



El Paso County
Falcon/Peyton Small Area Master Plan Update
Advisory Committee Meeting

24 October 2007: 3-5 pm

LOCATION: El Paso County Development Services Department
2nd Floor Conference Room
2880 International Circle Colorado Springs, CO 80910

ATTENDEES: Lynne Bliss – Committee Chair
Jason Alwine – Committee Vice Chair
Darsey Nicklasson – Committee Member
Tim Kistler – Committee Member
Trent Harwig – Committee Member
Sandra Martin – Committee Member
Conrad Schaap – Committee Member
Adrian Stanciu – Committee Member
Dave Elliott – Committee Member
David Powell – Committee Member – EPC Planning Commission Liaison
Henry Reitwiesner – Committee Member – SD 49 Liaison
Mark S. Shook – Committee Member – SD 49 Liaison
Aaron Briggs – HB&A
Stanley Mael – HB&A
Meggan Yoest – El Paso County DSD
Carl Schueler – El Paso County DSD
Gary Rombeck – 4-Way Ranch M.D.
Ron Waldthausen – Bentgrass Project
John Popovich – Falcon Hills Metro District
Steve Mulliken – Counsel for High Plains
Aaron N. Zemler – ATOZ Realty
Bryan Long – Windmill Development
Sharon R. Bennet – Mountain View Properties
Ellen Robley – District Administrator, Paint Brush Hills Metro District
Alfred Hagedorn – Mid-Colorado Investment Co., Inc.
Karl Andrews Jr. – Andrews Development
John McGinn – JDS-Hydro Consultants

AGENDA

- 1) Summary of Previous Meeting & Agenda for this meeting

Because there were so many people, we all introduced ourselves around the room at the beginning of the meeting.

Aaron summarized the meeting minutes from the last meeting, and there were no additions or comments from the attendees.

2) Stakeholder Interviews Status Report

Aaron and Carl summarized the stakeholder meetings that had occurred since the last meeting. There were only two meetings. Tasha and Aaron had conducted a meeting with the Bennett Ranch property owners. Janice Bennett-Good and Sharon Bennett-Cullers provided a great deal of information about their plans for the land in the future.

Carl met with Mr. McGinn prior to the advisory committee meeting, and will probably follow up in the future.

3) Water Resources Issues

- a. General Overview of Background and Data
 1. Groundwater and Geology
 2. Boundaries
 3. Providers

Carl passed out an informational handout and gave a general overview of the whole system of surface water, ground water, and wastewater in the area. He noted that water and land use are going to be the two major impacts on this plan, and it is therefore important that we spend some time talking about the specific impacts of water on future development in the area. He also noted that Cherokee Metro District and Black Squirrel Groundwater Management District were invited to the meeting but couldn't come to this meeting. The water discussion may carry over to future meetings. The following bullets summarize some of the points made by Carl.

- There are three kinds of water: surface water, alluvial groundwater, bedrock groundwater.
- In the planning area, there is no surface water to speak of. City of Colorado Springs gets all water from surface water. Everybody in the planning area gets water from groundwater.
- Bedrock groundwater: The most important aquifers in the area are called the Denver basin. This geological structure is composed of sedimentary water-bearing layers of rock that are several thousand feet thick and are shaped like a bowl. The formation is thicker in the center and thinner toward the edges. Our planning area lies long the thinning edge of the formation, so the southern portions of the planning area do not have as much groundwater resources as the northern parts.
- Alluvial groundwater: Alluvial aquifers lie on top of the bedrock groundwater system. They consist of buried stream channels that are close to the surface. Surface water infiltrates into these aquifers quickly, and groundwater moves through them quickly (on the scale of miles/year, vs. feet/year in bedrock aquifers).
- Water is measured in acre-feet. One acre-foot is 325,000 gallons, roughly 209 feet square, 1 ft deep.
- A typical household requires .2-.5 acre-feet per year.

- Most people have denver basin wells. Water rights are determined using a mathematical calculation of what quantity of water lies beneath your water right.
- The west uses the “Doctrine of Prior Appropriation” - Whoever got there first and put the water to use gets rights to it into the future.
- Water is seen as a right and as a commodity. Most people who have a well have an "exempt" well. You can have a well and use it without going through the water rights process.
- Water is allocated and apportioned by the State of Colorado, not the county. The State Engineer’s office offers well permits. The water court in Pueblo settles any disputes.
- Owners of surface water rights can assert their rights if the groundwater has a hydrological connection with the surface. Even bedrock groundwater can be tributary, meaning that surface water rights users can have rights over some groundwater. Augmentation plans allow groundwater users to put water back into the system to compensate for those rights.
- The County is required to show that water is plentiful enough for subdivision.
- The County requires sufficiency for 300 years of water in the denver basin because that water is considered non-renewable.
- From a county standpoint, alluvial water is considered renewable. Really, it’s semi-renewable because of the recharge rate.
- Groundwater Management Districts were set up to manage the groundwater in different drainage basins. The Upper Black Squirrel groundwater management district covers the majority of the planning area. They deal primarily with export of water out of the basin. The district can permit small wells, and is also requiring all large capacity users to be metered.
- Water providers – Carl passed out a handout that listed the major water providers in the area. Most of the water providers in the planning area are connected with metro districts. Meridian Ranch is a big one, so is Woodmen Hills. Many other smaller water providers. There are about 10 total. If there are providers that are not on Carl’s list, it should be provided to him so we can follow up.
- There are many areas where houses will be served by septic systems and central water systems, especially in the southern part of the planning area.
- “Use to Extinction” - If you have water, you have the right to use it until it's gone. For example, The City of Colorado Springs does a calculation to figure out how many times each drop of water is used. Non-potable uses have been considered and executed in the area.
- Groundwater recharge – there is a study underway through the Colorado Geological Survey to determine the capacity and recharge areas for the alluvial aquifers in the area. The plan is to use that alluvium as storage capacity, where water could be put in and taken back out.

- There are something like 4,000 wells in the Upper Black Squirrel area. The pattern is important.

b. Sandra Martin/Protect Our Wells

Ms. Martin gave a powerpoint presentation about Protect Our Wells. The presentation gave an overview of what Protect Our Wells does, what their mission is, and what their particular concerns are.

- Protect Our Wells is a non-profit, citizen-based organization, formed in 2002, to advocate the interests of county residents with private wells in the Denver Basin Aquifers.
- The aquifers in the area are non-renewable and are being depleted very quickly.
- Protect Our Wells has some concerns about the accuracy of calculations used to prove the 300 years of sufficiency that El Paso County requires for subdivision.
- Protect Our Wells would like to see a Groundwater Monitoring Program implemented at the County level to:
 - Establish a baseline from which change can be evaluated,
 - Identify areas experiencing significant depletion
 - Provide useful information for resource managers and planners to aid in future management of groundwater resources
 - Project future conditions of supply
 - Improve spatial distribution of groundwater monitoring
 - Determine water-yielding properties of the aquifers
 - Provide data for the basin wide groundwater flow model
 - Provide long-term and short-term data necessary to evaluate the response of the groundwater system to climatic variations and human-induced stresses
- Protect Our Wells also has other proposals for the County and State level to ensure adequate water supplies into the future.
- There was a question about whether Protect Our Wells is supportive of the County's 300 year rule, and Ms. Martin responded by saying that they're supportive, but are sometimes suspicious of the calculations used. We're all handicapped by a lack of data.
- There was another question about whether Protect Our Wells will advocate for a special district (a rural water authority). Protect Our Wells is looking into it, but not advocating it.
- Mr. Hagedorn had a few comments:
 - His company has wells into arapahoe and laramie hills aquifers.
 - Water quality and quantity are greater in these formations at their location.
 - He has experienced problems getting level data and pumping rates. He supplies this data to UBS. Annually, someone from the state checks their well depths.

c. Water Providers

- Mr. Hagedorn had a few comments:
 - He is the wholesale supplier for Sage Creek, providing water for about 350 households.
 - One of the main concerns regards the amount of water per house. Sage Hills people, over 20 years, people use about .26 acre feet per year per household, including approximately 10% loss in distribution.
 - There are restrictions on irrigated area (1600-2000 sf), but no restrictions on animals. People have horses and pigs.

- The wells that they drilled were subject to a "well logging" process as they were drilled. Maybe the calculations of capacity would be better if this was followed for every well drilled. It's a detailed analysis of the water-holding capacity of what was drilled through.
- He advocates having the state well permit fee increased enough to have the State be able to keep track of what's going on.
- There were no other comments from water providers in the area.
- Mr. Reitwiesner noted that as a major water user (School District 49), it is difficult to negotiate the different providers and systems out there.
- Carl mentioned that this is ultimately a land use plan, and therefore cannot do too much to reform the water system. However, the availability and quality of water are going to be key inputs in determining the land use distribution in the area. The plan is all advisory, but this plan can begin to recommend some of those ideas that might be important to the group.

4) Re-visit Future Land Use Map

a. Current Status

Aaron summarized the current status of the land use planning map (which was provided as a handout) for the attendees who weren't familiar with it.

- He described the land use graphic as a generalized, conceptualized layout of land use intensity in the planning area.
- There are three levels of analysis so far – Existing, Approved and Future.
 - Existing – We're aiming to estimate the remaining capacity in these areas.
 - Approved – We can track the number of approved housing units in areas that have an approved sketch plan.
 - Future – We have estimated the future possible build-out of the large future landholding areas. This is to reflect the expectations of landowners that may not have a sketch plan, but may still have expectations.

b. Individual Exercises

After describing the graphic, Aaron passed out markers and asked the meeting attendees to mark three things on their maps.

1. Draw the Urban-Rural line on your map.
2. Mark critical rural areas – Areas that, in your opinion, would be a great loss if they were urbanized
3. Mark critical commercial areas – Spots that should be set aside for commercial services to serve the area's population.

The meeting attendees were given approximately 15 minutes for these exercises, and at the end of the time, the meeting was adjourned.