

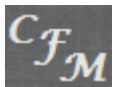
Please be advised – This edition of the Newsletter contains a fair amount of editorial comment – by necessity. It would be nearly impossible to recount the events of that evening without some explanation and without some interpretation of potentially complex zoning material. One can only wonder why that complexity must exist at all; that complexity we were told ‘developers will understand better than we will’ – the ‘we’ implied the P&Z commissioners. That comment reminded me of a political statement that emanated from our nation’s capital a few years back. And people wonder why development projects go awry! Please continue reading the newsletter.

There has been a great deal happening in and to Carefree of late; some of those things are good for residents and visitors, some not so much. It is very easy to get criticized by staff or officials for opposing those things which are potentially damaging to Carefree. A perfect example is the ADOT Bike lane project which Jim Van Allen warned about for months before the project was even approved by the Carefree and Cave Creek Councils. He warned what would be happening to the landscaping, medians, and roadways. He was ignored and criticized, even mocked by a Carefree councilman. But for almost two months, residents of both towns have been stunned by the destruction now evident, all for the sake of 5 foot bicycle lanes on our major roadways. Trees and native vegetation are vanishing, and will continue to do so. When you observe the rather narrow pavement addition being added to roadway shoulders you should be wondering where the extra few feet will come from to create the 5 foot bike lanes.

With any plan, lack of clear explanations and associated details only leads to more doubt and more questions – at least it should. If you find this or our past Newsletters helpful in filling the information gaps, **please pass copies to your friends and neighbors and ask them to subscribe.**

“The control of information is something the elite always does, particularly in a despotic form of government. Information, knowledge, is power. If you can control information, you can control people.”

Tom Clancy



Friends of Carefree, Jim and I want to thank all of you who attended the Planning & Zoning meeting Monday evening on such short notice (Jim counted about 40), as well as those who sent notes expressing their objection to the proposed dramatic commercial building height increase in the Town Core. No one in the audience spoke in favor of, or expressed support in any other way for, increasing commercial building heights.

For the record, we do generally *try* to keep the material in CFM Newsletters as unbiased and factual as we can manage. On occasion, or under special circumstances, that may not be possible. The Special Alert sent on Sunday was an example of a departure from the norm, but we felt it important because the essence and character of Carefree was being placed under duress, *clearly our opinion*. However, the meeting spectators seemed to strongly agree with our assessment, as expressed in their heartfelt comments. Their love of Carefree and their reasons for living in Carefree were evident in each and every word they spoke. And for the skeptics out there, who may obtain a copy of this communication and conclude the audience was stacked, I can say without reservation that neither Jim nor I knew the majority of those in attendance. Over time we sincerely hope to expand new acquaintances and build upon friendships, new and old.

In other instances, we try to separate the unbiased from what might be considered editorial comment by bracketing such comment [*in this fashion*]. You will see a fair amount of that in the meeting summary to follow.

Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting, January 11, 2016, 5:00PM

There was only one significant item on the agenda as of 5 PM on January 11th. There was no additional explanatory material posted online with the Agenda.

Items 1, Minutes from October 19, 2015 meeting: No discussion, approved 7 - 0.

Item 2, Work Session-Discussion: According to the agenda, the purpose of this item was “to conclude the conversation regarding building height requirements in the Zoning Ordinance for residential, commercial, and Town Center structures.” Representing the town staff were Gary Neiss, Town Administrator, and Stacy Bridge-Denzak, Town Planner. All 7 commissioners were present.

Stacy delivered a prepared and somewhat lengthy, occasionally technical presentation to the commission, stepping through changes and/or clarifications for Residential structures and Commercial structures outside of the Town Core area, before moving on to *new* Commercial standards *specific* to the Town Core (TC). The presentation included images of multi-level buildings in other municipalities [*mostly substantially larger municipalities like Tempe, Boca Raton, and a city in North Carolina, either Asheville or Ashland, I couldn't hear clearly*]. The commission asked numerous questions and continued discussion, at length, on all of the above material.

The proposed new standards would apply only to new construction, not existing structures. In reviewing the map designating ‘Town Core’, or ‘TC’, it seemed clear that only 2 undeveloped parcels exist within that boundary. Both are currently Ed Lewis’ (Butte) properties, one of which has already benefited from a prior text amendment, passed during Ed Morgan’s Administration. That text amendment permitted either 46 or 48 feet in height in that locale, but nobody could recall the specific number. It will be the site of the 3 story luxury condo project on Easy Street. All other commercial structures in Carefree, outside TC, would be raised to 30 feet from the present 24 feet.

[It should be noted that this meeting did not address the ‘Option B – More Intense’ standards which were part of the October meeting. That more intense option would have permitted structures up to 70 feet, something that suddenly seemed to be poo-pooed during this session. Nevertheless, the new ‘Option A- Less Intense’ standards discussed during this meeting still permit buildings of 4 stories, with a basic height of 50 feet, although ancillary features would be permitted to extend that height by 10 additional feet, or “as allowed by the Development Review Board.” Clearly 70 foot building heights were taken off the table for this meeting, but this is not the final P&Z discussion on the subject. I have since discovered that the Development Review Board is in fact comprised of the P&Z commissioners.]

When permitted, after discussion and near the end of the meeting, individuals from the audience were allowed to speak. I believe between 10 and 12 people spoke. I will attempt to provide a brief recap and I apologize, in advance, for being unable to hear or capture most (full) names.

The first speaker was Jackie McDermott. Ms. McDermott articulated, succinctly and with an obviously clear fondness for Carefree, what every subsequent speaker also conveyed to the commission in their own words. ***[I realize that I will not be able to recount the entirety of her comments, which is truly unfortunate. Official recordings of P&Z meetings are not routinely made available to the public.]*** She mentioned that although she had searched the internet and town website, she could find no detail regarding the discussion that was to take place at the meeting, nor was she able to discern from prior P&Z meeting agendas or minutes the nature of details under consideration for Carefree building heights. Further, she stated that she only learned of the meeting Sunday, and suggested that residents should be given more notice, and more detail, in advance of meetings. ***[No detail, other than a vague description that a ‘workshop’ discussion was to take place at the meeting, was available on the Town website.]*** Ms. McDermott was clearly not in favor of raising commercial building height standards in Carefree. Her poignant comments about the character of and lifestyle in Carefree struck a chord with everyone. This summary did not do justice to her thoughtful comments, or the veracity of those comments, which were punctuated with audience applause throughout her 3 – 4 minute talk. In response to her comments, a few commissioners spent well over 5 minutes trying to explain that COINS and the new town website were good sources of information available to anyone. One commissioner said he was pleased to see the turnout for the meeting since they (the commission) generally speak to an empty room. ***[In point of fact, not everyone uses the internet, or searches the town website with regularity. COINS email, while useful to obtain information regarding festivals, concerts, restaurants, and generic town news, lacks the type of detail which would alert recipients to potentially character-altering plans for Carefree. For example, in the 5 COINS email sent between December 2nd and January 6th, there was not a single mention of the P&Z meeting to be held on January 11th, much less any details. In contrast, in 3 of those 5 COINS email there was information regarding the Christmas Festival, even though media advertising and large signs had been readily apparent all over town for many weeks beforehand.]***

Ms. McDermott said it all, from lack of advanced details to Carefree character, charm, and lifestyle. All speakers who addressed the commission after her reinforced those sentiments and were as strongly opposed to the 'Option A' 50 (60) foot 4 story buildings as they were to the 'Option B' 70 foot proposal which would allow up to 5 floors. To the best of my recollection, and somewhat incomplete notes, the remaining speakers (I know I probably missed at least 1 or 2 names) included: James from the Boulders, another Jackie, Bob Schenkel, Aaron Grenley, Peg, John (who said that Carefree's Founding Fathers would be disappointed, Linda, Jim Van Allen, and John Traynor.

It was unequivocally clear from all the comments that people don't want high structures, even 30 feet is too high, in the Carefree. ***[Jim and I strongly agree; leave Carefree Commercial building height alone. The few who are pushing the idea of a tall hotel in the Town Core have self-interests at heart which go counter to the will of residents, voters and friends of Carefree. Putting the higher building height zoning change on the ballot for voters to decide was a well-received and recurring theme during public comment.]***

Item 3, Announcements: There were none.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and moved on to adjournment.

Item 4, Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:40 PM.

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Respectfully submitted by Jim Van Allen and John Traynor

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Carefree, what life should be!

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