Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Listening Session Notes

**April 8, 2021**

Attendees: Bill Rauer (Building Contractors Association of SW Idaho), Chad Hamel (Cartwright Ranch), Todd Tucker (Dry Creek Ranch), Sarah Martz (Avimor), Michael Comeskey (Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District), Clark Krause (BVEP), Ben Williams (BVEP), Meredith Stead (BVEP)

**General Comments**

Meredith mentioned that the Boise Valley Economic Partnership (BVEP) would like to see future sites for industrial or manufacturing uses preserved within unincorporated Ada County.

Michael said that he would like to ensure that the rights of irrigation districts are protected within the new Code. He said that oftentimes the easements of irrigation districts are not initially considered when a development is being proposed.

Clark said that BVEP was interested in seeing that there were good sites set aside for future employment centers, and that good planning practices were being utilized by the County in order to help facilitate economic development.

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

Todd said he would like the County to modify its substantial conformance requirements for final plats, in order to make it easier for developers to make minor adjustments to their preliminary plats. He suggested that as long as the number of lots remained the same, an adjustment of up to 20% to lot sizes be allowed. He said this could save developers and County staff a substantial amount of time.

Todd also suggested the County allow a certain percentage of required parking spaces to be compact, as is allowed in many of the cities, in order to make it easier to provide additional parking spaces.

**Are there any uses that are a concern, or that the Zoning Ordinance should do a better job of accommodating?**

Clark said the County should consider specific requirements and standards for data centers within its Code, as the State legislature recently passed legislation which would incentivize data centers to locate in Idaho. He said the County should consider appropriate locations for these centers taking into consideration their high water and sewer demands.

Sarah said she would like the County to allow existing nonconforming uses to expand or make site improvements without having to go through the conditional use process. She felt this requirement was overly burdensome on existing businesses.

Todd said the County should consider how it would like to regulate short-term rentals within the Code, due to their rising popularity and sometimes controversial nature.

Toll also said the County should consolidate all of its allowed use tables into one, in order to make it easier to use. He said the current format, which has a separate table for each land use category, is time-consuming.

Sarah suggested the Code be modified to more easily allow accessory dwelling units within the County.

**Are there any standards, topics or innovations missing from the current Zoning Ordinance?**

Sarah said she would like the County to implement an administrative process for small subdivisions of two to three lots, as is common in many of the cities, rather than having them go through the public hearing process. She said this could save County staff and Commissioners a lot of time.

Todd suggested the County review all the variances it has approved at the end of each year. He felt that if a variance for a particular use was being approved over and over, it may be best to amend the Code to not require variances for that use.

Michael said that he felt zoning ordinances often times are not equipped to deal with large utility infrastructure projects. He said it could be difficult for these types of projects to comply with zoning ordinances in some instances. He encouraged the County to consider these types of projects as part of its Code update.

Michael also wanted to ensure that the latest flood data was used when reviewing new developments, as felt that in some instances the information being used was from older surveys that did not accurately reflect current conditions.

Todd noted that the City of Boise counts drought-tolerant landscaping as a site amenity when reviewing planned unit developments, and encouraged the County to consider a similar measure as a means to conserve water.

**Are zoning application processes meeting the needs of staff and the development community?**

Sarah suggested the County not require a Natural Features Analysis for minor projects, due to the time it can take an applicant to prepare.

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

Meredith said she would like the County to maintain rural and agricultural areas as much as possible and to direct denser development to urban areas with existing services.

Todd said he would like the County to make the Code easier to navigate and understand. He felt it should be easy for members of the general public to use.

Meredith also said she would like the Code to be more understandable and predictable, which would help to reduce the need for variances.

Sarah agreed the Code should be made clearer, and also encouraged the County to streamline more of its planning processes.

Chad said he would like the County to make its website easier to navigate, as it was sometimes difficult to find information online.

Clark said that in general, he would prefer to see new development go where existing infrastructure was already in place. He also said he would like the County to preserve land for future job sites, and to not approve residential uses in areas where large industrial projects may be going in the future, in order to avoid incompatibility issues.