been about land use, but what happened in that room was about community.

And it was truly something special to witness. This is the Tri-Lakes community.

Marti Zehr-Breedlove lives in the Walden neighborhood of the Tri-Lakes area. Opinion pieces and Letters to the Editor reflect the views of their authors, not The Monument Independent

<https://monumentindependent.com/opinion/the-bocc-hearing-isnt-the-vote-its-the-community/>

Jessica Merriam

From: PLNWEB
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 7:59 AM
To: Jessica Merriam
Subject: FW: PUBLIC RECORD SUBMITTAL: Public Participation Is Not a Crowd-Management Problem
Attachments: BOCC_Public_Record_Submission_2026-08-04_Laurel_Schow.pdf
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed



Gayle Jackson

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From: Laurel Schow <ljschow@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2026 4:32 PM
To: Carrie Geitner <CarrieGeitner@elpasoco.com>; Lauren Nelson <LaurenNelson@elpasoco.com>; Holly Williams <HollyWilliams@elpasoco.com>; Cory Applegate <CoryApplegate@elpasoco.com>; Bill Wysong <BillWysong@elpasoco.com>; CARCTB <carctb@elpasoco.com>
Cc: PLNWEB <PLNWEB@elpasoco.com>; Kylie Bagley <KylieBagley@elpasoco.com>; Meggan Herington <MegganHerington@elpasoco.com>; Kenny Hodges <KennyHodges@elpasoco.com>; Bret Waters <BretWaters@elpasoco.com>; michaela.snow@state.co.us; cdphe.commentswqcd@state.co.us; Jason.Ullmann@state.co.us; Tracy.Kosloff@state.co.us; ColoradoES@fws.gov; mlakind@tomgov.org; Steve King <sking@tomgov.org>; sabbott@tomgov.org; csmith@tomgov.org; lkronick@tomgov.org; kkimple@tomgov.org; mfiorito@tomgov.org; Integrity Matters <integritymatterscos@gmail.com>; governorpolis@state.co.us; natasha_hutson@bennet.senate.gov; jess_cohen@hickenlooper.senate.gov; Elizabeth Harris <eharris@palmer-lake.org>; rmoseley@palmer-lake.org; jmarble@palmer-lake.org; mbeeson@palmer-lake.org; Atis Jurka <ajurka@palmer-lake.org>; wia@woodmoor.org; jarvis.caldwell.house@coleg.gov; Tri-Lakes Preservation, Inc. <trilakespreservation@gmail.com>; Monument Independent <editor@monumentindependent.com>; savannah.eller@gazette.com; Opinion@gazette.com; Tony.Keith@koa.com; Noah.Caplan@koa.com; EXTERNAL KOAA News <News@KOAA.com>; sam.page@krdo.com; Austin Sack <ASack@kxrm.com>; EXTERNAL Fox News <EXTERNALFoxNews@elpasoco.com>; EXTERNAL KKTU News <news@kktv.com>; Andrea Chalfin <achalfin@krcc.org>; EXTERNAL KRCC News <news@krcc.org>; news@cpr.org; bmarkus@cprmail.org; spencer.soicher@9news.com; newstips@9news.com; EXTERNAL News TipsDenver <newstips@thedenverchannel.com>; newstips@denver7.com; tips@kdvr.com; Jessica Alvarado Gamez <jalvarado@denverpost.com>; EXTERNAL Newsroom Denver <newsroom@denverpost.com>; Olivia Prentzel <oliviaprentzel@coloradosun.com>; newsroom@coloradosun.com; Karin.Brulliard@washpost.com; Jim <jim.carlton@wsj.com>; news-tips@nytimes.com; tips@cnn.com; tips@nbcuni.com; news.tips@abc.com; LBergman@newsnationnow.com; tips@thefp.com; BMAass@cbs.com; talkshow@aol.com
Subject: PUBLIC RECORD SUBMITTAL: Public Participation Is Not a Crowd-Management Problem

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Report

El Paso County Digital, Strategy & Technology (DST)

Dear Clerk of the Board and Members of the Board of County Commissioners,

At the August 4, 2026 regular meeting of the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners, I gave public comment under Items Not Scheduled on the Agenda regarding public participation and the county's land use hearing process. My comment was titled "Public Participation Is Not a Crowd-Management Problem."

Please accept the attached five-page PDF for inclusion in the public record. The packet includes:

- * Cover sheet
- * Written text of my public comment
- * Marti Zehr-Breedlove's Gazette letter, "The Question Is: Why?," published July 30, 2026
- * Comparative transcript excerpts documenting the public-comment procedures at the June 18 Planning Commission hearing and the July 23 BOCC hearing
- * Monument Ridge East transcript excerpts documenting the missing conceptual information and deferred administrative review

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Laurel Schow
Woodmoor, Colorado

PUBLIC RECORD SUBMISSION PUBLIC COMMENT PACKAGE

El Paso County Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
August 4, 2026 | Centennial Hall Auditorium

RE: Public Participation Is Not a Crowd-Management Problem

SUBMITTED BY

Laurel Schow

Woodmoor, Colorado

Unincorporated El Paso County | Tri-Lakes Region

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS

1 Public Comment - Non-Agenda Item

Presented August 4, 2026

2 Attachment 1: "The question is: Why?"

Marti Zehr-Breedlove | The Colorado Springs Gazette | July 30, 2026

3 Attachment 2: Comparative Transcript Excerpts

Citizen comment procedures | June 18 and July 23, 2026

4 Attachment 3: Monument Ridge East Transcript Excerpts

Missing conceptual plan and deferred administrative review | December 12, 2024

AUGUST 4, 2026

PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEM

Submitted by Laurel Schow | Woodmoor, Colorado | Unincorporated El Paso County

Commissioners, I am submitting Marti Zehr-Breedlove's letter published in the Gazette July 30th.

Marti asks why citizens received three minutes and pooled time at the Planning Commission, then 90 seconds and no pooled time at your July 23 hearing. My larger question is: Why does this county find flexibility for applicants, then remove it when citizens arrive prepared?

At the Board's December 12, 2024, Monument Ridge East hearing, staff said the applicant had not provided an overall site development plan or conceptual plan showing layouts and housing types. A conceptual plan had been submitted, then removed, making the project "very hard for staff to evaluate." The Board approved all three items 4-0, with key information deferred to later administrative review.

On July 23, citizens did what this system demanded. We studied the Master Plan and Land Development Code, organized the evidence, and built a professional presentation. Yet, with almost no notice, you cut speakers to 90 seconds and prohibited pooled time. The applicant kept its full presentation, expert testimony, and rebuttal.

That is upside down. When an applicant lacks information staff says it needs, the process bends and keeps moving. When citizens bring organized evidence, the rules change and their presentation is broken apart.

That same process makes the implausible sound procedural: a 74,000-square-foot interstate travel center becomes a neighborhood convenience store, while the Master Plan and the surroundings are redefined until the proposal appears to fit.

I applaud your 3-2 decision to deny the MA Subdivision Tract A rezoning applications at Highway 83 and Walker Road, File Nos. P261 and P262. But citizens should not have to overcome the hearing process to make the approval criteria work.

Please understand what July 23 set in motion. It did not discourage us. It taught us. Our eyes are open. Communities will continue to find one another, share research, and stand together against incompatible growth.

We are not against growth. We are for development that is compatible with the land, can be sustained by the infrastructure, and honors the character of the community it enters.

Today your agenda includes an executive session on heavily attended public meetings. Public participation is not a crowd-management problem.

Fix the process that brought us here: front-end screening; clear staff recommendations, including denial; consistent hearing rules; equal time for organized citizen evidence; and a citizen response after the applicant's rebuttal.

Applicants arrive with paid teams to advocate for their proposals. But you answer to the citizens who elected you. An application fee purchases review. It must not purchase momentum toward approval.

THE COLORADO SPRINGS GAZETTE | JULY 30, 2026

The question is: Why?

MARTI ZEHR-BREEDLOVE

Reformatted as a one-page attachment from the submitted Gazette article

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The board's own Rules and Procedures state that "The chair shall ensure that a full and fair due process hearing is provided to all participants in the hearing."

Fairness is about more than legality. It is about transparency, consistency and predictability.

The public came prepared. Residents spent weeks reviewing the Master Plan, studying the approval criteria and preparing factual, evidence-based testimony. They did exactly what we hope engaged citizens will do.

The Tri-Lakes community rose to the occasion despite the last-minute change. But citizens deserve to know the rules before they walk into the room.

The question isn't whether the chair could make this decision. It's what she will do moving forward to ensure that every resident understands the process and can participate meaningfully.

PUBLIC COMMENT PROCEDURES

COMPARATIVE TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS

MA Subdivision Tract A rezonings | Highway 83 and Walker Road | File Nos. P261 and P262

The following excerpts were transcribed and checked directly against El Paso County's posted video recordings. They document the change between the June 18 Planning Commission hearing, where speakers received three minutes and could transfer time, and the July 23 Board hearing, where speakers were limited to 90 seconds.

THREE MINUTES + TRANSFERRED TIME

El Paso County Planning Commission | June 18, 2026 | Agenda Items 5C-5D | File Nos. P261 and P262 | Chris Whitney, Acting Chair | Official County recording 04:15:11-04:15:51

"Please remember, we got a three-minute clock on for a lot of you, so we'll hold to that reasonably closely. ... In terms of consolidating time, it's three minutes per person, roughly. If somebody wants to cede their time to you, that's fine. They have to be here to do that, though."

90 SECONDS

El Paso County BOCC Land Use Meeting | July 23, 2026 | Agenda Items 7-8 | File Nos. P261 and P262 | Carrie Geitner, Chair | Official County recording 02:27:21-02:27:57

"Because of the number of people that we have here today, we are going to give 90 seconds for public comment. ... Make sure you're signed in, state your name for the record, and you will have a minute and a half to speak."

Source: Official video recordings posted by El Paso County: Planning Commission Hearing 6/18/2026, YouTube video bkL_FBjQp7E; and Board of County Commissioners Land Use Meeting 7/23/2026, YouTube video TYc8LJ0I5E4. Timestamps are elapsed times from the beginning of each full meeting recording. El Paso County has not issued written transcripts; the quoted excerpts were transcribed from the recordings and lightly cleaned for punctuation and filler words. Speaker identifications and substantive wording are preserved. Ellipses indicate omitted words.

MONUMENT RIDGE EAST HEARING EXCERPTS

Agenda Items 10-12 | File Nos. P246, P245 and SP241

The following excerpts are drawn from the unofficial transcript prepared from the County's recording of the December 12, 2024 Board land use hearing on Agenda Items 10-12. Timestamps are elapsed times within the Monument Ridge East hearing segment, beginning when the three items were called. The excerpts document the missing conceptual information, staff's difficulty evaluating the proposal, and the decision to defer detail to later administrative review.

KYLIE BAGLEY, PLANNING | 12:07-12:32

"An overall site development plan? No, we did not. ... We did not receive any type of conceptual plan that would show the layouts of the lots and the type of dwelling units that would be proposed. ... Typically we do get a use table that would explain what types of uses would be going on different lots ... so it does give staff a better idea of how the properties would look on the layout."

HOLLY WILLIAMS, COMMISSIONER | 13:15

"But that would be administrative approval? Correct. Okay, thank you."

CARRIE GEITNER, CHAIR | 14:04

"We're putting those on as potential conditions because we have not been able to receive ... I think that is a little bit of my concern here: we're not seeing the level of detail that we normally do on our preliminary plan."

KYLIE BAGLEY, PLANNING | 14:47

"A conceptual plan was submitted with a preliminary plan, and then staff was told that the applicant would remove that conceptual plan. So it was very hard for staff to evaluate when we kind of saw one and then it was taken away. That's why we're asking for an additional level of detail with that final plat."

BOARD RESULT

Agenda Items 10, 11 and 12 were each approved 4-0. Hearing timestamps: 05:10:07, 05:11:21 and 05:15:40.

Source: Unofficial transcript prepared from the El Paso County meeting recording, source PDF pp. 6-7 and 57-58. The official meeting agenda appears at source PDF pp. 1-3. Excerpts were lightly cleaned for punctuation, filler words, and obvious automated-transcription artifacts. Timestamps, speaker identifications, and substantive wording are preserved. Ellipses indicate omitted words.