

Joint Workshop Meeting Minutes
Lamar County Board of Commissioners
and
The Planning and Zoning Commission

3/22/2022
7:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. on March 22nd, 2022. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Heiney, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. The meeting was available via Zoom.

Development Regulations Update

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the Board and the Planning and Zoning Commission Board. In Sec. 503, “Development Standards for Lots” item J is about Lot Size. For major subdivisions: one acre minimum for lots located within three miles distance of the geographical center of the city of Barnesville and two miles distance of the geographical center of the City of Milner. Within those ranges, less than 1 acre may be allowed if connected to a public sewer provider. Outside of those ranges, all divisions must have a minimum lot size of five acres. The board reviewed the circled/bubbled areas around the city and discussed the areas that could be anywhere from two to three miles. Chairman Glass stated that the proposed circle/bubble cuts it closer to the City limits of Barnesville but there is still buildable land outside of those limits. At this time, the center has not been pinpointed and she is currently using the Courthouse as the center. Planning and Community Development Director Buice also shared a water line map with the board and the groundwater recharge area. She wants to make sure that the development standards include those areas to be considered for any type of new development. This is covered in Sec 501 Development Standards, inside of item E: Proposed subdivisions located in a Lamar County Watershed must refer to Article 21 Watershed Districts.

Planning and Zoning Commission Board member Dwight Fleming joined in the workshop conversation. Mr. Fleming said that if the County goes to a five-acre minimum on major subdivisions outside the circle/bubble there will not be hardly any desire by developers to develop a major subdivision with five-acre lots. The lot cost by the time you build streets, and other infrastructure would end up with approximately \$80,000.00 lot cost if not more. Mr. Fleming did an analysis with four different assumptions.

- Option one assumes the property is not developed
- Option two assumes the property is developed with a standard subdivision with five-acre lots and with \$300,000 home sale prices
- Option three assumes development with a conservation subdivision with a 3-acre net density built on one-acre lots and \$235,000 homes sale prices
- Option four assumes development with a conservation subdivision with five acres of net density built on one-acre lots and \$350,000 home sale prices

Mr. Fleming provided four detailed options related to development standards and net density. His basic assumption is for a 100-acre undeveloped tract that is currently in conservation use where Option 3 would be one that everyone could be proud of. Chairman Glass stated that if they went with the 5-acre lot size there is no more density with a standard subdivision but it would keep the developer above water. Mr. Fleming stated that in standard subdivisions all the streets are curb and gutter with storm drainage. In conservation subdivisions, the roads are not curbed and there is no underground piping. There are drainage swells beside the roads which help to dissipate the water before it ever gets to the collection point. Mr. Fleming explained that developers negotiate their terms and conditions based on what they need in the subdivision or the green space areas. Mr. Fleming

suggested that during the extension of the moratorium they could see what proposals they would get from developers regarding the types of subdivisions they want to build. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that she has seen developers present a conventional or conservation layout.

	Option one	Option two	Option three	Option four
Acres	100	100	100	100
Density/Acre	N/A	5	3	5
Total Lots	N/A	20	33	20
Developed Acres	N/A	100	33	20
Green Space	N/A		67	80
Tax Revenue				
Improved Parcels		6,000,000 20 @ 300,00	10,725,000 33 @ 325,000	7,000,00 20 @ 350,000
Land Only	72.500 100 ac @ 725	No Green Space	47,850 66 @ 725	58,000 80 @ 725
Total Value	72,500	6,000,000 20 @ 300,00	10,772.85	7,058,000
Forty percent Assessment	29,000	2,400,000	4,309,140	2,823,200
County Millage	0.01357	0.,01357	0.,01357	0.,01357
County Taxes	394	32,568	58,475	38,311

Mr. Fleming said that with conservation subdivisions, within the circle/bubble, if the sewer was available then green space could be protected. Planning and Community Development Director Buice suggested that inside the circle/bubble if you had access to water, and in some areas sewer, you could keep your density to one house per acre but then a planned development may come in with houses on a half-acre with a lot of green space around it. Planning and Zoning Commission Board member Gerald Thompson inquired about having sidewalks and lights in these subdivisions. Commissioner Thrash and Mr. Fleming stated that this could be a part of the negotiations with the developers. Mr. Fleming stated that Lamar County needs to control the growth but not eliminate it. He said that most young people do not want more land.

Lamar County Republican Party Chairwoman Ashley Gilles stated that she lives outside the circle/bubble and there are nice houses down the street. She said that her house was a starter home on twenty-five acres with three bedrooms and two baths. There are smaller houses on her road and people park alongside the road because of space. The noise level also increased. Planning and Community Development Director Buice asked what is considered a smaller house. District 2 Commissioner Candidate Chase Hassey said that a smaller house is less than two thousand square feet. He said that his house is 1850 square feet and living with a wife and two kids it is tight. Mr. Hassey said that a \$325,000.00 house in 2022 was \$225,000.00 three years ago. Mr. Fleming said that this was because of material cost. Mr. Hassey said that houses should be built to maintain their value. Ms. Gilles said that she feels like the proposed circle/bubble is unfair and said that she would shrink it so that it is closer to the highways. Mr. Fleming suggested that it be more of an elliptical area rather than two circles.

Mr. Hassey said that if they went with Option 3 with thirty-three houses on one hundred acres what kind of zoning would be applied to the remaining sixty-seven acres. Mr. Fleming said that it goes into permanently dedicated green space and can never be developed. The homeowners association (HOA) is responsible for the taxes on the land. Mr. Thompson asked what type of subdivision was in Milner because they do not have a backyard. Planning and Community Development Director Buice stated that this was a conventional subdivision. Mr. Fleming said that they are on sewer and in most places, it is considered high density. He said that seniors that live in smaller homes, need more services, and if they want to walk to town they should be located inside the circle/bubble. Ms. Gilles asked about a gated community for seniors with smaller lot sizes. Mr. Fleming said that sewer would need to be available. Board of Equalization Board member Rick Stephenson said that a high-density subdivision could

be built off of Hwy 41 South if the County could supply the hookups. Chairman Glass said that if a developer wanted to put in a packing station, such as in Redbone, and if water is also available, they could potentially have half-acre lots. Mr. Stephenson asked if a developer bought three hundred acres, and footed the bill to get hookups, for water and sewer, could they do this. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that in both of the scenarios current and future, regulations say no and this would be considered a planned unit development. Mr. Stephenson said that there are a lot of big acre tracts in Lamar County. Mr. Fleming said that the cost of getting to the sewer plant will rule out 99 percent of this type of development.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that there is not an empty house in Lamar County and no matter what scenario they produce, a farmhouse on one hundred acres, or a tract house on a quarter acre, they are selling for a lot of money. The question is about future housing and where do they want it. She is hearing that everyone agrees with concentrated one-acre lots, towards the city centers, so they need to nail down what that looks like so she can have a draft map printed through the regional commission. Mr. Fleming said that you could have smaller lots if sewer and water were available outside the circles/bubbles. There was more discussion and agreement on having 1-acre subdivisions such as in Cole Forest. Mr. Stephenson said that the problem with these types of subdivisions is that if someone buys one acre, and it ends up being clear cut, and then someone buys that tract and then someone else sells one hundred acres behind them, to do something else, then all they do is complain because they bought the land to be out in the country. Mr. Stephenson said that they should have looked at Qpublic before they bought it. Mr. Stephenson said that the problem with subdivisions like Cole Forest is that there are a lot of people but not a lot of revenue generated. He said that housing development cost the County money.

Vice-Chairman Heiney said that the original intent was to slow down the population growth until the infrastructure can catch up. He said that they are not accomplishing the goal of slowing the growth until they catch up with the roads, law enforcement, and fire department. Mr. Fleming said that according to the Board of Education there is plenty of capacity for students at the schools. The County is not going to get the kind of growth that is going to fund a lot of infrastructure improvements unless there is more commercial development. The County will not get the commercial development because of the sewer capacity and not having the highway interchange. There will be no attraction for shopping centers or nice sit-down type restaurants because this is based on population. The only industries they can hope for are solar farms and rock quarries because neither of these developments requires any more police, fire protection, water, or burdens on the school system. Chairman Glass said that outside of the circle/ bubble, a five-acre minimum lot size will restrict the growth and limit the overall population. Currently, there are no limits so they could go down to 1-acre lots sizes. Commissioner Thrash asked if having a 3-acre lot minimum in conservation accomplishes the same thing as the 5-acre lot minimum without shutting the door on any new development. There was discussion on property value increases and whether the people in Lamar County care about going to eat at Longhorns or if they want a high-density subdivision in the circle/bubbles so that people can walk to restaurants.

Mr. Fleming inquired about the number of houses that had recently been built in Lamar County and Planning and Community Development Director Buice replied that about 125 had been built and another 125 from the year before. Board of Appeals board member Doug Walker said that if each one of these new homeowners had made a \$2,500.00 impact fee that would have decreased the burden that they are bringing to Lamar County. This money could be used to buy a new fire truck or to hire additional personnel. Mr. Walker said that he grew up in Henry County and he saw the growth tremendously explode and he moved to Lamar County to get out of there.

Commissioner Thrash asked about Option 3 and having development with a conservation subdivision with a 3-acre net density built on one-acre lots and \$325,000.00 home sale prices. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said Option 4 is the exact same thing as a 5-acre minimum except you will have an HOA. Option 3 would have a higher population with a little more compromise for the developers and you would see more subdivisions with a 3-acre minimum. Mr. Fleming said that there would be a net density difference between Option 2 having a conventional subdivision, with 5-acre lots, and Option 3 with a conservation subdivision where you build them in one or more clusters. The development cost for Option 3 would be half as much for the

developer as opposed to Option 2 with the same land cost. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that for the environment this is way less impactful. Chairman Glass requested to see some example ordinances from other counties.

Chairman Glass requested that they reshape the circle/bubbles to an oval or egg shape where the area is closer to the highway. Ashley Gilles said that she was on the Comprehensive Plan Committee and the growth was placed on the North end of the County and not below Barnesville. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that it was centered around the services and the grocery stores in Barnesville. The Land Use Plan for the County was very vague and did not include high-density areas. Chairman Glass said that the Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year plan that is updated every 10 years and it can be updated at any time and is primarily used for zoning requests. Mr. Hassey said that it is important to know, where the circle/bubbles are drawn if people want to come to the cities. He lives in Lamar County but it is more convenient for him to shop in Pike County. He said that all the people that are living in North Lamar County are stopping off and shopping in other counties on the way home from work. There is no grocery store in Milner except for Red and White, and a few restaurants so he does not know what would draw people to a high-density area in Milner. Commissioner Thrash said that this is the reason that they are trying to plan because the growth in the County is coming. Chairman Glass said that retail businesses depend on rooftops. You have large subdivisions around cities that should attract more retail businesses. Mr. Fleming said that to control the growth in the County you need to have something like a conservation subdivision because it is not extremely costly to develop but because of the population, you will not get a Walmart or chain restaurants. Chairman Glass said that the goal is to limit the overall growth and the oval shape along the four-lane corridor between Barnesville and Milner helps with this along with the conservation subdivisions outside the cities with 3 to 5 acre lots.

Adjournment

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the Workshop meeting at 8:20 p.m. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Robert Heiney, Vice-Chairman

Bennie Horton, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk