



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

28 November 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
Carl Schueler, El Paso County DSD
Tammy Jansma, Committee Member
Dave Elliott, Committee Member
Meggan Yoest, El Paso County DSD
Kathleen Wallace, New Falcon Herald
Sharon Bennett, Mountain View Properties
Janice Bennett Good, Mountain View Properties
Bob Good, Mountain View Properties
David Litzelman, Colorado Springs Planning Department Liaison
Henry Reitwiesner, School District 49 liaison
Ellen Robley, Paint Brush Hills Metro District
David Powell, Planning Commission Liaison
Jason Alwine, Committee Vice Chair
Tim Kistler, Committee Member
Kip Peterson, Cherokee Metropolitan District
Kathy Hare, Upper Black Squirrel Groundwater Management District

MINUTES

1) Summary of Previous Meeting & Agenda for this meeting

Aaron went over the minutes from last meeting, and there were no comments or additions from the committee.

2) Recent Stakeholder Activity – Status

Lyn mentioned that Aaron and she attended the Protect Our Wells community open house on November 19th. It was a good gathering, and we were able to answer some questions for community members about our planning process and schedule. There was no major new information that came out of that meeting that could influence our plan.

Carl noted that we're getting toward the end of our list of stakeholders that we intended to talk with. We're going to be identifying which contacts are left.

3) Water Resources Discussion

Before the water discussion began, the meeting attendees introduced themselves around the room.

a. Summarize previous water-focused meeting

Carl passed out copies of the meeting minutes and summarized the discussion that we had during our water-focused meeting on October 24th. He also passed out copies of a water resources overview that he prepared for that meeting. He emphasized that although we covered the basics during that meeting, we didn't want to close the books on water issues until we'd heard from two of the most important water-related organizations in the area, which is why Cherokee Metro District and Upper Black Squirrel Groundwater Management District have been invited to speak today.

b. Cherokee Metro District

Kip Peterson introduced himself as the General Manager of Cherokee Metro. He's also a former planner and planning director for Teller County, so he understands and appreciates the future land use planning process.

- Cherokee MD is a provider of water and sewer on the east side of Colorado Springs and has been in existence since 1958.
- They also provide streetlights, parks, and open space in addition to water and sewer.
- In the past, the district has not really had opportunities to expand because of being surrounded by the City of Colorado Springs.
- Because the district does not get property taxes, and only receives revenue for the provision of services, it has had difficulty with replacement issues and other funding of long-term strategic plans.
- All of Cherokee's water comes from the Upper Black Squirrel (UBS) basin and most people are aware that there have sometimes been strained relations between Cherokee and UBS Groundwater Management District. They've been working hard to get away from the perception that they're always butting heads. Kip believes that they probably have more in common that separates the two organizations. Chiefly, they are both critically concerned about water quantity and quality in the area.
- District is in the process of designing and building a new 4.2 MGD wastewater facility 3 miles south of Schriever AFB. This will be an activated batch reactor facility, giving much high quality than the current lagoon system (located near Peterson AFB).
- Existing lagoon system will remain in place for overflow or backup capacity.
- Cherokee is aiming for the new plant to start treating sewage in 2010.
- Also planning for an aquifer recharge program. Recharge facility is under construction. This will involve piping effluent from the wastewater plant six miles south to the Sweetwater well field where it will be placed in basins to allow percolation back down into the alluvial aquifer. The last 10% of treatment happens in the first six feet of ground, and the water ultimately percolates to 100-150 feet deep.
- Water quality is estimated to be better than the background water quality after recharge.
- They'll start withdrawing water from the recharge system approximately six months after starting the system.
- It's basically a way to get more uses out of the water.
- Cherokee is also looking at expanding the district's area into areas that are currently not serviced by central services. Particularly in the northern part of the UBS basin. This "Northern District" would serve the area as far north as Meridian

Ranch and Judge Orr road, and would provide central sewer services to the area.

- This is partially an effort to stem the proliferation of septic systems in the UBS basin. Cherokee believes that the growth in number of septic systems is going to have an inevitable negative effect on the water quality in the area. If Cherokee's wells along the Ellicott Highway become contaminated, they can't be used because the price of cleaning them up is cost-prohibitive.
- They would also like to build a wastewater treatment plant in the Northern District with a recharge facility. Cherokee believes that growth is inevitable, and that we need to manage it right as a community in order to make it sustainable and economically viable. Central water and sewer services are a critical part of that managed growth vision.
- Carl asked for clarification about the eventual closure of the Paintbrush Hills treatment facility and the impact that might have on Cherokee and the existing line that runs south from Highway 24 along Meridian Road. Kip noted that Cherokee has been working closely with Meridian Ranch to provide wastewater treatment. In fact, Meridian Ranch is a 48% partner in the construction of the new treatment plant, and therefore owns 48% of the capacity. The line running in the area is not currently being used, but once the facility is open, Meridian Ranch will start using it. Some of the other developments in the area, potentially including those currently served by the Paintbrush Hills facility, will then join in at their discretion. Kip also noted that a Northern treatment facility could serve this whole area more efficiently.
- Lynne asked about how long the recharge ponds are operational, and Kip responded by saying that they are basically indefinitely operational, as long as they are maintained. The top few inches of sand does gradually get less permeable, but there is a rotating maintenance protocol that involves scraping the top layer off and replacing it every so often to keep the percolation rate high. Cherokee did a test a few years ago using a tracer to track how quickly the water moves through the soil in the area, and they found that it moves about six feet per day vertically and about 11 feet per day horizontally.
- Sterling Ranch and other near term developments may have the ability to use the capacity of the new 4.2 MGD plant when they come online. The limiting factor on the 4.2 MGD is the physical capacity of the lines, rather than the capacity of the plant. Sterling ranch will probably max out the capacity of that line.
- Once that line is maxed out, the best option will be a northern treatment plant, which may come online in 5-7 years. Kip hopes that it may move faster, but that estimate is based on how long it has taken for the current facility. The current recharge facility is the first of its kind in Colorado, and so the State has been very deliberate and slow in moving it through the process of approvals. The hope is that future efforts will move more quickly.
- The existing litigation does not currently extend to the recharge facility. The facility is a done deal, at issue may be how much water they can withdraw from it, but that will be decided.

c. Upper Black Squirrel Groundwater Management District

Kathy Hare introduced herself as the president of the Upper Black Squirrel Groundwater Management District. It is a state organization that answers to the Colorado Groundwater Commission and works hand in hand with the State Engineer's Office. Kathy's position is an elected position. Elections are coming up in February. Kathy mentioned that she worked on the 1993 Falcon-Peyton plan, and has lived in this community since 1979.

The following bullet points summarize Kathy's main discussion points:

- The recent drought has coincided with rapid growth in the area.
- Before any litigation started with Cherokee, the board was involved in a Senior Water Rights Call in which a senior downstream water user asked for the wells of junior upstream users to be shut down. This was a very difficult decision, because shutting down a large commercial well involves taking away someone's livelihood. Kathy eventually voted against the water call because the person making the call did not have meters on their wells, and so there was no documentation of their use.
- Out of all this, the UBS board passed a motion saying that all large capacity wells must have meters on them. These wells will be closed down if these users are not reporting their meter readings as of January 2008.
- What do you do with the 124,000 (maybe more) people forecast to move into this area? With such fast growth, we are not going to be able to have things the optimal way we want them. We are not going to be the only users of our water supply. We are going to have to use water wisely, using extreme conservation methods, and use water over and over again.
- Please look at the Peyton area very carefully, and look at it from the perspective of growth. How are you going to supply water and wastewater capacity to the area?
- The UBS board is very much in favor of the Northern Basin wastewater treatment plant. Recharging the aquifer in that area is going to be very beneficial for the whole basin. They would have liked to have the southern plant discharge moved to the north, but that's not going to happen. In general, they are happy that metro districts are realizing that they need to do something to supply both water and wastewater in order to build in this area.
- There are people in UBS with very high priorities who will retain their right to call their senior water rights, and if this happens, we don't know how many wells would have to be closed down. This is not a situation we want to get into again.
- Colorado is way behind in the area of aquifer recharge. Kathy is hopeful that once the first plant is online, the process will be quicker for the second plant.
- The lack of wastewater capacity in the area has stopped a lot of commercial development in the area. It is a limiting factor right now.
- 2.5-acre lots with septic tanks no longer cut it. Kathy has had numerous people in UBS call about their problems with their septic systems. People don't understand how to use it. This level of density is a big problem. In this case, she's in favor of density so that the economic forces can justify central systems.
- Although Kathy has typically been labeled as a low-growth person, she will be fighting for density in this case, just so that economic forces justify central systems and the water quality is preserved.

d. Questions/Comments

After Kathy's and Kip's main statements, there were a number of questions and further discussion which is summarized below:

- 5-acre density is better. This used to be the standard, (from 1960 to 1981). In 1981, it was changed to allow 2.5-acre septic-served lots. Less than 5 acre lots require a more rigorous process to analyze the soils and geology.
- Dave Elliott mentioned that there is no discussion of septic system maintenance in the County's development approval process. They address roadway maintenance, drainage basin maintenance, etc, but no one mentions anything about septic system maintenance.
- Carl noted that some larger developments have districts that can perform routine maintenance. Maybe this is a compromise to require centralized maintenance of

septic systems in order to allow septic on 2.5-acre development. Homeowners Associations are generally an ineffective way to do something like this, but districts may a much more effective way to do it.

- There is not evident water contamination right now, but it's a trend that concerns the UBS board for the future. In Kathy's opinion, it's an imminent economic disaster.
- Is the Health department in a position to control the proliferation of septic systems? They're just starting to think about it, because they generally deal with immediate health problems, not the long-term population level impacts of a slow degradation in water quality.
- UBS groundwater storage project is different from the recharge project. It's basically an alternative to a surface reservoir.
- There are about 4000 permitted wells in the UBS basin, but that number might be low. Could be more like 7-8,000 wells. That's a lot of water working it's way through wells and septic systems into the groundwater.
- Kevin Butcher asked if the future answer might be in consolidating the existing patchwork of districts into a single accountable entity? This would ensure that there are not different districts that are fighting with each other over water and wastewater capacity. Kip and Kathy agreed that the proliferation of districts does make it harder. Cherokee is probably going to be the regional provider, but part of the reason that it is difficult to combine the districts is because of their structures and their use as a financing tool to handle the obligations of the developers. Ellen Robley also noted that the districts see their services as a feather in the their cap and have no interest in sharing these resources with the competition.
- Ellen asked if the UBS district can impute a rule that requires pumping of septic systems? Kathy answered that it may be out there in the future, but there will be significant opponents to such a rule.
- Ellen also noted that there is significant inconsistency regarding how much landscaping and other uses for water other areas use. There is a landscape manual which allows for low-impact landscaping, but doesn't require it. There is a lot of waste and a lot of slack that could be pulled out of the system.

Carl asked if there was anything that the committee should be aware of as far as disagreements between the Upper Black Squirrel District and Cherokee Metro District.

- Kathy mentioned that Meridian Services has the right to export 289 acre-feet per year, and will do it as effluent. While this is fine, Kathy is concerned that there might be pressure for Meridian to provide emergency water to Cherokee or other users, thereby increasing the amount that they export. She is concerned about how much developments are actually exporting versus how much they are allowed to export.

4) Land Use Recommendations

Aaron started by refreshing the committee's memory about the graphics and products that have been produced thus far, and the progress of our analysis at the last meeting. Key points include:

- We did an exercise to poll the committee and meeting attendees about future urban and rural areas.
- The exercise showed significant agreement on urban density on the area that is already densely developed and Santa Fe Springs.
- The exercise showed agreement on rural density on areas to the extreme north and northeast of the planning area.

- There were three significant areas that there was not agreement on, and those areas were the southern part of the planning area, the area encompassing Shaw Ranch and 4-Way Ranch, and the area surrounding Peyton. These three areas were chosen as subareas for further analysis and scenario development.

a. Subarea 1

Aaron described the area and presented some current figures about the area.

- Subarea 1 includes the southern portion of the planning area, including everything south of highway 24 and Judge Orr, excluding Santa Fe Springs.
- Current Situation in the subarea:
 - Total Acreage is about 21,000
 - Population is about 5,600
 - Total Acreage not accounted for as existing or approved rural residential development is about 10,000
- The area is distinguished by a scattered, unstructured development pattern, no large landowners, no central wastewater providers, and a significant existing population.

Aaron then presented three potential development scenarios for the area, with the purpose of helping the committee to define what they would and wouldn't like to see happen in this area:

- Scenario 1: An extension of current average densities (2.5 and 5 acre lots) throughout the remainder of the area.
 - Approximately .59 people/acre X 21,000 acres = about 12,500 people in the area
 - This is the status quo, or no-action scenario, because this pattern has been spreading during the past 14 years.
- Scenario 2: Development at a higher density (similar to that proposed by High Plains Ranch) throughout the entire unfixed area.
 - 12,000 unaccounted for acres X 1.8 people/acre + 5,600 existing population = about 27,000 people in the area.
- Scenario 3: Development of half of the unfixed areas at urban densities (similar to those proposed in Santa Fe Springs).
 - 6,000 unaccounted for acres X 5.5 people/acre + 5,600 existing population = about 39,000 people in the area.

The following discussion points came up after the presentation of the scenarios:

- Bob Good asked what the timeframe for these scenarios is, and Aaron answered that the timeframe is generally the horizon, or as far as we can see.
- It is important to note the impact of the much higher density of urban development in scenario 3. Even though half of the unfixed land remains undeveloped, the overall population is greater than when the whole area is developed at a lower density.
- There are some issues with Scenario 3 regarding the orderly transition of land use from more dense to less dense. It becomes difficult to picture the development of any of that land as pure urban densities without some transitional areas surrounding it.
- Because there are no large landowners in the area, development is likely to happen in a piecemeal fashion, which makes it difficult for any developer alone to develop at urban density because of the difficulty of building the critical mass and bringing infrastructure necessary for urban density.

- Extensive 2.5-acre lots on unregulated septic systems would be a bad outcome for this area, but there might be some room for compromise in requiring centralized maintenance of the septic systems.
- Central water service might help in the area because the centralization, treatment, and deeper wells involved help to guard against the impacts of water quality degradation from septic systems.
- Henry Reitwiesner raised the concern over how many students would be added to the school districts in these various scenarios. It's a 50% bump just in this one subarea.
- From many different standpoints, including the school districts and infrastructure, urban densities are more efficient. However, because of landownership and character-preservation concerns, this is unlikely to happen in the area.
- This may be an area of valuable rural residential character that the landowners in the area will want to preserve. They would be unlikely to want to swap nearby neighbors for central services.

Because the meeting was running behind-schedule, the remaining discussion for subareas 1, 2, and 3 was saved for the next meeting.

5) Discuss Upcoming Considerations

a. Public Meeting

There was some discussion about the date of the next public meeting. After running through some of the availability of key people and venues, we're now targeting Wednesday the 23th of January at the new Falcon High School and Thursday the 31st of January at Peyton High School.

b. BOCC Update

Carl mentioned that the update will probably happen on Dec. 20th. This may or may not happen based on the ability to get on their agenda. We'd like to do it as much in advance of the public meeting as we can.

c. Draft Policies

Carl is going to be working on producing a policy outline, trying to consolidate all of the things that we've talked about throughout our meetings. The committee can expect to see that outline at the next meeting, and this will be an important part of the final plan, as a compliment to the text and the land use recommendations.

6) Miscellaneous / Administrative Items / Additions / Questions

a. Next meetings

The committee will not be meeting on December 26th, as our normal schedule would suggest. For now, we'll plan on meeting Dec. 12th, Jan. 2nd, and Jan. 16th.