

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M., IN THE FLORENCE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, ARIZONA.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Frost called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**ROLL CALL:**

Chairman Frost	Present
Vice-Chair DeRosa	Present
Commissioner Proulx	Present
Commissioner Leaman	Present
Commissioner Wooley	Absent

Note: Council Liaison Adam was present.

Staff: Andrew Birkelbach, Maricella Benitez, AJ Monroe, Cliff Mattice, and Bruce Walls.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Proulx led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC/COMMISSION RESPONSE:**

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Individual Commission members may respond to criticisms made, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Commission shall not discuss or take action on any matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

Courtney Ramirez, a Florence resident, expressed her concern with the roadway infrastructure around the Town. She requested all developers put their projects on hold until the roads are improved. She stated that the developers are aware of the issues but still keep coming to the community.

**DISCUSSION/APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL** of the minutes of the special meeting conducted on January 9, 2025.

On a motion by Commissioner Leaman, seconded by Vice-Chair DeRosa, and carried by a 4-0 vote, to approve the meeting minutes from January 9, 2025.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **PRESENTATION/ RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL / APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS / DENIAL of a Preliminary Plat for the Planned Unit Development known as Monarch located at the Southeast corner of Arizona Farms Road and Felix Road (PZ-24-32)**

Maricella Benitez, Senior Planner, stated that the property owner is GM Gabrych Family Limited Partnership, and the preliminary plat applicant is Communities Southwest Inc., with the property in question located along Felix Road south of Arizona Farms Road. She stated that this is part of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that was approved in 1998 with a size of 2,542 acres and that this preliminary plat is for 513 acres. She stated that the original PUD has been changed to a 714-acre PUD that was approved in 2020. She stated that there will be a variety of lot sizes, with a total of 2,050 single-family lots planned over six phases. She stated that 124.68 acres (24.31%) of the area will be dedicated to open space, and amenities will include a pool, playgrounds, and pickleball courts. She stated that the amenities will be connected by a looped collector road.

Mike Kern, President of Communities Southwest Inc., stated that his company has experience developing these PUDs and will be involved in every part of the process from construction through HOAs.

Michelle Yerger, Vice-President of Communities Southwest Inc., stated that the community has been designed to be consistent with the requirements of the PUD, noting the inclusion of a new fire station within the plans. She stated that land has been dedicated for the construction of a church as well as land being set aside for a water campus for EPCOR. She stated that the preliminary plat offers three large amenity areas with pools, pickleball courts, and a large playground. She stated that the phasing plan was determined based on the location of existing utilities. She stated that she spoke with the Fire Marshall and Fire & Medical Chief regarding the planned roundabouts, noting that they have provided them with response time analysis and detailed depictions of the roundabouts to show fire trucks will be able to safely navigate the roads.

Commissioner Leaman inquired if the developer plans to develop the land to the east of the PUD, noting the original plans showed roads connecting there.

Ms. Yerger stated that they will not be developing those roads but noted that a developer is working on that land and that they have been in communication with one another.

Commissioner Leaman expressed his concern that this development might only have one point of ingress/egress along Arizona Farms Road. He thanked the developers for setting aside land for the proposed North/South Corridor. He noted that the suggested 2050 traffic impact numbers may not be taking into full account the impact of the N/S Corridor traffic.

Ms. Yerger stated that they intend to develop the roads to the suggestions of traffic impact studies and that they will be revising those studies up through the final engineering of roadways. She noted that the traffic concerns spoken to in Call to the Public do occur at the intersection of Felix Road and Arizona Farms Road during evening rush hour, but that all other roadway sections have passing traffic grades.

Mr. Kern noted that there is a need for roadway infrastructure improvements in the area but that the only way the funding for those improvements will occur is if there are more residents in the area. He stated that development has to be done responsibly and that the developers must do their part in responsible construction.

Commissioner Leaman suggested placing the church along one of the major roads, noting the ease of access for church visitors. He inquired how many pickleball courts would be placed in the community.

Ms. Yerger stated there would be a minimum of four.

Commissioner Leaman inquired if a traffic light would be placed at the intersection of Felix Road and Monarch Road.

Ms. Yerger stated that the traffic study showed the need for traffic lights at the community entrance on Felix Road, the community entrance on Arizona Farms Road, and the intersection of Arizona Farms Road and Felix Road.

Commissioner Leaman inquired if the proposed school will have entrances only off of Monarch Road.

Ms. Yerger stated that it will depend on the school but that the entrance can easily be off of the interior collector road.

Commissioner Leaman inquired if the fire response times listed are based on the proposed fire station or based on response times from Fire Station No. 2.

Ms. Yerger stated that the max response time from the entrance of the community to the furthest lot from that entrance is four minutes.

Commissioner Leaman inquired how many parking spaces there are at the pool.

Mr. Kern stated that they do not have the specific number but that there will be adequate parking as well as intentional designing for the community so that residents can access the pool without a car.

Commissioner Proulx expressed his concern about the current safety issues regarding roadway infrastructure.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired where the community center building will be located.

Mr. Kern stated that there are not any plans for an indoor community center building but noted that there will be a large amenity space with outdoor pavilions. He stated that previous indoor community centers they have developed have gone underutilized.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired how many Home Owners Associations (HOAs) CSW oversees and how many of them are without an indoor community center, inquiring where the HOA will meet.

Mr. Kern stated they oversee six or seven HOAs.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired if there would be reclaimed water used for landscape irrigation.

Mr. Kern stated that EPCOR is the water provider for the area and that they do not provide reclaimed water services. He stated that EPCOR uses the reclaimed water to recharge aquifers.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired why there would only be one pool for approximately 7,500 residents.

Mr. Kern stated that many residents will have backyard pools and that they feel the pool is the right size for a community of this size. He stated this pool will serve all phases of the community.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired what would happen with the approximately 200 acres of the PUD not developed by CSW.

Mr. Kern stated that a different developer is working on the land, and it is unknown what their plans are.

Vice-Chair DeRosa noted that land is set aside for a school, a church, and a fire station and inquired what caused the developer to set aside land for those three items and how much land is determined to be set aside.

Mr. Kern stated that the existing PUD requires dedication to a school site and a fire station and that the school land was set aside based on the existing school design. He stated that the buildout of the school is based on the school district's timeline.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired if the school dedication would remain in perpetuity.

Mr. Kern stated that the school site will be reserved for five years. He stated that if the school district could not construct it in five years, then the developers would have to make a determination, but noted that a charter school could go in immediately.

Ms. Yerger stated that the PUD specified the school would be for the Florence Unified School District.

Vice-Chair DeRosa expressed her belief that five years is not enough time for a school district to fund a new building.

Chair Frost inquired what the five-year timeframe is based on.

Mr. Kern stated that the information is in the development agreement.

Clifford Mattice, Town Attorney, stated that the school concerns are understandable but noted that the agenda item does not include modification of the PUD through conditions.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired who would be responsible for widening the roads in 25 years.

Mr. Mattice stated that the developers are only required to fulfill the requirements of the Town Code, which are typically half-street improvements.

Commissioner Proulx noted that there are no plans for commercial development and inquired why that is.

Ms. Yerger stated that commercial projects tend to go at intersections and that the area along Arizona Farms Road and Felix Road is designated for commercial development.

Mr. Kern noted that the original plans in 1998 included a large commercial development and that over time this PUD was trimmed down to single-family residential homes only.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired about the use of a traffic study manual that was updated in 2009.

John Grey, Bowman Consulting, stated that the traffic study was contracted out and that they would look into that item and report back.

Chair Frost expressed his concern about the usage of turf on slopes or narrow, non-useable areas.

Mr. Kern stated that they have utilized this landscape architect for other projects, and they have provided quality work, noting that the smaller green spaces can be usable.

Chair Frost stated that the smaller green spaces are a waste of water and send a poor message to a community trying to conserve water.

Ms. Yerger stated that more evaluations will be done as the project is closer to final engineering.

Chair Frost suggested the adjustment of the walking path displayed in landscape plan L15 so that it does not cut the play area in half. He inquired if the plan is for EPCOR to have a complete water campus in the community.

Mr. Kern stated that the area is in a pressure zone change and that EPCOR has asked for the full campus to accommodate the pressure zone.

Chair Frost inquired if the developers would have any say in the aesthetics of the water campus.

Mr. Kern stated that EPCOR will most likely do the design of the water campus and that they will have the final say. He noted that EPCOR currently has a facility north of Town that has a low-profile water campus.

Chair Frost suggested conducting percolation testing on the soil if they are to keep the current basin retention requirements. He inquired if a gravity lift station would be needed at the location.

Mr. Kern stated that EPCOR is designing the greater area to have fewer, but larger, lift stations.

Chair Frost inquired if there are design considerations the developers will implement to reduce natural straightaways and keep speeds reasonable.

Ms. Yerger stated that many parcels include shorter residential streets to help reduce speeding.

Commissioner Leaman inquired about the locations marked “adjacent right of way to be acquired.”

Mr. Kern stated that some right-of-way acquisitions may be needed for future traffic lights. He noted that there was a portion of right-of-way that was lost in the 90’s but was acquired.

Commissioner Leaman inquired about the location of the fire access gate.

Mr. Kern stated that due to the project being completed in phases, there will be fire access routes at the north and south points of the community along Felix Road.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired what level of service the Town Code allows for roads.

AJ Monroe, Community Services Director, stated the levels of service are covered in the transportation plan and that the need to improve a low-service area would be determined by staff, the Commission, and the Council. He stated that certain things can be done to work with developers regarding this but noted that developers are only responsible for their requirements.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired when the traffic signal at Arizona Farms Road and Felix Road will be installed.

Chair Frost stated that it will not be installed until warranted by the traffic study.

Mr. Monroe stated that there is only a brief period that the intersection operates at a “D” and that the value in rushing a traffic signal might not be there.

Vice-Chair DeRosa stated that there needs to be a continued review of what the Town can do in conjunction with the developers as more PUDs begin construction.

Chair Frost cautioned that having trees too close to roadways may cause unsightly damage from trucks.

On a motion by Commissioner Leaman, seconded by Commissioner Proulx, and carried by a 4-0 vote, to recommend approval of the Preliminary Plat for Monarch (PZ-24-32) with the following conditions:

1. Development of the subdivision shall comply with all applicable Town codes, including all applicable planning, building, fire, and engineering requirements.
2. Final plans for right-of-way and easement dedications and/or abandonments, which may be provided via the Final Plat or other means, are subject to the review and approval of the Town Engineer prior to the Final Plat approval by the Town Council.

3. Developer/Property owner may reduce the number of lots or widen lots within the subject preliminary plat area prior to submittal of a final plat without requiring additional Town approvals, provided there is no net increase in the subdivision density, no reduction in open space.
4. All turf in common areas is to be usable and playable, and a Homeowner's Association (HOA) shall be responsible for the maintenance of all park and open space tracts within Monarch.
5. The approval of this Preliminary Plat will become official after the final Town Council approval and the owner/developer may then move forward with the Final Plat process.

Mr. Monroe expressed his praise for Ms. Jennifer Peele-Davis, Fire Marshall, for working with the developers to secure additional access points.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Monroe reminded everyone of the joint work session on February 10, 2025, and that discussion topics include transportation planning and projects, PUDs, and community development efficiencies. He stated that Anthem Merrill Ranch east of Felix Road will be coming to the Commission on February 20, 2025 and that the project is approximately 1,000 acres with over 3,200 units. He stated that there will also be a discussion of Commission training at the February 20, 2025 meeting as well.

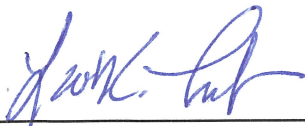
#### **CALL TO THE COMMISSION- CURRENT EVENTS ONLY.**

Commissioner Leaman reminded everyone of the Historic Home Tour coming on Saturday and noted many events are coming to Town.

Chair Frost thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Chair Frost, seconded by Vice-Chair DeRosa, carried by a 4-0 vote, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm.



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Lonnie Frost, Chairman



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Date