

City of Desert Hot Springs Meeting October 10, 2017 Item #2

MALE: We have item number 2, which is a request for a three-year extension of time for tentative tract map 33745, subdivision 554 lots, 499 residential for the Silver Oaks Sunset Ridge Residential Development located on the south side of Mission Lakes Blvd. between Karen Ave. and Western Ave. Staff.

MALE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. The project site, it's about, let's see, it's 165 acres on the south side of Mission Lakes Blvd. east of Karen and west and Western. This is the approved substantial conformance map. You can see 499 residential lots that results from this. This project was originally approved by City Council on June 6, 2006. It's called the Silver Oaks Sunset Ridge Residential Development. With that, it got environmental clearance. It was a general plan amendment, a specific plan, a zone map amendment, an environmental assessment and the tentative tract map you have before you tonight. Due to state law, as many of you know, there were automatic extensions over the years because of the economic downturn. There was a chain of State Assembly Bills and State Senate Bills. However, the latest extension that was granted in December of 2015, Riverside County no longer qualified for the automatic extensions. That being said, last year the client came in on June 14th that you see here at the bottom and Planning Commission granted a one-year extension from June 14, 2016 to June 14, 2016 this year. The applicant did submit prior to expiration. So this would be a retroactive approval and it would extend it until June 14th of 2017 if it's a one-year extension. They are requesting a three-year extension, which our municipal code does allow for up to a three-year extension of time. The MND has already been certified for the project and unless there are substantial changes to the project, no additional review is required. With that, staff is recommending approval of a three-year extension of time for tentative tract map 33746 for the Silver Oaks Sunset Ridge Residential Development on the south side of Mission Lakes Blvd. between Karen and Western Ave. That concludes staff's report and we are available if you have any questions and I believe we have representatives on behalf of the applicant here in the audience.

MALE: Okay. Any questions of staff from the Commissioners?

MALE: The project says in here that there is to be no RV parking whatsoever and it has a breakdown of the lots. There's lots as small as 6,100 square feet and this tract map is from 2006 back in the height of the market when they were stacking homes in there at high capacity. Is there a way to alter any of those lots to be larger and more desirable, maybe 8,000 square foot lots with RV parking?

MALE: That would require, essentially you'd have to recommend or deny this extension and have them resubmit the project from scratch.

MALE: It's been on the table since 2006.

MALE: Correct. The discretion here is you know the extension from one to three years or to recommend denial of the extension.

MALE: My concern is that the product that would sit on this size home site would be of lower caliber. It would be small. So the price point would be a high price point.

FEMALE: If I may, just to reiterate. I understand the concern and if that's something of concern and if it's echoed by the Planning Commissioners with findings, of course, you can deny the extension. However, we can't go ahead and modify it as this point because it would literally, we would have to modify the lines of the actual lots, in which case it would have to be completely reengineered, pretty much taken back all the way down to square one.

MALE: Right.

MALE: So, my question again is the tract maps aren't separate.

FEMALE: What do you mean?

MALE: It's one tract map total.

FEMALE: Correct. There's, I think it's just one tract map, is that correct from staff?

MALE: Yes.

FEMALE: It's 33746.

MALE: Yeah.

MALE: Any other comments or questions or, before we open the public hearing? None, and this has been, this was approved how long, 10 years, 11 years ago, if I'm correct.

MALE: Yeah, June 6, 2006.

MALE: Okay. Okay. Alright, we will go ahead then and open the public hearing. We will invite the applicant to come up to the front and speak if they so choose.

NEIL GASCON: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Neil Gascon. I represent the owner and we are asking for a three-year extension of time for the tentative map and one of the reasons for that is simply part of it might be responsive to the Commissioner's question on the size of lots, but we will have to go back through and redo the hydrology for the property while we're doing the final map and the final map engineering and the design engineering. That process, just the private consultant is going to take probably six months to process that through the city. I'm going to estimate it's going to be anywhere from 12 to 18 months. That's 24 months, that's if we started at the expire date or the expiration date last June. So we're already into six months into this next period. That's why we've asked for a three-year extension and you're right, the property was approved several years ago and we are waiting. We have now, for the first time since in the last probably six years, have interest in the property and the difficulty is your, you have Skyborne sitting just to our west that has been very slow to continue in a new development and I understand they're getting some attention now, but again they haven't, I don't

believe, pulled any building permits in the last two or three years or probably longer than that. At any rate, we're here. We have a couple of interested buyers, one who is actually substantial enough to take the whole project and one of the things we're looking at doing is it is one tentative map for 499 lots is coming up with a phasing plan so that we can develop in phases and probably when we come in with that if we have to make some adjustments, we can do it then. Thank you.

MALE: Okay. Are there any questions for the applicant, of Commissioners. Go ahead and stand.

MALE: When would the infrastructure be put in for the common areas?

NEIL GASCON: The common areas must be built. It's going to be dependent on what our DRE requirements are, but typically, they're going to be after so many units are up. Those facilities will have to be in place before we can go forward.

MALE: Would you be willing to cut down the number units that would be?

NEIL GASCON: I can't answer that question now. My general answer would be we can. We just need to know what we're targeting to do.

MALE: We don't want another Skyborne is where I'm going at.

NEIL GASCON: I understand and we do have extra room. When we look at the map the, I believe it's the northeast corner of the property, much of that is set aside for flood control purposes and it's a big basin and if we can adjust that, we can probably increase the size of the lots or at least change the configuration of the lots. Thank you.

MALE: Alright, public testimony. Did we, Madame City Clerk, do we have any?

FEMALE: No, we do not.

MALE: Okay. Alright. We'll go ahead and we'll close the public hearing. Any Commissioner comments, thoughts, motions or?

MALE: I have a question of staff. So what is the total amount of units before some of the common areas are to be installed?

MALE: Well there's a total of 554 lots, 499 for single family homes.

MALE: How many units are in Phase 1?

MALE: That, I don't believe there was a phasing of the project.

MALE: It's not even phase yet.

MALE: Okay.

MALE: That is something if they were to do a phasing, we'd do an amendment to original approval and we'd bring it back before this Commission.

MALE: I'm struggling with this one because of the fact that we do have Skyborne and it could have been a beautiful project, but it's just sitting in the dust. So we don't need another one of those communities in Desert Hot Springs. I can tell you personally I work for a developer and 6,100 square feet on a home site is way too small for homes is my personal opinion. So I'm just going to throw that out there.

MALE: Chad, do you have anything? Larry.

MALE: No, not at this time. I think that if they come in with phasing and things like that, then we'll have an opportunity to discuss that again. My only concern is Skyborne. Looking at Skyborne, it's just, it's been a constant issue as long as I've been here at least and we don't need another one of those, that's for sure.

MALE: So let me ask you, Scott. If we, if this was approved and they came in, would the phases, would those come to Planning Commission? If so, would Planning Commission have the discretion to say you know 6,100 square foot lots is not acceptable. We want 10,000 or 8,500 or like, or we want changes in what's been approved?

MALE: Yeah, once you open it up for an amendment, then you have the discretion to make those types of changes.

MALE: Okay, so if this was approved as is today, it still comes back to us, then the opportunity to make those changes to either move the project forward or not.

MALE: Correct.

MALE: We could do that.

MALE: Unless, you know, in the next year and a half they were to build to these plans and submit for building plans.

MALE: So, okay, so within the next year and a half if they come in and submit to build this, then we're stuck with this.

MALE: That's correct.

MALE: Okay.

MALE: That's where you might want to look at you know the year to three years in that discretion.

MALE: I don't want to say I'm anti-build, but this project's been sitting idle since 2006 and that was in the boom of the market and people were waiting in line to get homes back then. I just don't think that that area of Desert Hot Springs calls for mass, you know, compilation of homes, home sites that are just too small.

MALE: I'm going to agree with you on that for a couple of other things. At that time, certain amenities, open space, greenbelts, more decorative entry ways and the like were very limited with some. Skyborne has got a few of them, but I'm not real, just from what I've seen in there, it's a fairly generic proposal. It's just there it is, here they are, here's our vacant spot, we got a few little park things, throw it in and the line of people coming in here and it's been sitting here. You know, these are an opportunity that it's been on the books for 11 years, nothing's been done, these are an opportunity where we have a chance to review this. What concerns me is if they decide to come in in a month what, if this were to be approved today, we're stuck with what this is and that I have a hard time. I'll be very honest with you. As proposed, I would not have supported that as proposed and I'm probably one of the most pro-development people in this city, but there's different amenities and fixtures and the way the town is and stuff that I just don't want us to be the dumping ground of affordable houses, necessarily, that are crunched together when that's now where the market is at. It's just my two cents' worth.

MALE: May I respond to a couple of your concerns. I know the public testimony is over.

FEMALE: Do you want to reopen the public hearing?

MALE: We'll, go ahead and reopen the.

FEMALE: And see if there's anybody else with interest.

MALE: Sure, we'll go ahead and we'll reopen the public hearing.

MALE: First of all, lot size is very widely and it's personal opinion of what's appropriate or what's not appropriate and I appreciate your concern over people trying to dump less-affordable housing in the city. That's not the intention of this map, but it probably was the intention of creating the map at a time when the market was very active, but with respect to your concern about can a developer come in and develop this product within the next year, 18 months, my answer is no, because we're going to have to, whoever takes it forward the next step would have to prepare the engineered plans. It's going to take private engineer. Our engineer is Hunsaker out of Irvine. They did the original plan and I've already talked to them. It's going to take four to six months to get through design. That's after correcting the hydrology. One of the key elements of why a developer hasn't taken this property on, the way the map is approved, all the infrastructure surrounding the project has to be put in first. That's all around it. That's a huge undertaking for public improvements before you get to your first lot. So the only way that makes sense is to phase the project and we've discussed that, but in my case, we're not in a position to go forward with that, but that's what's going to happen. If this map gets developed, it's going to get phased in a way that'll allow the developer to phase the offsite improvements so they don't have to do all of it upfront and I think as a practical matter, that's where we are. Thank you.

MALE: Okay. With that being said, we have a number of projects where that's been a very vocal issue to Council members. Project is incomplete, public work improvement is not completed, developer goes off and the property gets absorbed back by the bank and bonds don't get cashed in or get stopped or whatever the work is related to that and you've got half-built roads, half-built public infrastructure and the like because of the phased-in thing. I'm just, I'm having a hard time with this one. Yeah. So, with that being said, if there's no further comments from Commissioners, we'll go ahead and close the public hearing and we'll entertain either further discussion and or a motion on item number 2.

MALE: My motion would be to deny the extension of this tract map of 499 homes based off of the style of home that is desired in the marketplace of today.

FEMALE: Mr. Chair Members of the Commission, if the motion-maker would also like to add further findings from what I've heard and feel free to correct those findings if I misspeak. That approximately 2,100 square feet for a lot size, especially in this area, is too small. The project is too dense for the area. There are no amended or minimal, I want to say minimal, you can correct me if I'm wrong on that minimal amenities for the tract and it has been sitting idle since 2006 and has not had any movement in 11 years.

MALE: Correction is 2,100 to 6,100.

MALE: It's 6,100.

FEMALE: 6,100.

MALE: 6,100.

MALE: 61, yeah.

MALE: I will go ahead and second that. We have a motion and a second, please vote.

FEMALE: Motion passes with (INAUDIBLE) voting no.

FEMALE: Just for members of the audience, the motion was to, to deny, which passed. Anybody who was affected by the project can appeal the denial, of course, to the City Council.

MALE: Alright. Moving on to item number 3.

END OF ITEM 2