Looking Toward a Hopeful Future

This is my last time writing as Executive Director for the VARD newsletter. In November I am stepping down as ED in order to care for a new addition to our family. I believe this time of transition for me and my family mirrors a time of transition for Teton Valley.

It’s been a stormy season in Teton Valley this year with a changing political climate and a new approach to managing our community’s growth. As autumn approaches I see signs of this period of social upheaval coming to a close. On August 27, the Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously not to rescind the Planned Unit Development ordinance, an issue that had become hotly contested.

Instead, the commissioners worked together and found a solution that rose above the rhetoric while addressing an important growth challenge. It is an encouraging sign that the commissioners, and by extension the community, are not so divided that they are unable to work together for clean water and air; wildlife; the unique natural beauty we are blessed to have around us; social equity, fiscal responsibility; and all the other things that lie close to the heart of every citizen of Teton Valley.

Our last newsletter focused on examples from other communities of solutions to common growth challenges similar to those that Teton Valley is facing. Our goal was to demonstrate that the issues we face are neither unique nor insurmountable. To those that Teton Valley is facing. Our goal was to demonstrate that the issues we face are neither unique nor insurmountable.

Teton Valley is a community to be proud of and a valuable place worth the hard work.

Take a Peek at our Centerfold!

In the centerfold of this edition of the VARD newsletter you’ll find many of the many faces of growth in Teton Valley. Our intention is not to provide a comprehensive inventory of growth and land use, but rather a pictorial reference with the goal of empowering citizens to engage in the sometimes boring, sometimes overwhelming, area of land-use planning. We hope you feel compelled to put them to work. Reliable tools are essential in order to produce a good product; in this case fair, consistent and predictable decisions.

Good decision-making requires not only clear and consistent policies and codes, but also decision makers who have the gumption and tenacity to implement them.

A good decision involves careful interpretation of the comp plan and ordinances, drawing on the input from various agencies such as the Department of Environmental Quality and Idaho Fish and Game, data and studies specific to a piece of property, listening to the concerns of neighbors, and keeping in mind how each piece fits into the big picture of the ecosystem and the community.

As the county grapples with an overwhelming number of development applications and a restrictive timeframe for processing them, we need to get comfortable with a more in-depth process if we want quality decisions and results on the ground. On August 27, 2007, the Board of County Commissioners did just that and sent a clear directive to require more comprehensive development applications – something that has not been a part of the decision-making culture up to this point.

Some developers may find this unfair, but most responsible developers recognize that a more thorough process protects their investment. Others may call a more thorough process expanding government bureaucracy, but the alternative is chaotic development with no checks and balances to protect – among other things – water and air quality, small-town character, economic prosperity, public safety and ultimately the common citizen. All of these are critical to a healthy and vibrant community and things we believe are worth standing up for.

— Kathy Rinaldi, Executive Director
**GRAND TARGHEE**  
**ISSUE:** Expansion of Grand Targhee impacts Teton Valley — for example:  
- Traffic within town, increased traffic, serves an economic engine.  
- This potential to be counterbalanced by potential growth and four-season development initiatives.  
**ACTION:** Decision-making power is Wyoming, little influence from Idaho.

**SOLID WASTE/LANDFILL**  
**ISSUE:** County landfill reaching capacity and landfill needs out of compliance with state regulations.  
**ACTION:** Two or three existing recycling facilities being constructed. Recyclers will evaluate numerous of waste that county plans, Schmidt for regional landfill.

**WILDLIFE CORRIDORS**  
**ISSUE:** Historically wildlife travels to different areas for different seasons in search of water and food.  
New developments are changing and sometimes blocking wildlife corridors and migration routes.  
**ACTION:** Directs to address conservation and protection of natural resources and important habitat in PUD.

**ROADS**  
**ISSUE:** Lack of funding and heavy traffic leads to poor maintenance, repair, dust and safety issues.  
**ACTION:** Capital Improvements Plan and possible impact fee for development track traffic.

**PUBLIC ACCESS**  
**ISSUE:** Historic access to public lands and wildlife movement by development because county is not able to maintain certain accesses.  
**ACTION:** Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

**SCHOOL FUNDING AND TEACHER SHORTAGES**  
**ISSUE:** Growth is resulting in crowded classrooms and staffing of existing facilities. Teacher shortages due to high cost of living.  
**ACTION:** School superintendent has asked county to help ensure developers pay towards impact on school system. Thus far, developers have been asked to make voluntary contributions. More consistent system needs to be put in place to ensure fairness in process.

**SCENIC CORRIDOR**  
**ISSUE:** Development along Highway 13, designated as a scenic corridor in the comprehensive plan, in some cases is detrimental to open spaces.  
**ACTION:** Directs to P&Z to request data needed to review decisions to protect scenic corridor.

**COST OF SERVICES**  
**ISSUE:** The county is short on funds to cover essential county services such as the sheriff's department, partially because of the state mandated 2% property tax cap. The county relies on one-time developer donations to help cover costs.  
**ACTION:** A consultant has been hired to draw up a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) which will project future county needs and costs and how they can be funded.

**FAIR & CONSISTENT DECISION-MAKING**  
**ISSUE:** Without more clear policies and codes, developers are left guessing what the community wants, and without a legal mechanism for making developments pay for their impacts on community services, developers are left guessing about what “voluntary” donation is required.  
**ACTION:** Directs are an attempt to get P&Z and BCC to each pass in order to ensure a fair and consistent process for developers and the public.

**COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**ISSUES:**  
- HOSPITAL — growing needs and staffing and funding challenges.  
- SHERIFF’S DEPT — understaffed  
- PLANNING & ZONING DEPT — overburdened and understaffed  
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- PLANNING & ZONING DEPT — overburdened and  
- HOSPITAL — growing needs and staffing and funding challenges.  
**ACTION:** 
- CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) will help address.

**SURFACE AND GROUND WATER QUALITY**  
**ISSUE:** Vulnerable to contamination from runoff and inappropriate concentration of sewage without study of cumulative impacts of area.  
**ACTION:** Greenwater Protection Ordinance, passed by the county in November 2006. Directs to protect ground and surface water.

**HABITAT LOSS**  
**ISSUE:** Development encroaching into sensitive wildlife areas such as riparian areas and wetlands.  
**ACTION:** Directs to give careful consideration to habitat while reviewing PUDs, as per the comp plan.

**APPROPRIATE RURAL DENSITY**  
**ISSUE:** Thousands of new lots are being created, spread out across the rural parts of the county with effects on rural character, open space, habitat and agriculture. This land-use pattern is also the most expensive in terms of the cost of providing essential community services.  
**ACTION:** Directs to concentrate higher density towards the cities, consistent with county’s rural plan. Reduced density language from comp plan.

**MEANINGFUL OPEN SPACE**  
**ISSUE:** Land of direction in the PUD ordinance and from decision-makers about what constitutes meaningful open space.  
**ACTION:** Directs to give careful consideration to open space to protect natural, scenic and other significant features as per the comp plan.

**EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE EFFECTS OF GROWTH**  
- **LOCAL ECONOMY:**  
  - **Music on Main**  
  - **Fourth of July festivities**  
  - **Arts events and classes**  
  - **Author events**  
  - **Poetry nights**  
  - **Growing number of athletic events running, biking, etc**  
  - **County Fair**  

**COMMERCIAL ZONING/GROWTH**  
**ISSUE:** Commercial/industrial area requests across county but no Projected Land Use Plan (PLUP), as required by state law, to guide such decisions.  
**ACTION:** A-M has languished in P&Z for the last year. Clarion looking at PLUM.

**AIR QUALITY**  
**ISSUE:** Air quality in county is currently one of the worst in the state.  
**ACTION:** Commissioned June 2007

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**  
**ISSUE:** Economical housing is scarce because a copper price binge helped to prop up the economy of the valley. Another period of pull-out from construction.  
**ACTION:** Encourage ways of reducing traffic such as interconnected pathways, public transportation and reducing the length and number of car trips by concentrating development near the cities, all of which are comp plan policies.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**  
- BOSC: Board of County Commissioners for Teton County, Idaho  
- Clarion Associates: A professional planning firm hired by the county to help evaluate county land-use codes.  
- CIP (Capital Improvement Plan): Identifies and addresses needs for public infrastructure, including roads and public facilities, with regards projected growth. Can be used to identify possible funding mechanisms, including impact fees. Commissioned June 2007  
- Comprehensive Plan: This comprehensive plan is a vision document for how a county community wants to grow. It consists of policies in different categories such as Land Use and Economic Development. Decision-makers are supposed to make decisions in keeping with the vision of this comprehensive plan. The county ordinances are the means by which to enforce the county comprehensive plans.  
- Directions: On August 27, the BOSC drew up a list of directions to guide decision-making at both the P&Z and BCC level. There are further planning tools that can be put in place. The decisions were based on input from Clarion Associates that the current comp plan and ordinances could be enforced more stringently to hold developers to a higher standard.  
- P&Z: Planning & Zoning Commission, an advisory board to the BOSC which is charged with making out planning as well as review and make recommendations or development applications.  
- PLUM (Projected Land Use Map): area, imposed by state law, that designates suitable land uses for a jurisdiction, such as Teton County, which can be used to guide future zoning decisions. Pending.  
- PUD (Planned Unit Development): a form of planned residential development that concentrates buildings on one or more parts of the site allowing the remaining land to be used for recreational, open space, or preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.
Thank You Old Bill’s Fun Run Donors!

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you who have once again, or for the first time, given to VARD through Old Bill’s Fun Run. Although we do not have final numbers at this time, we have been gratified by the response so far. Thank you for your support of VARD’s work, which focuses on the importance of managing growth in order to ensure our community’s long-term economic vitality and to preserve clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, our small-town character and many other assets that give us our outstanding quality of life here in Teton Valley.

Mad Hatter Party set for Friday, Nov 9

It’s never too early to start planning your hat creation for the Mad Hatter Party! If you haven’t yet made it to this annual event you’ve been missing out. Join us this year on the evening of Friday, November 9 for an array of delicious appetizers, wine, beer and soft drinks and a great demonstration of creativity as participants vie in several hat award categories. Tickets are $25 per person or $40 per couple. For more information, look for our ad in the Teton Valley News in the weeks leading up to the event. See you there!

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