



North Ada County Foothills Association

One voice. One goal. One plan.

NACFA Update: Eagle Foothills Hearings—Public Testimony now on September 16.

October 2, 2007

For those not at the first (September 25th) comp plan hearing and who have not otherwise heard, the entire agenda was taken up by M3 and consultants; the hearing lasted about 4.5 hours. Not a lot of new information, though some changes are being considered. A summary of that hearing is attached.

As a result of the M3 filibuster, the rest of the agenda was moved to October 9th, 6 p.m. start. Some good news on the hearings length: Council agreed (at their regular meeting 9/18/07) that they would try to avoid very long hearings, running to late night. They'll aim to end around 10 p.m., continuing the hearing (and leaving it open for testimony, if appropriate) unless there are only a few items left to be considered or only a few people left to be heard.

So, it now appears that ***October 16th will be the main public testimony session.*** This is likely your last chance to be heard on foothills development and it's vital that Council hear from as many people as possible. Please come, consider testifying and tell every one else you know to do the same thing.

The agenda for 10/9 now has now been expanded to include additional information on transportation/roads and economics, as well as a presentation by Keith Allred, the facilitator hired by the City for comp plan proceedings. Allred will be discussing what he learned in talking to various "stakeholders", as well as briefing Council on some policy/decision options.

As we know it, the 10/9 agenda is:

- Avimor applicant presentation
- Staff (NBS) presentation: BLM 1915 acres Public/Semi-Public designation
- Staff presentation: Foothills Comp Plan (in its various iterations)
- Keith Allred
- COMPASS transportation modeling
- Dr. Don Reading (economics)

If there's time, the hearing on 10/9 may include some public testimony, but under any circumstances, the hearing on 10/16 will feature public testimony.

I strongly urge all of you to also attend the October 9th hearing to get a refresher course on where we've been with the comp plan process as well as hear the new information being presented. Both CJ and I are pretty jammed and may or may not be able to find time for an "update" between the 9th and the 16th.

And by the way, if you've not yet submitted written comments they need to be at City Hall not later than 5 p.m. on Thursday, 10/4/07.

Hearing Summary

Eagle Council 9/25/07 (First Foothills comp plan hearing)

October 2, 2007, by CJ Thompson

1. Mayor Merrill opened the hearing by reminding attendees that this was Council's first opportunity to consider the draft foothills comp plan and the individual applications within it. She acknowledged that, with the election on the horizon and possible Council changes as well as a new mayor beginning January 2008, some citizens had had questions about timing of the comp plan hearings. The mayor expressed strong resolve that "...this Council, this mayor..." would finish work on the comp plan and would not pass it along to incoming officials.

2. Nichoel Baird-Spencer (NBS), staff planner, gave a brief overview of actions to date and expected hearings schedule. NBS reminded Council that they had determined that, rather than hold special meetings for comp plan consideration, they would stick with their normal Tuesday night hearings.

3. NBS listed the "Considerations for Comp Plan Amendments" as well as the P & Z recommendations on various components Council was considering. She noted that, in the case of the M3 application, the developer "...can still request..." Council consider application as originally submitted, irrespective of P & Z recommendations. She noted that P & Z had held 20 hearings on the M3 application over an 18-month period, ultimately recommending approval of the text amendment (April 2007) and denial of the map amendment (June 2007). She noted that the P & Z map denial recommendation was made on the basis of concerns about the M3 "Community Core" sub-area (intensity and placement in the central foothills), transportation impacts, economics and general uneasiness with the densities being considered for the overall foothills, of which M3 is a significant part.

4. Developer Bill Brownlee of M3 began the M3 application presentation, noting that the proposed development had undergone "significant refinements" that had resulted in a better project and mitigation of impacts. He cited input from Eagle staff, P&Z commissioners and the public as sources for the changes.

5. Brownlee noted that the SH16 improvements necessary to accommodate the development, as well as handle other existing and planned traffic for 5 municipalities, had been identified as candidates for GARVEE funding. He further stated that the M3 frontage on SH 16 was "prime" for commercial and residential development. Brownlee stressed that the project "...is not sprawl..." given its location within 7 miles of downtown Boise.

6. Brownlee noted that M3 had acquired property from 11 different owners to give the company "flexibility to place density where it should be placed" in the foothills. He reviewed the constraints-based approach (limiting development on slopes > 25%, in habitat and flood plains) and detailed proposed open space.

7. Brownlee stated that the development, when complete at 20-year buildout, would add \$4.3 billion and about 3500 permanent jobs to the local economy. He compared the development to a business enterprise, suggesting that if the development were a business project "you wouldn't ask me to pay for outside infrastructure." He mentioned that the project will include a housing mix, included "affordable and subsidized housing", starting at \$200,000 and going up to \$1.4 million.

8. Brownlee also discussed the proposed M3/BLM land exchange (to which M3 has now added a “sunset” caveat for exchange within 10 years) and advised that BLM had denied the M3 request for land swap before the next update of the entire Resource Management Plan update. Brownlee confirmed that, to the extent that the SH16 BLM land is appraised as more valuable than the 800 M3 acres east of Willow Creek Rd, M3 would contribute land (v. cash) to equalize the transaction.

9. Brownlee noted that the lack of north/south connections through the foothills argues for a large east/west connector (proposed at 5 lanes through Big Gulch) and noted that the average daily traffic (ADT) at M3’s Village Center (just west of Willow Creek Rd in Big Gulch) was estimated at 36,000 and that of Linder at 23,000 ADT.

10. Brownlee discussed M3’s proposed “activity centers”/commercial locations (community core, northern and mixed use sub-areas) and stated that they would serve all residents within a 3-mile radius.

11. Brownlee addressed schools requirements, listing 8 (5 elementary, 2 middle, 1 high school), modifying first estimate of 7 schools and second estimate of 6 schools.

12. Brownlee stated that the entire 9/25/07 presentation would be available at: www.m3eagle.com (not updated a/o 10/2/07). Among the recent changes Brownlee presented were:
500 acres possible vineyards in the Southern area, reducing housing (5-acre lot, 1-acre building envelope) to about 125 units; if vineyards not feasible, would contain nearly 900 units
Highway/mixed use now proposed to include 300 units
Community Core 2400 units, 500 hotel rooms; includes Village Center as live/work; area also a good site for medical uses, including possibly a hospital
Southwestern now 69 large-lot building sites, equestrian theme

13. Council comments/questions as follows:

- Consider performing arts facility in Village Center
- Business infrastructure needs are much lower than residential and cost of services much lower for business (see #7 above). Asked what AZ had required for infrastructure (specifically roads) on other M3 projects
- Asked how much research done to assure viability of vineyards (soil, etc.); noted that 500 acres of grapes would need 15-20 wineries to process.
- Expressed concern that jobs in live/work would be service jobs (relatively low-paying) and that employees would not likely be able to afford housing in M3 Eagle. Wanted to know who the major employers would be generating the 3500 projected permanent jobs.
- Noted that, although transportation improvement requirements in Treasure Valley are very large, TV does not have a majority in the legislature (to enable funding those improvements). Legislative task force (including Sen. Bastian) has been formed to try to find a way to “get the votes” for transpo improvements. Suggested a big grass roots effort would be vital to convince legislature to fund connection of SH 16 to I-84.
- If land exchange with BLM accomplished, what would be use? Brownlee: more intensive employment uses closer to SH but would not replace Village Center. Might include equestrian events center, BSU satellite campus, community college, veterinary school; cemetery

Presentations by Squires and Faraday (water), Wonders (traffic), Kolmeini (habitat) and Church (economics) followed the Brownlee presentation. BLM land exchange also discussed.