

ROCC Land Use Committee Report / Annual Meeting December 8, 2022

Valley Zone Mining Proposal: A Paonia resident filed a “citizen-initiated” proposal to add mining as a “use-by-right” to the Valley Zone. He had filed a prospecting claim on some BLM land straddling a short section of the Uncompahgre River between Ridgway and Ouray. He wanted a County-recognized right to develop his claim. The Land Use Committee submitted a lengthy comment letter opposing the zone-change proposal, as it would conflict with the Master Plan, the Land Use Code, and the existing agricultural and residential uses in the 40-plus square miles of the Valley Zone. We also contacted other groups and individuals, and they submitted letters in opposition as well. The Planning Commission unanimously recommended denial, and the Board of County Commissioners formally rejected the request in August. As a result of this ill-advised proposal, the BOCC may consider some changes to the Land Use Code governing “citizen-initiated” zoning proposals, which are rarely successful and clog up the system.

Master Plan Update. The process has finally gotten underway. The BOCC and Planning Commission have held two joint workshop meetings with an outside consultant group. The Planning Commission met again separately and decided to recommend retaining the consultant, and the BOCC agreed. The primary purpose of the joint meetings was for the Planning Commission, BOCC and County staff to share their thoughts about the current Master Plan and the perceived land use issues that should be addressed in an update. The Planning Commission is scheduled to meet again on December 6th to review the Master Plan itself and its previous 2016 report regarding issues that should be addressed in an update. **The Master Plan process needs to be a high priority for ROCC and its Land Use Committee. There are typically opportunities for public input at all the meetings, and everyone is encouraged to become involved.**

County Road 5 Litigation. The Court of Appeals heard oral arguments on November 15, 2022. The attorney for San Juan Huts made a strong case on the substantive legal issue – whether the County has any legal authority to limit vehicular access to the property owners. ROCC’s attorney did not recommend appearing at the hearing, as doing so would have limited the time allotted to San Juan Huts’ attorney. (Our attorney has also since changed careers and is no longer practicing law.) There has not yet been a decision from the Court on the appeal.

Town of Ridgway. New development proposals in Ridgway have dramatically increased, severely overloading staff’s ability to process them. There are also concerns regarding the capacity of the Town’s sewage system, the water supply and other public services to handle the new growth. Also, updates are needed to the land use code. As a result, the Town enacted a moratorium on accepting any new development applications until March of 2023. This would apply primarily to new subdivisions and other major development applications, but not to building permits and other minor projects. Jennifer Cram is our Land Use Committee member monitoring Ridgway land use issues.

City of Ouray. Wayne Pandorf was our Land Use Committee member monitoring Ouray issues, but he has moved from the area. So, if you are a Ouray person interested in picking up the ball, or otherwise interested in serving on the Committee, please contact Scott Williams at s_swiliams2001@yahoo.com

ROCC Land Use Committee

Al Lowande, Roze Evans, Jennifer Cram, Kate Kellogg, Diane Thompson, Scott Williams