

**GUNNISON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, November 21, 2024**

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-Roland Mason Vice-Chairperson- Fred Niederer Commissioner- Julie Baca Commissioner- Eric Phillips Commissioner-Matt Schwartz Alt. Commissioner- Bill Barvitski Alt. Commissioner- Catherine McBreen BOCC – Jonathan Houck BOCC – Liz Smith BOCC – Laura Puckett Daniels	Assistant County Manager for Community and Economic Development-Cathie Pagano Planner-Rachel Blondy Planning Technician – Jena Greene Others present as listed in text
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Absent: None

Recused: Schwartz and Barvitski for LUC-23-00032 only.

Zoom: Baca, McBreen

With a quorum present Chairperson Mason opened the November 21, 2024 regular meeting of the Planning Commission at 8:51 am.

Moved by Baca, seconded by Phillips to approve Planning Commission meeting minutes, dated November 7, 2024, 2024. The motion passed unanimously in support with the insubstantial amendments as noted by Mason and Schwartz.

Staff announcements/miscellaneous: Pagano requested that the planning commission move the January meetings to the 9th and the 23rd instead of the 2nd and 16th. None were opposed, and it was decided that the meetings would be held on January 9th and 23rd, 2025. Greene would send out calendar updates after the meeting.

Joint Public Hearing: LUC-23-00032 Major Impact | Sketch Plan | Discount Storage Expansion of Commercial Use

The property owner and applicant, Centennial Storage Partners, LLC, requested an expansion of commercial use to allow for approximately 115 outdoor vehicular storage spaces adjacent to the existing Discount Storage at 1825 State Highway 135, Gunnison, CO.

Chair Mason opened the joint public hearing at 8:01 am

Preliminary Matters Schwartz and Barvitski recused themselves, as they had for previous meetings for this application.

Confirmation of Adequate Public Notice

Pagano confirmed adequate notice per LUR Section 3-112.

Applicant Presentation and Review Body Commission Questions

Attorney Michael O'Loughlin and legal assistant/office manager Abigail Grimmer were present on behalf of the applicant, Ken Snyder, Managing Member of Centennial Storage Partners, LLC, who was also present in the room. O'Loughlin reviewed the proposal to add 115 spaces onsite in addition to the 134 existing spaces, adding that there was a large need for additional storage in the valley. There was support from the City of Gunnison. Expressed that he felt that the application met all of the standards. The applicant applied in 2018 for the initial/current outdoor storage project, which was currently full with a waiting list.

The water and ditch information were reviewed. O'Loughlin noted that Grimmer thoroughly researched the two ditches onsite. The Whip Ditch, which was to the north and not on the property, had owners; and the "Wastewater Ditch", which Grimmer was unable to find ownership information for, went through the property. With that in mind, the site plan and plat were revised to include an easement for the Wastewater Ditch, in case owners ever did come out of the woodwork – which they would have a statutory right to protected by the state regardless. The current owner had this ditch culverted. There was also a drainage report that had been provided by the applicants.

The setbacks were briefly discussed. A variance would need to be applied for during the preliminary plan phase of the project.

The residence in the middle of the parcel was discussed. The applicant stated that they worked closely with the landowner overtime, including extra property in a boundary line adjustment that was done in 2018. The current owner was in support of the project. Pagano added that previously staff had expressed concern with the residential property that was surrounded by commercial, and that staff still had concerns about this issue and future development.

Puckett Daniels asked about the fencing. The new fencing was proposed to be chain link with slats to match existing. This would comply for buffering purposes, but would that comply with wildlife and sage grouse? It was noted that the fencing would be addressed at the preliminary plan. The Gunnison Conservation District comments concerning the Sage Grouse impacts were reviewed in reference to the fencing, but comments from CPW had not been received at the time of this meeting. Staff suggested that more input be requested for from CPW and suggested that the applicant research fencing for the preliminary plan.

Buffering was discussed. Mason added that the Planning Commission had conducted a site visit, and that there was a good amount of shielding along the highway, and that the property was situated fairly low even with the 3-5 feet of added elevation, which was why the Planning Commission hadn't required additional buffering after the work session. The interior parcel buffering was discussed. There wasn't a concern at this time since the current owners had expressed support, but it was noted that a future owner may not feel the same.

The residential parcel in the middle was further discussed. Puckett Daniels expressed concern that the residential parcel in the middle would be forced to be commercial in the future, based

on compatibility. Mason noted that since the commercial property was a parking area, it conversely had the potential to be redeveloped as residential. It was hard to predict.

Staff Comments

Pagano mentioned the proliferation and demand for storage being all around the entrance points, and how the commission had expressed concern in the past about this happening around the entrances to the City of Gunnison. Community area plans, this area would probably be contemplated for mixed use, the west would probably be considered for multifamily, the intent would be that the re

Pagano also added that the applicant agreed to comply with the area plan, however this use wasn't contemplated for this area at this time.

Public Comment

Martin Klinowski – property owner to the east. Mr. Klinowski expressed frustration with the board for not approving a variance for outside storage during the previous meeting. He highlighted several issues related to storage and infrastructure in Gunnison County, including trailers being left unattended or improperly stored in town, limited availability of storage, especially due to low-income housing developments; poorly designed garages and driveways in new buildings, which were too small to accommodate larger vehicles; and an evident need for outside storage given these challenges. Klinowski emphasized that the proposed storage unit was largely pre-existent or could be easily adapted. He also pointed out that the lack of commercial properties in town increased the potential value and utility of the storage facility. Ultimately, he voiced strong support for the storage unit, describing it as a beneficial public resource.

John Succo – part owner of discount storage. Asked about the use of storage being contemplated for the area.

Applicant Response

None

Staff Response

Pagano noted some recommendations for changes to the draft recommendation document including a finding that the applicant would get clarification from Gunnison Conservation District and CPW concerning the best type of fencing to be used, and a condition that the fencing would be a part of the preliminary plan; making a separate finding and condition for 13-113 concerning the fencing; some minor edits; a summary of Mr. Klinowski's comments; the addition of a sentence section 10-104 noting that the current draft of the community plan had not been adopted by the county and that the proposed storage use would not be in compliance for that reason, modified section and condition concerning the ditch, due the applicant's submission from the previous week; deleted the section related to housing.

O'Loughlin asked about Condition 5. Pagano noted that this line was included in all recommendations, O'Loughlin expressed concern. Pagano requested that the County Attorneys review the condition first, and that it could be further reviewed at the BOCC meeting.

Close the Public Hearing

Baca made a motion to close the public hearing. Seconded by Phillips. The motion passed unanimously in support.

Recommendation

Niederer made a motion for a recommendation to approve the recommendation document as amended. Seconded by Phillips. The motion passed unanimously in support.

BREAK

Schwartz and Barvitski rejoined the meeting.

9:54 am Mason opened the Joint Public Hearing for LUC-24-00021 Major Impact | Sketch Plan | Harmels on the Taylor Expansion of Commercial Use Harmels on the Taylor requested an expansion of commercial use to allow for lodging units, RV sites, glamping sites, employee housing, and storage units at 6748 County Road 742, Almont; Parcel No. 3433-000-00-026.

Chair Mason opened the joint public hearing at 9:54 am

Preliminary Matters - NoneConfirmation of Adequate Public Notice

Pagano confirmed adequate public notice.

Mason verified that no Planning Commission members or Board of County Commission members had any ex-parte communications

Pagano reviewed the requirements for major impacts for Gunnison County, and the process, noting that this project was in sketch plan phase which was intended to be conceptual, and that a lot of engineering and other specifics wouldn't be required until the preliminary plan phase.

Applicant Presentation

Attorney Jacob With was present, along with applicant David Reynolds. With began by acknowledging the significant amount of public feedback, primarily from neighbors. Appreciation was expressed for the community's input and the importance of preserving neighborhood character, adding that the applicant also viewed the neighbors as potential customers, and that the applicant also cared about preserving the neighborhood. Concerns were raised regarding current traffic and pedestrian safety and Harmels planned to conduct a traffic study to analyze existing conditions and potential impacts of development, as they were required to do so during the preliminary plan, and that they weren't allowed to do during the sketch plan phase, noting that some changes to traffic management may be necessary regardless of Harmels' plans.

With began with an overview of the site plan. He reviewed the proposed development of an RV area which would be screened by existing trees and topography, and new laundry facility to replace the existing facility. Additional cabins with a focus on infill near existing structures. Potential glamping sites (may be reconsidered due to cost of hazard analysis). Site visits confirmed significant natural shielding from Spring Creek Road and Taylor River Road, with minor visibility from specific vantage points.

Commissioners Mason and Phillips added that Planning Commission did a site visit on October 3, and echoed that there was a lot of existing screening and shielding. It was also noted that they spent a good amount of time at the site in addition to

With reviewed the updates for the wastewater treatment plant. The existing wastewater systems were outdated and environmentally problematic. A new plant was required before the new infrastructure became operational and was going to be added regardless. Preliminary site selected, with input from neighbors and state regulations. Final location will be determined during future phases. A compact, odor-controlled wastewater treatment plant design planned, adhering to stringent CDPHE standards, which would be operated by certified personnel as required by law.

With discussed the increase in occupancy and the use of ATVs/UTVs. A traffic study would inform guest limits, infrastructure decisions, and potential amenities like a public RV dump station. Target of ~200 guests, with a 30% increase during peak season and better off-season utilization. With added that the applicant was also concerned about ATV/UTV use, and was willing to offer as a condition that use of these types of vehicles would be restricted to employee use and accessibility needs.

With reviewed the environmental considerations. Development plans aimed to avoid clear-cutting and preserve wildlife corridors. Additional tree planting proposed for screening purposes. Planned to collaborate with CPW to monitor bighorn sheep migration using game cameras.

With discussed the proposed employee housing. Housing for approximately 40 employees during peak season, hoped that providing housing onsite would help reduce traffic and support year-round operations. Potential for winter housing to accommodate ski resort employees. Select cabins to remain operational year-round for employee housing and off-season guests.

With discussed the proposed RV sites and storage units. RV sites to operate seasonally (summer-only) with electricity provided to reduce generator noise. Consideration of a public RV dump station pending results of the traffic study. Proposal to provide storage for local residents to reduce traffic to Gunnison. Unit sizes would range from small vehicle storage to larger spaces.

The proposed glamping sites were discussed. With noted that many would be located in a rockfall hazard area that further analysis would be needed during the preliminary plan phase.

With stated that it was important to the applicant to maintain the “dude ranch” aesthetic and community appeal. The soccer field and restaurant were to remain integral parts of the site. The applicant acknowledged increased traffic in the Taylor Reservoir area and emphasized the

opportunity for holistic analysis once the application moved past the sketch plan phase and into preliminary plan.

Planning Commission Questions

Schwartz asked if there would be a time limit/minimum for the RV sites. With said that the applicant was intending to have people onsite that would stay for longer periods of time. Liked the idea that people could come for longer stays and keep those people out of the forest service campsites, both of which could help reduce the traffic. Acknowledged a need for a dump station for the general public, and that RV's were already an existing problem. With added that the applicant was considering making that available, but they wanted to first conduct the traffic study to be able to get more information to determine if that would be possible. Overflow parking need would also be determined by the traffic study.

Schwartz further commented that it would make sense to have the RVs removed in the winter. The applicant agreed. The applicant noted that there would be electricity to the sites, which addressed the comment/concern about generator noise.

Puckett Daniels encouraged that the applicant get data in preliminary plan to support that the storage would be used by local neighborhood and to further assess the overall need and use.

Mason also encouraged conversation about lighting, hours of operation.

BREAK

Public Comments

Lizzie Plotkin – Homeowner on CR 54 and year-round resident. Thought that the proposed application was an example of extractive tourism, and that not all tourism was sustainable. The expansion as proposed was not sustainable. Stated that she was wary of the increase in traffic on Spring Creek road, as there were already issues with enforcement. Also expressed concerns for fire danger with the amount of beetle kill in the area. Noted that the Forest Service did a good job of dampening fire rings, but would there be fire rings at the proposed RV sites. Expressed concern for the amount of water that would be used by the expansion with wells in the area already going dry. Her well was only 85 ft deep, who would pay to dig it deeper with the increase in use. Didn't support the dump station as that is not what they paid "top dollar" property taxes for.

Chris Cappellucci – year-round full time on spring creek for 52 years. Concerned about living in the expanded ideas of Harmels, noting that they lived upwind of the proposed dump station. The Spring Creek area had a lot of sentimental value, as she got married and raised her family there. Didn't want to see a change like this.

Ward Kable – property owner to the direct south. Third generation to get to enjoy the area. Echoed Liz's concerns about water supply. Added that the laundry facility could use up lot of water in the area which was not acknowledged in the applicant provided table; and there were no comments from Division of water resources and encouraged the board to wait until their comments returned before moving forward with the sketch plan. Has concerns about the new wastewater treatment plant impacting the river since it was proposed to be so close to his

property, which was on the river, and how the discharge from the plant would impact his family and the fishing. Requested that the wastewater treatment plant go somewhere else or that the existing systems be replaced.

Mary Forshagen – Taylor Canyon resident. Everything they do has an impact on the Taylor river. Encouraged more responsibility to the land and the water. Asked that they thoroughly assess the impact to the water.

Harmon Zuckerman – Attorney, representative of the Kable family (second homeowners to the direct south of the Harmels Property). The Kable family had concerns about the proposed location of the wastewater treatment plant. Asked that the wastewater treatment plant should be treated as industrial. Expressed concerns for the increase in water use, as well as the Kable Family's strong opposition to the proposed location of the wastewater treatment plant, which was close to their property line, and the family's fishing/swimming hole. Expressed further concern about the proposed RV sites on steep slopes, unanswered questions regarding wildlife passage, violation of setback requirements, lack of buffering, and potential excessive groundwater withdraws. Requested that the board recommend denial of the application or recommend a thoroughly crafted set of conditions of approval which would ensure that the intensity, location, and quality of the proposed uses don't destroy the character of the area, the water quality of the Taylor, and the quality of life for neighborhood.

Martha Harsher – Members of the community since the early 90s. Enjoyed everything about spring creek. They had concerns about the RV park noting that they passed by empty RV sites along their drive up from Denver 3 weekends a month in the summer and didn't see a reason to add more sites. In support of dump station, but not for public use due to the increase in traffic that it would cause. Requested that the story poles used by the commission for the site visit be left up year-round so the residents of the area could see. Noted that she had met with Public Works during COVID and that there was data showing that travelers consistently went 10 to 15 miles per hour over the speed limit. Requested that the traffic study be done when spring creek reservoir was fully open, if it was done in the near future, to get an accurate result.

Richard Foster – Owner upriver from Harmels on the Taylor. His property had the same family owners for 70 years, and 5 generations of owners. Noted that there was wildlife in the area including moose. This was not a place for camping, opposed to the RV sites and the increase in density. Wanted Harmels to be a place where people could rent a cabin and the neighbors could come and be together in harmony. Also opposed to the glamping sites. This proposal would change the area, the land wasn't meant to be used for the proposed purpose.

Matt Lackey – Full time Spring Creek resident since 2019. Concerns about water usage. His well was only 80 ft. deep and an influx in usage could affect them. Echoed concerns for increase in traffic. 300 occupants would be too much. Didn't want a light put up in front of his neighborhood. Expressed concern for fire rings at campsites and for the employee housing.

Paul Edstrom 29 Shawnee – Had seen big changes during the 21 years of owning their cabin. Expressed concerns about the occupancy, which from his calculation could be up to 310 people. Concerned about the water usage for that many people and the WWTP would also use

a lot of water. His cabin had a 60 ft. well which was in jeopardy already. Concerns for everyone having to drill deeper wells.

Kip Daniel – 55 Shawnee drive. Owned his second home there for 70 years. Had seen a lot of change, including an increase in density. At some point the impact had to stop. The environment was fragile. The ATV use would be hard to control. Car traffic was already bad and the intersection 742 and 744 was dangerous, especially for people trying to walk across. Encouraged the commission to look at the impact overall, it was more than just a traffic study.

Mark Anderson – Concerned about the defensible space, which “does not exist in the RV park” consider a potable water storage, then they. Also requested that the applicant consider potable water storage to help with the drawdown, as well as fire hydrants on the resort. Also wanted to see a retention pond installed for the wastewater treatment plant to monitor the water quality.

Tim Heure – Property owner on spring creek. Owned since 2020 but had been coming to the area for over 50 years. Witnessed a lot of change. Enjoy and respected the beauty of the natural environment of the area. Now there were so many people and the was overused. Noted that the impacts were so much more than the visual impacts. Agreed with all of the previously stated comments. If this project were to move forward, it would dramatically transform the area in a detrimental way and harm the residents and visitors. Requested that the application be denied or that the scope be reduced.

Cindy Wright – lived right next to Harmels on the river. Year-round resident for 22 years.. Found it challenging to see how the application aligned with the community character and compatibility standards of the LUR, due to an increase in noise, use, and traffic. She had recently seen three big horn sheep unable to cross the street because of the traffic. Also noted that she had deer, bears, moose and bighorn. Impact needed to be greatly reconsidered. (year-round resident).

Applicant Response

With acknowledged comments on potable water storage, retention ponds, and fire hydrants, emphasizing that fire safety was a priority. Housing and cabins would comply with new codes, and outdoor amenities would minimize fire risks while ensuring adequate space and buffering. With did not believe the proposal posed significant fire hazards.

Traffic and aquifer impacts would be evaluated during the preliminary planning phase. They sought approval to proceed with engineering studies to facilitate more concrete discussions, recognizing the current stage involved speculation. Appreciation was expressed for community participation.

Regarding the wastewater treatment plan, it was deemed necessary and supported by the county, aiming to be respectful of neighbors’ concerns about septic systems. The wastewater treatment plant could potentially serve as an amenity for nearby properties, addressing the area's high residential density. The speaker acknowledged the need to revisit occupancy numbers to better understand maximum and average usage.

They requested approval to advance to the next phase to conduct engineering studies and quantify the proposal's impacts and issues.

Staff Response

Pagano provided additional comments on several key topics. Regarding the wastewater treatment plant, the county aimed to ensure adequate wastewater treatment at the site, which was currently lacking. The building and environmental health official, Crystal Lambert, could provide further input on this matter if needed. On the topic of employee housing units, there was no submission regarding a deed restriction for these units, although this could potentially become a condition imposed by the commission.

The STOR committee had emphasized the need for more established camping options in the valley, particularly in reference to the RV campground. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) planned to collar animals in the area, with a focus on bighorn sheep, to assess wildlife impacts. Concerning the traffic study, the applicant was advised to consider and discuss the timing of the study, especially in light of the closure of the Spring Creek Reservoir.

The Division of Water Resources did not typically provide comments at the sketch plan stage, but such comments would be expected at the preliminary plan stage. Additionally, there was a desire for evidence demonstrating the need for the proposed storage units.

Pagano noted that the hybrid meetings were available to enhance accessibility and advised against delaying scheduling to accommodate all parties. Attendees were reminded that recordings would be available for those unable to attend in person. Finally, Pagano noted that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) had the option to hold an additional public hearing, and the public was encouraged to submit letters to the BOCC if necessary.

Pagano requested that the planning commission continued the hearing, based on the amount of comment. Pagano also wanted to make some changes to the draft recommendation document.

Board Discussion

Mason discussed continuing the public hearing, emphasizing that the public would have additional opportunities to submit written comments and make oral statements at the next hearing.

Puckett Daniels outlined a list of questions for the applicant, including the need to resolve discrepancies concerning wildlife activity, which would require a wildlife impact analysis during the preliminary plan phase. She also requested details on fire management policies, outdoor fire use, and policies for ATV and OHV use. Additionally, she sought an analysis of the pros and cons of a public dump station, as well as evaluations of water supply, storage, and the WWTP's tie-in capacity, all of which would be addressed during the preliminary plan phase. Puckett Daniels also reflected on the community's love for the area, asking how the proposed expansion could contribute positively to it.

Barvitski requested more information about the seasonality of occupancy for the site.

Smith noted the fluctuations in use patterns and expressed general support for worker housing. However, he raised concerns about housing being tied to employment and requested

clarification on how this approach would benefit the workforce while providing necessary protections.

Phillips focused on operational concerns, asking how the project would be managed and suggesting that the applicant clarify their values to help the community better understand their vision.

Continuation of the Public Hearing

Schwartz made a motion to continue the public hearing to January 9th, 2024 at 9 am. Seconded by Phillips. The motion passed unanimously in support.

BREAK

Joint Public Hearing: LUC-24-00028| Minor Impact | Kunes 3 Lot Subdivision

The Applicant proposed a three-lot subdivision of 127 Evelyn Lane. The subdivision would split the current 4.1 acres into a 2.01 acre, a 1.0 acre, a 1.01 acre parcel.

Chair Mason opened the public hearing at 12:24 pm.

Confirmation of Adequate Public Notice

Blondy Confirmed adequate public notice.

Preliminary matters, ex-parte communications: none.

Applicant Presentation

Jim Kunes was present. He purchased the 4 acres last year. It took the time to improve the property including putting in a new septic system. Wanted to split up part of the property to help reduce the mortgage for his daughter and her husband.

Staff Comments

Blondy gave an overview. After the last work session, the planning commission asked the applicant to create a road maintenance agreement with the HOA, which the applicant did. The Applicant also drafted covenants.

There had been a few comments concerning the increase in traffic, and the existing dangers of the intersection of HWY 135 and Evelyn lane. Blondy reached out to CDOT, and they verbally commented that a traffic study would be required with a 20% increase in lots. The creation of two lots was less than a 20% increase and therefore didn't trigger a need for a traffic study at this time.

Review Body Questions

Puckett Daniels asked for clarification about how the road

Public Comments

Jay Kelleher – 17 Paul Place. Downhill neighbor. Had concerns about water and snowmelt runoff. Concerned about water runoff when new buildings were built there. Concerns about the water runoff from the driveway. Had any studies been done? What would happen if there were any water issues in the future. What was his protection in the future.

Applicant Response

Kunes noted that he hadn't done any studies. The access was existing, but he anticipated that any future construction would require him to do a study at the time of permitting.

Staff Response

Staff reiterated that the driveway review would be conducted by Gunnison County Public Works to meet road and bridge standards at the time of building permit submission.

Blondy noted that Mr. Kelleher had written in a comment concerning potential building sizes.

Blondy addressed the commissions' question concerning public comments about wells, and wells in the area drying up. She noted that the applicant was required to show that each new lot would be able to have adequate water and was required to purchase augmentation from the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District.

Puckett Daniels asked if it was possible to know how drilling additional wells in the area would impact the neighbors' existing wells. The Division of Water Resources commented on the project, but they didn't comment on the physical adequacy for this project. Houck noted that the state was the ultimate authority, and that they took neighboring wells into consideration before permitting new wells.

Review of Draft Decision Document

Blondy gave an overview of the findings and conditions, noting that the application met the standards and requirements of the LUR for a minor subdivision.

Close Public Hearing

Neiderer Moved to close the public hearing. Seconded by Schwartz.

Recommendation

Schwartz made a motion to recommend the application to the Board of County Commissioners. Seconded by Niederer. The motion passed unanimously in support.

Mason adjourned the meeting at 12:55 pm