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November 10, 2015

Rec'd 11/10/15
cc'd - BACC
Orjako
Schroeder

RE: Clark County Rural Planning Assumptions

The recent County Alternative Proposal #4 gave us hope that our 20 acre Agricultural parcel could become dividable, so we attended the Planning workshop yesterday. We hoped to learn that we would soon be able to divide our property. While we didn't get the exact answer we wanted, and I'm not well versed in political process, I learned two very significant things in that meeting, and feel compelled to speak up about.

One, I learned that in a previous county administration, when the GIS maps were first "overlayed" on the existing county lands, it was done in such a way that up to 89% of the already existing parcels in rural and agricultural zonings were considered "non-conforming". In other words, to a large extent, the zoning they assigned to the lots didn't match the actual lot sizes and uses. This GIS issue did not affect urban lots, only rural lots.

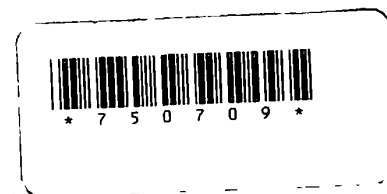
Secondly, I learned that the county uses data from the GIS as a basis for making their assumptions and policies regarding rural land development. And somewhere in the past, someone decided to assume that every rural lot was actually dividable. But they aren't, because of very legitimate environmental concerns about wetlands and wildlife. Development costs are not a significant issue, because in our development is required to pay for itself and to create the needed infrastructure such as roads, schools, and open space in the form of permits, taxes, fees and meeting code requirements.

So now I understand how our American Dream of land ownership became so hollow... and I see that what was revealed in yesterday's work meeting is way bigger than whether or not our own parcel of land is dividable. It affects thousands of families in our county.

Yesterday's meeting revealed that our current County Commissioners have discovered a discrepancy in the actual numbers of developable rural lots compared to the numbers that the county has been using for the 20 years. This use of the wrong numbers of developable lots has created a 20 year legacy of faulty county planning assumptions, which then leads to the truth that the current rural development plan actually does not match up with growth and development laws.

Yes, there is the fear of litigation and what that might cost the county- can you just imagine the hordes of angry rural landowners whose rights have been ignored for 20 years? And I can imagine that some might fear that they could lose their jobs over this.

But good choices cannot be based on fear.



I see three choices for going forward.

1. We can try to sweep it all under the rug – (but that won't work anymore, because the cat is out of the bag – because I am now an educated a land owner, and there are a lot more like me out there).
2. We be angry and start suing the pants off of everyone ever involved in county development. OR
3. We can let the past be the past, trust that the people involved in this whole county planning process did the best they could with what they had to work with at the time, and focus on fixing the underlying cause of this real problem by using real numbers to make accurate assumptions going forward.

A short form of our own story:

We purchased our 20 acre dream parcel in year 2000. We hoped that within a few years we could transition completely to an agriculture-based business on the property, but as it has turned out, our efforts to create income from the land have never become financially successful enough to support the mortgage or even to cover our costs or pay my husband for his time of working on the land.

One of the biggest issues in trying to create an agriculture business has been the lack of water rights. We learned that though we "owned" this land, and had the obligation to take care of it and use it for agriculture purposes, we could not get the water rights to irrigate crops. It seems the only rights we really have as landowners is to pay the mortgage and the taxes.

Our 3 years of Community Supported Agriculture farming revealed that without being able to use water for irrigation, we could never grow that business beyond the hobby farm phase, regardless of the size of our property. Restrictive county policies have drastically limits our ability to make agricultural use of the land.

Another big issue has been conflicting information received from the county. We researched a number of other possible businesses allowed on our land, but found that we were continuously blocked by prohibitive and conflicting limitations in the form state, county and environmental directives, policies, opinions, requirements, regulations and fees

The economic meltdown in 2008 affected our employment and our business, as it did thousands of other families in our county. If we had been able to divide our property and sell a portion of it we could have been able to avoid bankruptcy in 2012, maintain financially solvent, conserve our resources and been able to focus on giving back to the community as we moved into retirement. Instead, we have endured the indignities of unemployment, foreclosures, several years of poverty level incomes and more. Economically, we're starting over after age 60...

My 2 cents as a citizen and land owner?

The county leadership and staff need to work together and make this right.

Base the planning assumptions on correct numbers.

Fix the zoning for those so-called non-conforming parcels.

Let our county leadership set aside their personal politics and fear based thinking, and just do the right thing.


Kevin Cornelsen


Lyn Cornelsen

Schroader, Kathy

From: Tilton, Rebecca
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2015 11:17 AM
To: Orjiako, Oliver, Schroader, Kathy
Subject: Comp Plan Comments
Attachments: Cornelsen_JoLyn_11-10-15 Comp Plan Comments pdf, Alexander_Valerie_11-10-15 Comp Plan Comments pdf, Levanen_Carol_11-17-15 Comp Plan Comments pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hello,

Attached here for your records are comments re the Comp Plan Update, received at the board's hearings of 11-10 & 11-17 during the public comment portion of the agenda.

Thank you!

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