



Friends of Carefree, the Council held another Executive session on November 1st, but no details were made available. The regular monthly Town Council meeting was also held on December 1st.

Town Council Meeting, December 1, 2015, 5:00PM

General observation – It was essentially a full house for this meeting.

Items 1 – 5, Consent Agenda: All items were related to routine town business (meeting minutes, bills, financial reports, event permit(s), etc.). Approved 7 – 0.

Item 6, Call to the Public: Jim Van Allen, in reference to 28 additional Town Center faux LED Gas Lamps to be discussed later in the agenda, asked the council not to approve projects on a piecemeal basis when only part of the total costs are disclosed. He said we won't find out the real cost until the project is done. This also applies to another agenda item requesting funds to construct turn lanes in support of the already approved and planned Gateways. He cited, as a very recent example, the total cost of the fireplace project which turned out to be more than double the approved amount. [More on these topics later in the newsletter.]

Item 7, Current Events: None mentioned.

Item 8, Christmas Festival Status Report, Jo Gemmill: Ms. Gemmill delivered a comprehensive report on the festival, complementing the team of dedicated volunteers which grows each year. Additional sponsors this year include The Boulders and Easy Street Development. Work on this 8th edition of the Carefree Christmas festival actually began in March and continued to build in intensity throughout the year, culminating with the ever-evolving spectacle. One volunteer in particular, Lyn Hitchon, handled the difficult job of seeking door-to-door donations from merchants, while others have coordinated with staff and outside help or selected new decorations. For the first time, this year the festival will feature a 'Preview Night' on December 3rd so that residents and local neighbors can enjoy the upcoming event before the estimated 20,000 visitors come to town. Images magazine featured a 4 page article on the festival. Ms. Gemmill received a round of well-deserved applause.

Item 9, Keystone Homes 'Eastwood' – General Plan & Zoning Changes: Since there had been many requests to speak on this topic the Mayor outlined a phased format which would be followed for the remainder of discussion on this topic. There was a detailed presentation by the town planner and then a brief presentation by the builder. Public comment followed. At the time this newsletter was drafted there was no recording of the meeting available although it was online later. If correct spelling of names can be determined from that recording, a revision to this newsletter will be posted on our website at a later date. We'll do our best to provide just a short overview of key points and public comments before the council vote. There were two comments in favor of the project and all the rest were opposed.

Because of numerous objections from the public during the Planning & Zoning hearing on this project, as well as letters to the council from neighbors and the SkyRanch at Carefree HOA, the builder had requested a continuance prior to the November council meeting. Since that time the builder held meetings with town staff and representatives from the HOA Board to arrive at a compromise on a set of issues.

Public comment centered predominantly on the proposed high density development in an area generally zoned for Low Density Residential (R-43, 1 acre lots), at one of the 3 roadway corridors into Carefree. The proposed 39 Eastwood lot sizes will be 5,000 to 8,000 sf which will yield essentially 4 homes per acre although the proposed rezoning request would permit even higher density. A few folks mentioned that there was little concern for protecting/maintaining open space. The lack of sidewalks in the plan was mentioned twice.

Sky Ranch *resident* Robert Schenkel provided a summary of the 5 page detailed letter of objection he sent to Council. He argued that the town was about to violate its own zoning regulation (Section 3.06) that a Residential Unit Plan of Development (RUPD) must have a minimum size of 10 acres; the true Eastwood project gross acreage is only 8.6929, not the 10 acres required. He went on to say that the proposed zoning classification permits *Multiple-Family Residential* on smaller lots than the more appropriate buffer that R1-10 (10,000sf) or R1-18 (18,000sf) lots would provide. He added that the Eastwood provision for 'open space' was flawed because their open space consisted primarily of roads, a small pool area, and required drainage.

Laura Beyers [*sorry about spelling*], owner of a 3,600sf office in the Pima Norte Garden Office complex, stated her objections from a business perspective, as did Dan Kobalt [*same here*] a principal in the Pima Norte complex, citing noise and disruption to his tenants.

William Kauper, President of the Board of Directors for the SkyRanch at Carefree HOA, spoke regarding the board's original objections to the project and the subsequent compromise which resulted from a meeting with Keystone representatives. He said the board had withdrawn their formal objections to the project but that individual HOA residents may have a different perspective. He noted that this project had surfaced larger issues for Carefree and tactfully suggested the need for a discussion regarding insensitivity within the appointed Planning & Zoning Commission. ***[Having attended the meeting, during which members of the P & Z heard numerous valid objections to the Eastwood project from a very large public presence, I can say it certainly seemed there was an air of 'we know better' in their unanimous acceptance of the town staff recommendation to approve the Eastwood project.]***

Resident Ron Harkelrod said the builder had originally committed to limit building heights to 20 feet. He asked town staff for confirmation that would be the case. There was some discussion that it might have been 22 feet. Councilman Miller stated that Carefree residential building heights were permitted to be 24 feet. Mayor Peterson asked the builder if the majority of the 39 homes would be 20 feet. The builder did confirm that 20 feet was the height mentioned in the community meeting and then went on to outline the height of each model within the proposed 39 unit development. The average height was just over 20 feet; all units were under 22 feet.

Sheryl D, [sorry about the name and I believe she said she is a realtor in Desert Mountain] was in favor of smaller homes and properties in Carefree for her Desert Mountain clients wanting to downsize.

[It should be noted that there is a great deal of concern that the 40 acre parcel to the immediate west of Eastwood may now become a target for rezoning to higher density as well. It is conceivable that a prospective builder, or a member of staff, would argue that those 40 acres should be rezoned to R1-10 or R1-18 to act as a buffer between the much higher Eastwood density and the nearby Low Density Residential (R-43, 1 acre) properties. The P&Z, the Town Council, and the Town Staff have now set a precedent - this is a very slippery slope.]

When public comment was closed Mayor Peterson asked the town administrator to frame the motions the council was expected to consider. Gary Neiss did so and in turn 3 motions were presented. Councilman Miller made the motion to approve the General Plan Amendment which was then approved 7 - 0. Councilman Farrar made the motion to approve rezoning a parcel from Garden Office to Medium Density Residential and a second larger parcel from Low Density Residential to MDR, which was approved 7 - 0. The final motion by Councilman Miller was to subdivide the entire new parcel into 39 lots for the Eastwood Subdivision, also approved 7 - 0. At this point in the meeting the chamber emptied of all Keystone staff and residents for or against the action, with just a few people staying for the remainder of the agenda.

Item 10, Authorization for 28 more LED Street Lights: There are currently 24 faux gas lamps (street lights) within the town core [*perhaps that is 23 faux lights and one authentic gas light*]. The faux lights had recently been upgraded from soft ambient light to brighter LED fixtures. ***[More than doubling the number of significantly brighter LED lighting units in town could be a violation of the Maricopa County "Dark Sky's Ordinance", or at least trample on the spirit of that ordinance.]*** Councilman Miller has studied the area and availability of electrical service in certain locations. A proposal has been made to purchase 28 additional faux gas lamps, along with LED light kits. 26 of those are for installation *primarily* on the east side of the core along Easy Street and in front of the upcoming Lewis Condo project. They seem to be spaced much closer together than any of the existing 24 fixtures. A couple will be installed in darker spots in the area of Ho & Hum roads. The remaining 2 are designated for spare parts. The cost for the lamps is \$184,300 and another \$30,826 for 26 LED kits. There was considerable debate about whether or not to disclose the projected installation cost. Councilmen Farrar and Vice Mayor Crane wanted to know an approximate cost but Councilman Miller resisted, claiming disclosure to the public would adversely affect the town's ability to obtain good bids. After some heated discussion Councilman Miller said the cost would be within budget, and after further heated discussion he said the project budget was \$340,000 but expected it to come in lower. Since there is no line item in the approved budget to substantiate the \$340K figure, the final cost must be covered from the undefined \$1.5M Economic Development category. Councilman Miller held up a sheet of paper that he claimed had been made public during budget workshops. The lamp order is expected to be completed in about 4 months. Council approved an expense item of \$215,000 for this purchase, 6 - 1 with Councilman Farrar voting no due to incomplete project information.

Item 11, Town Gateway Turning Lanes: After a brief explanation of how this will save Carefree money, the council voted 7 – 0 to authorize \$35,000 for including new turn lanes within the ADOT Bike lane project. The turn lanes will be located at Ho Road and Tom Darlington as well as Carefree Drive and Tom Darlington. The Tom Darlington phase of the ADOT project is expected to be completed by the end of January.

Item 12, Town Council Updates: Nothing major noted.

Item 13, Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7 PM.

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Respectfully submitted by Jim Van Allen and John Traynor

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