



From: Frances Romero <fromero@twlandplan.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 4:40 PM
To: Brianda Negrete; sbcob
Cc: Williams, Das; Nelson, Bob; Lavagnino, Steve; Laura Capps; Hartmann, Joan; Rubalcava, Walter; Griffin, Matt
Subject: A-36: Comment Letter-Romero
Attachments: LTR-Comments-Village Square-2023-02-27-final.pdf
Categories: Public Comment

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Dear Clerk of the Board,

Attached is a comment for Item A-36 for tomorrow's agenda.

Thank you,

Frances Romero

SENIOR PLANNER

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February 27, 2023

Santa Barbara County Flood Control & Water Conservation District
130 E Victoria St
Naomi Schwartz Building, Suite 200
Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2019
ATT: Board of Directors

VIA EMAIL

SUBJECT: Item A-36 Public Works Department, Board of Directors, Flood Control and Water Conservation District, February 28, 2023
Comments on the Village Square Cooperative Agreement

Dear Board of Directors,

First and foremost, I recognize and understand the importance of allowing community members to express their sentiments and concerns on all projects. Public involvement is a cornerstone of good planning and development practices. Furthermore, I understand that your positions come with a mandate to listen to and advocate for your communities which must be cautiously balanced with a respect for the fair and objective processes prescribed by local and state regulations. However, some members of the public deliberately mischaracterize residential projects and attempt to create narratives that are not supported by facts to prevent growth and change across the County, the approved Village Square subdivision has been no exception. This is deeply disheartening, especially as the County seeks to comply with the State's housing mandate through the current Regional Housing Needs Assessment update. The lack of housing stock in our State and County creates a shortage that drives both rents and sale prices upward which negatively impacts everyone. With this said, I am writing today to re-state that the Village Square Project is not on the agenda today, only Item A-36 which is not a discretionary action or a project (see letter dated 2/6/2023 RE: Legacy Estates – Approval of Flood Control contract, Reply to Opposition Letter Submitted February 3, 2023 by Law Office of K.M. Neiswender), it is simply a contract, a mechanism that allows County Flood Control to accept drainage infrastructure and easements to serve the west side of Los Alamos.

We need to emphasize to two simple facts: the Village Square project has been approved and the project EIR has been certified. It has become abundantly clear that voices behind the Save Los Alamos group are misinformed about the scope of your approval today, the project history, and what can be further required under local and state law. The County has identified this property as being appropriately sited for residential development and has approved a project which creates the framework under which this development can take place. When proposed, each individual unit will be required to meet applicable Building and

Flood Control District standards for properties in this area. These are the same stringent standards applied to all projects in the Los Alamos area. Continuing to entertain misinformed claims and comments, despite resounding contradiction by County staff and documentation by licensed experts, is unfair to both the Developer and to these community members.

I will briefly provide some background that has been previously provided in more depth relative to the process and approvals and respond to community concerns that have been voiced or are captured in letters and emails about the Village Square Project.

In 2005 the Planning Commission conditionally approved the Village Square project which allowed the creation of 59 residential lots with the required infrastructure improvements and certified the associated Environmental Impact Report as adequate environmental review for the project. In 2015, they revisited the project under a request for a time extension and approved the extension with a determination that the Environmental Impact Report remained unaffected because the project nor its environmental context had significantly changed. The Board of Supervisors approved the final map, and it was recorded in December 2022. Since 2020, the Developer has applied for and obtained necessary clearances from the Planning Department, Public Works Department, Community Development Department, Fire Department, Public Health Department, Los Alamos Community Services District, Air Pollution Control District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and United States Department of Fish and Wildlife for the initial tract improvements. **None of these reviews, approvals, or clearances are under review or consideration as part of today's agenda.**

As part of the entitlements, the approved Village Square subdivision is required to install drainage improvements valued at over \$2.4 million. The improvements plans were reviewed and approved by district Staff in 2015. Due to the magnitude of this drainage improvement, the District will take ownership of these improvements because they are considered a necessary regional drainage improvement for the Los Alamos area. Notably, only 15% of the pipe's capacity will be needed for the Village Square community, the balance will serve the greater community drainage needs on the west side of Los Alamos as stated at the last hearing by your Flood Control Staff. The cooperative agreement (Item A-36) is the mechanism by which the district outlines the process and procedures which must be followed to ensure that the district can accept the improvements once completed. **The agreement is an administrative and ministerial approval of a document that has been recommended by your staff for the implementation of an approved project for the betterment of the Los Alamos Community.**

Over the last two months we have read and listened to concerns from members of the Los Alamos community related to Village Square project. Several community members have voiced genuine concerns about general deficiencies in the infrastructure and basic services available in the community. Though many of these concerns are outside of the purview of this agenda item we welcome the use of this project as a platform by which they can vocalize their concerns to the Board of Supervisors. I have attached my research regarding these general

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concerns so that information can be publicly available. However, there have also been many comments about the approved Village Square Project that are misleading or incorrect which is disappointing because the correct information/facts have been made available in response at each of the last hearings and at an informational meeting on 1/25/23 at the Los Alamos Valley Men's Club. We hope that our prior letters & your staff's input will facilitate your review and approval of the cooperative agreement.

Thank you,



Frances Romero
Senior Planner

Attachments

1) *Response/Research RE: General Community-wide Concerns*

CC:

Chris Jones and Tara Mitchell, MHP Builders, Inc
Kate Neiswender, Law Offices of K.M. Neiswender

ATTACHMENT 1: RESPONSE/RESEARCH RE: GENERAL COMMUNITY-WIDE CONCERNS

Olga Reed School (Part of the Orcutt Union School District) & Orcutt Academy:

Orcutt Academy moved from Casmalia to Los Alamos 10 years ago (not after Covid). Attendance at the Academy is voluntary & generates 2 buses daily from SM & Orcutt. There is no bus service provided for Los Alamos residents. There is no Safe Route to School Plan (likely due to the lack of sidewalks). Coiner will have a sidewalk that children can use on their way to school.

School Dust Complaint: The initial complaint to APCD was made on 8/24/22. On 9/2/22 wood chips were spread at the site where the buses parked. Based on the email thread that I reviewed, no further complaints were received & the school district continues to replenish the chips as needed. It appears that this issue has been resolved to APCD's satisfaction. The District's Business Office staff indicated that the County was going to install a patch of paving over the winter break, but that it did not occur (likely due to the rain).

Enrollment Concerns-

Published School Capacity: 300

Olga Reed K-8: 187 latest available data

Orcutt Academy: 120 maximum enrollment & the Orcutt Academy is in the top 1,000 schools out of 30,000 schools.

The Olga Reed campus can easily handle additional students from Village Square based on personal communication from the Business Office. Their enrollment has been in decline (9% over five (5) years, this is a matter of public record. Most agree that Village Square homes are not starter homes & will not be attracting large numbers of young families.

Current school fee for K-8 is \$3.42/SF: Approximately **\$443,916** in school fees to OUSD will be paid based on the average of the low & high of the square footage proposed $(1,850 + 2,550/2 = 2,200\text{SQ FT} \times 59 \text{ homes} = 129,800 \text{ SF}$.

Sheriff Crime Stats & Response Times for Los Alamos:

I spoke with Elizabeth in Crime Statistics & she indicated that she can provide me with data about calls for service, but it will be after the annual DOJ reporting cycle concludes in mid-February. The Sheriff, as you know, does not produce a report for Los Alamos & they do not provide response times. As of 2/23, no information has been provided.

Cell Service:

Based on replies from two personal contacts in telecom I was told by contact #1 that bad service must be coupled with enough customers to justify the investment. Contact #2 relayed a conversation w/a Verizon engineer on 2/13 that Verizon will probably have budget next year to look at Los Alamos. In the meantime, residents with cell service issues should call their carrier to complain because budgets are often created to address complaints.

Frontier Service:

Supervisor Nelson have moved Los Alamos up in the queue for fiber, eight (8) underground installations are in process for the end of first quarter.

Post Office-

Discussion w/Postmaster Jay Fiscalini:

The Post Office will be remodeled & they will plan for the growth of our project & others. All of Los Alamos is required to get mail at a PO Box, therefore, the boxes are free (unless a resident pays for a bigger box) which means that the post office does not have the income needed to be open longer hours, current hours are M-F 10-4. The boxes get broken into when the lobby is left open. When the building is locked, the front door is being broken into.

Passports:

Both the Los Alamos & Pismo Beach Post Offices are inundated with people from Fresno, Bakersfield, the Bay Area, & LA for passports because their local post offices are booking appointments months in advance.

Other Post Office Hours/Options:

As an example, the Shell Beach Post Office is only open from 9-1; hours vary greatly based on income of the site. A UPS Mail Center franchise would need 200-300 boxes depending on rent & staffing, personal communication w/UPS Mail Center franchisee. Fewer boxes would be needed if co-housed with a coffee shop/smoothie shop or some other retail business already staffed or in a building owned/not rented, a non-franchised mail center could be successful.

Infrastructure:

There were many statements about the lack of infrastructure in Los Alamos. The project will build its own infrastructure to serve the lots. In addition, DIFs of nearly \$2.6M are required from the project to go toward community wide infrastructure upgrades plus \$2.4M for a regional drainage facility that also serves the project & the greater community. Funds have already been paid for CRLF Mitigation of nearly \$300K. Simply put, the three categories listed above put a \$90K/lot burden on the project.