



Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

March 5, 2012

Teton County Board of County Commissioners
150 Courthouse Drive
Driggs, Idaho 83422

RE: P&Z recommendations and updated application materials for upcoming hearings

First off, I'd like to say that the respectful, productive tone of the public comment at the February 14th P&Z hearing for the LDS meeting house was a compliment to our entire community. It was a shining example of Teton Valley's ability to engage in thoughtful discourse and debate. It set the bar high for future public hearings.

While we at VARD still believe that this meeting house is a valuable community asset that should be centrally located within a town, the focus of this comment letter is about *process*. Several years ago, this Board adopted a policy that County Commissioner hearings would not be held until at least one month after the P&Z minutes were adopted, thus giving the public the ability to review and comment on what was actually recommended by P&Z and what is now up for final hearing by the Board of County Commissioners. This also gives the applicant time to update his or her application materials. Overall, the public process then benefits from more meaningful and relevant comment on the adequacy of these recommendations, as well as gives the P&Z the opportunity to correct any errors or omissions in their final recommendations.

I wish that I could provide more specific comments on the current state of this application and the recommendations by P&Z, but as of today, *which is the day that comments are due*, I do not have any information available to me. It is very hard to submit comment without the benefit of updated materials or the hearing minutes outlining the very lengthy and very detailed conditions of approval that were recommended by P&Z. Only the prior application materials are presently available, and this particular application has changed over time, making it hard to submit relevant comment. At the February 14th P&Z hearing, the applicant presented for the first time an amended lighting and landscaping plan. Then, the P&Z recommended further changes to these proposed plans, both of which strike at the heart of the dark skies and visual impact concerns expressed by many members of the public. P&Z also passed additional recommendations regarding the bike pathway and traffic mitigations, both of



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which are also not contained in the new materials or on record. In reviewing the updated traffic studies and comments by the county engineer, it is unclear whether an updated traffic report will be submitted and whether it will address the public's comments made at the hearing regarding 6000S and 50W.

We are talking about the construction of a facility that is designed to last 100 years, so access to public process regarding citing and impacts is absolutely critical. Having the final public hearing on the CUP two days after there will (hopefully) be a final decision on the height variance, and without the benefit of minutes or revised application materials, does not leave room for meaningful public comment. Considering the significant public interest in this proposal, why leave P&Z's recommended conditions to potential misunderstanding? If P&Z (acting as the Board of Adjustment) denies the height variance, will the application need to be amended? When will the public be able to view and comment on both the recommendation as well as changes to the landscaping, lighting, traffic, and other conditions?

While the public made good, thoughtful use of their 3 minutes of allotted time to comment at the February 14th hearing, it would not be a good idea to require the public to look at all new materials and comment in 3 minutes or less at what may be the final hearing on this application. **The public process would greatly benefit from (1) P&Z minutes that clearly outline what has been recommended for approval, (2) a final decision on the variance issue, and (3) revised application materials showing what is currently being proposed in light of application changes and P&Z recommendations.**

I recognize that these types of land use issues are definitely not easy to grapple with, and involve considerable staff time and county resources. So once again, thank you for all of your hard work and careful consideration in the service of our community.

Sincerely,

Anna Trentadue
VARD Program Director / Staff Attorney