

Planning Commission Minutes
For January 19, 2016

Members Present: Chairman Dwight Freeman, Grover Hathorn, Mike Mitchell, Gene Glover, and Carol Osborn – Substitute Secretary.

Members Absent with notification: Vice-Chair Leonard Brown, Secretary Dixie Diltz

Members Absent without notification: Wesley O'Rourke

Others Present: Randy Kern, John Troyer, Edwin Hochstetler, Lester Yoder, Cathy McCurdy and Suzanne Beauchaine

Chairman Dwight Freeman called the meeting to order at 1:35pm.

Gene Glover made the motion to accept the Agenda as submitted, Grover Hathorn seconded, motion carried unanimously; The October 20, 2015 Minutes were approved, motion was made by Grover Hathorn and seconded by Gene Glover; motion carried unanimously.

First item of business: Conditional Use Application submitted by John & Kathy Troyer for a 7,500 Hen Organic and Free Range Egg Production facility, to be located at 4744 E CR 7 South, Monte Vista, CO.

Chairman Freeman read the Staff Report and then offered the floor to John Troyer for further comments on application.

John Troyer stated that he had discussed in his application his reasoning for proposing to move the barn to the east until it is 150' off CR 7. There is some conflicting information on the application form verses the Land Use codebook. Mr. Troyer clarified that the property is 116 acres total.

Chairman Freeman asks the Commission members for clarification on what the setbacks were intended to be. Page 90 of the Land Use Codebook seems to be in conflict with the chart on page 91 of the codebook. Commission members present believe that the set back from property boundaries was to be 250', and that the Codebook should be corrected to reflect this dimension.

Suzanne Beauchaine, Wildlife Refuge Manager, states that due to the Refuge being visited by "a few thousand" visitors the setback of 250' may be more appropriate.

Cathy McCurdy commented that REC recently put a new power line in that may or may not affect the setback based on the height of the building.

Gene Glover states that the setback of 250' from any property boundary may be in the best interest of the project.

John Troyer states he has no problem with maintaining the 250' set back. The map presented in application remains correct as to proposed location of request.

Chairman Freeman verifies that the application packet contains a letter from the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, Mike Gibson, stating that water is available for the 7,500 Hen operation for a one time cost of \$23,000.00, and an annual maintenance fee of \$1,000.00. Also included in application is a letter from Suzanne Beauchaine with the National Wildlife Refuge asking how the applicants proposed to address the buildup of ammonia, waste product and dead birds and ground and surface water contamination from cleanup operations? The greatest concern of Suzanne on behalf of the Wildlife Refuge is the possibility of avian disease spread between wild flock and domestic flocks.

John Troyer states that he is mostly familiar with the bird flu that recently was circulating. It is his understanding that most wild birds seem to have better immunity to this and the domestic flock would be more at risk than what the wild flock would be.

Suzanne Beauchaine discussed some of the possible ways parasites, bacteria and fungi could be spread. She says she would agree that the domestic flock would be more at risk of infection or disease than would be the wild flocks.

John Troyer states the only time the birds are out of the barn is during the daylight hours. They are in a fenced area that also has a double "hot wire" fencing around it. This is to deter all types of predators, coyotes, fox, dogs, etc. from trying to get into or dig under. He does not intend to put a net over the outside run at this time.

Chairman Freeman asks John Troyer for more information on the cleanup and handling of manure.

John Troyer explained that the slated floor is taken out, then they go in with a small loader and manure is loaded onto dump trucks and hauled to a composting facility. The water used to clean the barn will also be collected with the manure and hauled to composting. This is done one time a year. The wastewater from the collection room will be handled in an on-site septic system. The eggs are not washed on the farm that is all done at a facility in Denver.

John Troyer addressed the first concern in Suzanne's letter regarding the buildup of ammonia. The barn is climate controlled with fans and intake louvers, the ammonia is controlled by this system. The dry climate we live in and the fans keep the litter dry, and the cleaning out of the barn as discussed above when the flock of birds is rotated results in very little odor. The birds are only kept for 12 to 14 months so they are gone before they molt alleviating the concern of large amount of loose feathers.

Chairman Freeman states again that the purpose of all the questioning is to determine if the egg laying operation is compatible with the area.

Suzanne Beauchaine states that from the Refuge aspect it fits into the agricultural area they are in as long as the applicant is aware of the higher risks associated with being located next to a Refuge area.

Cathy McCurdy states that most of her questions have been answered with the exception of what will be done with dead birds. She is still somewhat concerned with “some of the other gases that may be involved in a hen operation” and fungi and bacterial infection transmission through rodents, predators or even the neighbors pets.

John Troyer addresses Cathy’s concerns. The dead birds will be stored in a freezer until there are sufficient quantities. He then will transport them to the composting location. Rodents control will be a high priority and every effort will be made to eliminate them. As for predators and “neighbor pets” the hot wire around the outside run will discourage them from digging or climbing into the pen.

Chairman Freeman read aloud the contingencies stated in staff report in regards to building codes, agricultural exemption and building permits.

John Troyer agreed he was aware of these requirements and would work with Randy Kern in the Building Department.

Chairman Freeman clarified that this conditional use will apply to all 116 acers and if the Troyers ever wish to expand or add more hen operations they will need to re-apply for a new conditional use.

With no further comments,

Mike Mitchell moves to move this application forward to the BoCC on February 24, 2016:
Grover Hathorn seconds motion; motion carried unanimously.

With no further business meeting adjourned at 2:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dixie Diltz
Secretary of the Board

