

**GUNNISON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, December 21, 2023**

The Gunnison County Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting in the Planning Commission Meeting Room in the Blackstock Government Center, 221 N. Wisconsin, Gunnison, Co. and on Zoom

Present:

Chairperson-Andy Sovick Commissioner-Roland Mason Commissioner- Matt Schwartz Commissioner-Fred Niederer Alt. Commissioner-Eric Phillips Commissioner – Julie Baca (called in)	Director of Planning - Hilary Seminick Planning Technician – Jena Greene
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Absent: Alt. Commissioner Annie Beal

Recused: none

Zoom: Fred Niederer, Julie Baca

8:48 a.m. Call to Order: With a quorum present Chairperson Sovick opened the December 21, 2023, regular meeting of the Planning Commission at 8:48 a.m.

The Planning Commission reviewed the December 7, 2023, meeting minutes.

Moved by Commissioner Mason and seconded by Commissioner Sovick to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes, dated December 7, 2023, with the recommended changes of correcting spelling for commissioner Mason's and Commissioner Niederer names. The motion passed unanimously.

There were no unscheduled citizens.

8:50 a.m. Work Session: LUC-23-00015 Minor Impact: Spezze Subdivision

Seminick introduced the project. This is a proposed subdivision for a parcel east of Gunnison off of state Highway 114. The applicant Tom Spezze submitted an application to subdivide the portion of the property that is on the west side of the highway into a 3-acre lot (Lot 1) and a 4.842-acre lot (lot 2) and place the remaining 27 acres on the east side of the of the highway into a conservation agreement. Lot 2 already had a single-family residence and all of the appropriate well permits and access permits have been obtained to allow for a residence to be built in the future on Lot 1. Since the proposal for the subdivision didn't meet locational standards and did not fall within the 3-mile plan, nor was it adjacent to any population centers, Mr. Spezze got creative and proposed the conservation of the 27-acre parcel in exchange for development rights on Lot 1. This would cluster development on the west side of the highway and make use of the existing ag access on Lot 1, and the designation of the conservation parcel would keep development out of an area where development wasn't appropriate and help to protect a known Elk migration corridor. Staff was supportive of the proposed subdivision. Staff had reviewed the convenience with the county attorneys, but they hadn't been fully reviewed at the time of the meeting.

Mr. Spezze attended the meeting in person. He added that when he and his wife purchased the full 40 plus acre parcel, they never intended to develop or subdivide it. This changed when he wanted to give his son an opportunity to build a home in the Gunnison Valley. After discussing different conservation projects around the county with Seminick, Spezze further realized that the 27-acre conservation parcel was a “donut hole” in an otherwise continuous conservation effort along the Cochetopa river. His intent was to donate the value of the conservation parcel in exchange for the Lot 1 development rights, in addition to creating covenants to ensure the protection of the land.

Planning Commission Discussion: Commissioner Mason stated that he was impressed with Spezze’s report and commitment to the project, noting that it had been in progress since 2019 and had been delayed because of COVID. He confirmed with Seminick that the proposals met the intent of the LUR, which allowed for some flexibility in circumstances like this one. He added that he thought staff had worked through all of the issues.

Commissioner Schwartz echoed Commissioner Mason’s comments on the application. He noted that the proposed development and conservation seemed to match the neighborhood context. Commissioners Philips and Niederer agreed with Mason and Schwartz.

Chairperson Sovick asked if there were any comments from CPW. Seminick brought up the email from Nick Gallowich which stated that they had no significant concerns about the subdivision.

Seminick presented a zoomed-out map of the area, to help give more context to the “Donut Hole” that Spezze mentioned. It showed how all of the land along the Cochetopa Creek to the north and south of the Spezze parcel was in either a conservation easement or a pending conservation easement, therefore, dedicating the 27-acre parcel created continuity in the conservation efforts along that entire section of the creek. Spezze chimed in, explaining his professional experience working for the Parks and Wildlife, and all of the ecosystem improvement work he had done for the conservation of the wildlife corridor on the parcel. He added that the covenances were crafted to allow him to continue that work in the area. Chairperson Sovick noted that it was refreshing to read covenants that were focused on conservation and ecology.

Chairperson Sovick asked if a site visit was needed. The commissioners agreed that a site visit was not needed. The chairperson asked staff to draft a recommendation for a joint public hearing with the Board of County Commissioners, which was decided to be scheduled for March 7th, 2024.

Chair Sovick adjourned the meeting at 9:09 a.m.
