

FOOTHILL/TRABUCO SPECIFIC PLAN REVIEW BOARD Trabuco Canyon, California

Meeting minutes of the regular meeting of the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Review Board held October 11, 2023 at 7:00 P.M.

In attendance were Chairman Dale Weber, Vice-Chairman Jake Reed, Secretary Robert Borland, and member Mike McClanahan. Joining the meeting were members of the public.

Item 1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Dale Weber

Item 2) Approval of Minutes

Motion by McClanahan: Approve minutes as presented

Second by Reed

No further discussion

Vote: 4-Ayes

Item 3) Old Business

None

Item 4)

PA23-0119 –

A Use Permit to establish residential development standards (setbacks, building heights, etc.) for the 181-unit Saddleback Meadows development. The zoning on the site permits the applicants to develop as a planned development. – Applicants – California Quartet, L.P., (Recupero & Associates, agents) - Location – vacant 222.2-acre project site located on the eastern side of El Toro Road, adjacent to the former St. Michael's Abbey site and approximately one-half mile south of the intersection of Santiago Canyon Road (El Toro Road) and Live Oak Canyon Road. Third Supervisorial district.

Project Details:

Weber asked the applicants if they would like to present their project. Brian Diaz responded that they had not prepared anything.

Kevin Canning from the county planning department explained the general details of the project.

Following Kevins explanation, the floor was opened up to the public in case they had questions for Kevin.

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Public Comments:

John asked Kevin if he knew what the approximate time frame was on the project being completed. Kevin responded that there was no way to know, depends how long the process takes.

Dan asked when the EIR was completed. Kevin said he was not sure, but that all documents are re-assessed each step of the process.

Lynn asked about the potential for wildfires in the area, and how this project would impact the evacuation plans and focus of first responders. Kevin said that houses are built to current fire code, and that it is up to the Sheriffs Department to review evacuation plans.

Gloria asked about the existing lawsuit

Anthony stated that he was the general counsel for the existing lawsuit on behalf of the Monastery. Anthony asked Kevin how the county was able to schedule a meeting without notifying the plaintiff (Monastery). He stated that it was a stipulation within the settlement agreement that they would be notified of any meetings related to this project. Kevin stated that no decisions are made tonight, this is only an advisory committee. Anthony responded that he objects to this meeting due to improper notice.

Erin asked about schools, water, traffic, and other impacts of this project on the community. Asked who do we talk to about these issues. Kevin directed to the county supervisors office.

Mike asked about the CEQA study and if it has been reviewed recently as times have changed and additional developments have been built in the area. Kevin responded that he wasn't aware of that specifically, but all required items have been completed thus far on the project.

Dan asked if the addendums to the EIR are open for public discussion. Kevin responded that the county reviews everything.

Bruce asked if in the applicants studies they have figured out that the hill in which this project is supposed to be built is in fact a sand dune. He said 12 engineers have looked at the soil over the years and come to the same conclusion. Kevin responded that he was not aware of any soil issues.

Darin asked how the new homeowners would get fire insurance. Kevin said he wasn't sure.

Irene asked about the emergency exits and evacuation routes for these new homes as well as the existing Hidden Ridge development where she lives. She stated that the only way out for her community is through the street Valley Vista Way. She stated that these new 181 homes would also have their only exit as Valley Vista Way. Kevin responded that all evacuation routes are reviewed by the fire department.

Paul asked if all soil testing has been completed. Kevin responded that some has been completed and some still needs to be done. Paul then asked why we are having a meeting about building setbacks when the soil tests haven't even been completed. Kevin responded that the applicant asked for a meeting on setbacks.

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Robert asked if there was still an opportunity to do tract map adjustments. Kevin responded that the tract map has not been recorded yet. Robert then asked Kevin, if you were in our shoes and were concerned about this development who would you talk too? Kevin responded, your county supervisor.

Steve stated that evacuation due to fire has always been an issue, and new building standards do not change that. We still have to evacuate even though these new houses are built to current code.

Gloria said that new traffic studies should be required. We need to study the traffic today after all of the new developments that have been completed in the area. This neighborhood needs larger exits, and also the 2007 CEQA guidelines were amended to require studies on greenhouse gas emissions.

Board Discussion:

Borland stated that the Specific Plan was created back in 1991 not to prevent development in the canyon area, but to ensure it is done in a responsible manner while taking into account the wildlife, trees, and surrounding nature. Under the spirit of the plan, a 181-unit development should definitely be subject to the parameters of the specific plan if at all possible. Due to its size and scope it has a significant risk of negatively impacting the rural nature of the canyon.

Page III-4 of the Specific Plan (Exhibit 1) describes the original Bridlewood Residential District (BWR) project as it stood in 1991 when the plan was implemented. You will see that Bridlewood (BWR) was made up of four different developments, Saddleback Meadows, Lyon Ranch, Santiago Ranch, and Zadeh. You will also see that it says that these developments are only exempt from the plan if they stay consistent with the approvals that were made prior to the 1991 creation of the specific plan. Today, Saddleback Meadows has taken over the entire Bridlewood District (BWR), and the other three projects have gone away. This is a material change in prior approvals, as one project got sizably bigger and three disappeared from the Bridlewood Residential District.

On Page III-20 of the Specific Plan (Exhibit 2) you will see the original purpose and intent of the Bridlewood Residential District (BWR). It states that *"While the Board of Supervisors does not believe that these approvals are consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the Specific plan, the property owner has recently declared bankruptcy."* This clearly shows that this project being exempt from the plan was not the intent of the Board of Supervisors, they were stuck with it due to Federal bankruptcy laws. In section 3.2(a) you will see once again that the plan states that this project is only exempt if it stays true to approvals prior to 1991. 3.2(b) states that any deviations from the approved plans will require the project to *"be consistent with all of the provisions of the Specific Plan."*

The original project included four different developments in Bridlewood Residential District (BWR), three were eliminated and rolled into Saddleback Meadows. The original Saddleback Meadows project was 700 mobile homes, it is now 181 single family homes on lots as small as 4000 sq feet. The Specific Plan states that any changes to the prior approvals within the Bridlewood Residential District (BWR) will require the project to be subject to the entire Specific Plan. Significant changes were made, therefore this entire project should be brought before the Foothill Specific Plan Review Board for complete review.

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Weber stated that on one of the board of supervisor resolutions it states that a minimum of 71% of the land must be donated to the county for open space or easement. This current project shows it using 38% of the land, thus only leaving 62% as open space. He pointed out that this project location is the beginning of the transition from the city into the Cleveland National Forest. Portolla Hills, which is just outside the forest area, has 7000-8000 sq ft lots. This proposed project gets as low as 4000 sq ft. As we move into the forest from the city, lots should get bigger (10,000-15,000 sq ft) and open space should grow. This project shrinks lot size and is looking to almost eliminate open space within the development.

Public Comments:

David stated that 35 foot building heights were ridiculous for this area.

Ray submitted a three page document to the board detailing several issues and questions regarding this project. (Exhibit 3)

Kevin (public) asked if there was someone at the county that would review the soil tests. Kevin (county) responded that licensed engineers will review them.

Bruce stated that he lives next to the development property and it is all sand.

Dan stated that 7.5 million cubic yards of grading within the Specific Plan area is absolutely crazy

Kim asked what the size range was for the setbacks.

Board Discussion:

The board discussed several different variations of setbacks and building heights. Borland stated that the biggest concern here is the lot size, combined with the developers request to be able to build on the entire lot. There will be next to zero open space within the development, this is going to look more like townhomes in Ladera Ranch then something fitting of a forest friendly development. Although we cannot do high enough setbacks to make a 4000 sq ft lot look rural, we need to set them as high as possible to ensure that there is at least some space between the homes.

Motion:

Weber made a motion for 15 foot setbacks on each side, 20 foot setbacks on the front and back, and a maximum building height of 30 feet.

Reed seconded.

Vote: 4 Ayes

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Item 6) Public Comments

None

Item 7) Administrative Matters

None

McClanahan made a motion to adjourn, Weber seconds. Meeting adjourned at 8:59 PM