

REZONING Public hearing scheduled

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and residential uses outright. According to the agenda memo, the applicant, Dean Enterprises, LLC., plans to apply for a four-lot short plat to create three 5-acre residential lots and one 65-acre lot off of Byrckett Road for residential construction.

According to the memo, the larger lot may be further divided depending on market conditions, and a conservation easement of approximately 14.5 acres will be created to protect Bear Creek. Following a recommendation from the planning commission to approve the rezoning proposal, county commissioners held a discussion before coming to the conclusion that further input is necessary, and deciding to continue the public hearing, scheduled for 6 p.m. on June 1, with options for virtual and in-person participation.

Approval of the rezone would mean the greatest conversion of forest lands in the Trout Lake Valley in recent years; the applicant had received a rezone approval for 40 acres directly adjacent to the land currently under debate in 2006, which were later short-platted into seven

lots. According to a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) document showing mitigated approval of the 80-acre rezone through the county planning department, the applicant installed underground power and wells to serve the seven lots at the time of the 2006 rezone.

According to the SEPA document, the seven lots have been sold, and "owners are drawing up plans for housing and intend to build in the next one to three years."

The applicant, according to the SEPA document, considered the forest resources on the 80-acre parcel to be "of low density and of poorer quality than the timber to the west."

A "significant portion" of the area is covered by "scattered active Armillaria root rot disease pockets," which is marked by significant tree mortality in the area, according to the SEPA document.

"While clear cutting this 40 (acre lot) is an option, we conclude that a better use for this property would be to continue the development already begun to the south by creating (over time) five acre lots that are connected to Jennings Road by extending Byrckett Road," the applicant wrote in the SEPA document.

Commissioner Discussion

Commissioner Jacob

Anderson started the discussion on the merits of the specific rezoning proposal on the commissioners' desks. To begin, Anderson noted the merits of planning for residential development in an area where the housing supply is virtually non-existent.

"In terms of community need, last I checked, there is nothing for sale in the Trout Lake Valley. Nothing," Anderson said. "With that being said, creating another lot is not going to alleviate any issues that were brought up."

Anderson argued that the parcel would be the "next logical place" to build in the area, based on his recollection of past Trout Lake Community Council discussions which cited the western area as a possible area for expansion.

Commissioner Dan Christopher opposed the rezoning proposal based on two reasons. The first he cited was that the rezoning proposal "could be considered a spot zone just because it is not in their current comprehensive plan."

He also voiced opposition on the basis that there is no fire exit currently on the property.

Associate Planner Lori Anderson confirmed in an email exchange that both the 1995 Trout Lake Comprehensive Plan, and the 2010 plan that was never approved, "would allow

the General Rural zone in those (comprehensive) plan designations."

Anderson responded in agreement to Christopher's concerns about fire safety, saying Yellow Brick Road was too small for fire exits.

"I want fire data. I want fire egress, ingress ... as part of the start of the conversation," said Christopher.

Scott Richmond, a representative with Dean Enterprises, LLC., was allowed to speak directly to questions commissioners had on fire safety in the parcel.

"It's a very important question to us, I know it's a very important question to the community," Richmond said.

Richmond said the company has done a shaded fire break on Cheese Cave Road over a decade ago, and discussed updating that, but "we were told at the time of the planning commission hearings, that the issue of a fire exit was more of a short plat issue rather than a rezoning issue, which is why we haven't addressed it yet at this point."

In the SEPA document, Dean Enterprises, LLC., also state their intention to complete a commercial thinning of the parcel, primarily in the southern 40 acres.

Out of conversations with Trout Lake fire officials and representatives from Washington Department

of Natural Resources, Richmond was ready to address the issue of fire safety, presenting to commissioners a couple different options for expansion of fire escape routes.

Richmond said it is possible to extend Byrckett Road as part of the development, and provide a link to Cheese Cave road, which would give an extra exit for people to escape a dangerous situation to the west. It may also be possible, Richmond said, to find some way to connect the parcel to Dean Road to provide fire exit in that area to the east.

Richmond said the company intends to expand the proposals to provide additional fire egress at the time of the short plat process.

Following input from Richmond, Commissioners made a unanimous decision to hold their own public hearing following board discussion to gather more input.

"Changing the rules mid-game"

The Growth Management Act requires counties in Washington to maintain a comprehensive plan, which includes a land use element that sets the direction of future growth in a community.

In Klickitat County, a comprehensive plan update for the Trout Lake area had been drafted in 2010, but was put on hold and

never adopted, according to Deputy Planning Director Lori Anderson.

Because of the hold, the plan has not been codified, so county commissioners are basing decisions in the area off of a plan adopted in 1995, a grievance which Commissioner Dave Sauter voiced in his report priming the discussion on the rezoning proposal.

During Tuesday's commission meeting, Sauter called the situation "a huge problem that we're going to have to fix, one way or another."

Sauter voiced his personal hesitations on approving rezones, arguing that the county is being "forced into kind-of these one-offs where we're trying to force ... what we believe to be the current view of planning in that community based on really almost anecdotal information."

With local planning efforts having been stopped by litigation in the past, such as a comprehensive plan update effort for the Husum-BZ Corner area that was stalled by a SEPA appeal, Sauter contended that commissioners are being put in a position to make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

"To me it feels like you're changing the rules mid-game," Sauter said.



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