Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Listening Session Notes

**March 18, 2021**

Attendees: Jessica Harrold (ASWCD), Josie Erskine (ASWCD), Romeo Gervais (Boise Fire), Sarah Arjona (ITD), Christy Little (ACHD), Jeff Mafffuccio (Idaho Power)

**General Comments**

Jessica said issues that were important to the Ada Soil and Water Conservation District included water quality and efficiency, the preservation of prime agricultural lands and the protection of natural resources.

Sarah said ITD was primarily concerned with the impacts of development on the safety and mobility of state highway systems.

Romeo noted that one of his primary concerns was wildfire prevention and making sure the County’s development standards within the Wildland-Urban Fire Interface zone were adequate.

Christy said the public right-of-way (ROW) associated with public roadways was an important issues for their agency, as they need to ensure adequate ROW is dedicated with new developments, in order to prevent future conflicts when roads are widened. She also said she would prefer more of the dead-end roadways approved by the County to be private rather than public, due to the high cost required for ACHD to maintain them.

Jeff said that Idaho Power would need to add and expand facilities in Ada County as its population continued to grow, and wanted to ensure the ordinance would accommodate that. He also noted that Idaho Power has a goal of having all of its energy come from clean sources by 2045, so he would like the ordinance to allow for renewable energy facilities.

**What is and isn’t working well with the existing zoning ordinance?**

Jeff said he felt the ordinance was clear and easy to understand when it came to power facilities, and that he had a good working relationship with staff. He also said he would like the ordinance to provide a little more flexibility when it came to such things as putting fences or walls around their facilities for security.

Christy said she likes when the County requires developers of large projects to submit traffic impact studies prior to submitting applications, as it can prevent the need to defer and re-schedule public hearings later on. She said she would like the County’s ordinance to require traffic impact studies for all developments that would generate 100 trips or more during the PM peak hour before development applications are submitted.

Sarah agreed with Christy on requiring traffic impact studies prior to applications being submitted, as she said this would really help ITD as well.

Josie said there were currently no effective tools for preserving farmland within Ada County, or for ensuring adequate infiltration of aquifers. She suggested the County work with other agencies to monitor the health of aquifers.

Romeo said he liked the County’s Wildland-Urban Fire Interface (WUFI) standards, but also thought some improvements could be made to them. For instance, the requirement that WUFI plans be certified by a licensed fire engineer was burdensome to applicants due to how few licensed fire engineers there are in the area. He also said the County’s private road standards seemed to be working well, but he would be willing to review them as part of the zoning ordinance update to make sure they met the needs of the fire department.

**Are there any specific design standards that the County needs to tune up?**

Christy noted that the County currently defers to ACHD regarding street design standards. She wanted to make sure the new ordinance would not include any street design standards that would conflict with those of ACHD.

Jeff said he generally liked the County’s current design standards as they were not overly burdensome on developers. He said that while the Master Site Plans and Natural Features Analyses he was required to submit with many of his applications required extra work, he felt they were for the best, as regulations such as these resulted in better designed facilities and developments for the community.

Jessica said she would like the County to consider adding pollinator spaces to its landscaping standards. She said she would also like the County to encourage more water efficient landscaping, such as the use of drip irrigation instead of sprinklers.

**Are there any standards, topics or innovations missing from the current zoning ordinance?**

Jeff said he would like the County to promote agricultural uses and allow additional opportunities for agricultural properties in order to reduce the pressure on existing farms to sell.

Josie said the County should consider agricultural zoning, similar to what has been done in other states, to help preserve existing farmland as there are currently no funding mechanisms in place for obtaining conservation easements.

**What should the primary outcome of the zoning ordinance update be?**

Jeff said the zoning ordinance and application forms should be made simpler and easier to understand. He said that while he is familiar with them through his work, they could be confusing or overwhelming to members of the general public. He also said that he felt too many conditions of approval are added to application approvals. He said that it would be preferable for these conditions to instead be codified within the ordinance.