



Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Thursday, September 6, 2012, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

San Tan Conference Room – Municipal Services Building

Committee Members:

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| Ryan Nichols – Chairman | Present |
| Chris Clark – Vice-Chairman | Present |
| David Bond | Present |
| Gregory Arrington | Present |
| Steve Conklin | Present |
| Nichelle Williams | Present |
| Richard Turman | Absent |
| Robin Benning, Vice-Mayor | Present |
| Kenn Burnell | Present |
| Alan Turley | Present |

Public:

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| Nicole Anne-Marie Bruno | ASU |
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Town Staff Members:

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| Troy White, Public Works Division Manager | Present |
| Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant | Present |
| Wayne Balmer, Planning Administrator | Present |

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Nichols called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

2. Introductions:

Members and guests introduced themselves. Council Member Benning introduced Nicole Bruno, who is in the Masters Program at ASU.

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Items for Discussion and possible action

Item A: Consideration and possible approval of August 2, 2012 minutes **Chairman Nichols**

Chris Clark made a motion to approve the August 2, 2012 minutes, as presented. Nichelle Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried **unanimously 9-0**.

Item B: Presentation and Discussion of 2012 Major General Plan Amendment Applications **Wayne Balmer**

Planning Administrator Wayne Balmer started by stating this presentation and the presentation on Housing/Permit Activity may well represent the next 20 years of growth in the Town of Queen Creek. He invited the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to attend future open houses/public hearings on the 2012 Major General Plan Amendment applications; alternately, he could forward comments from tonight's meeting to the Commission and Council.

GPA12-047: Land Use: Master Planned Community: Box Canyon: located in the southwestern portion of the planning area, and bordered by Power Road, Hunt Highway and Bell Road (west of Sossaman). This property has 10 owners who have filed a collective application. The property is comprised of 2,090 acres. This application includes the foothills near the San Tan Mountains. Mr. Balmer pointed out where development on this property can and cannot occur, noting there is Council interest in seeing a hotel in this area, near the foothills. The proposal is to change the density from 1 unit per acre to 1.8 du/acre. The development plan would be filed in the future at the time of the zoning case. This application only concerns increasing the density to be able to market the property to large developers. A new goal in the San Tan Foothills element will be added to address consolidation of land and coordination of development. Development of this area will result in more traffic on Power Road and Hunt Highway, and around this project. The layout of the property presents a challenge for transportation circulation, since there is only a half mile frontage at the north, and a distance of four miles from north to south. Creating additional frontage may entail encroaching on tribal property. Mr. Turley asked what the plan for Bell Road is. Mr. Balmer responded Bell Road is a partially developed street with large 2 ½ to 3 acre lots. The Town has not addressed additional traffic on this street.

GPA12-048: Belleró: currently designated Very Low Density (VLD) Residential (0-1du/acre). The applicant is proposing to change the land use designation to Low Density (1-2 units per acre). The existing subdivision (Pegasus Estates) was approved in 2004, with 89 lots on 121 acres, plus a clear zone for Pegasus Airpark. A proposal to reconfigure the subdivision to include smaller lots on the interior of the project, maintaining the existing size of the perimeter lots, is expected. A plan has not yet been submitted for this. The issues associated with this application are whether or not to change the density (if the higher density designation is approved, this would be one of the few areas in this part of the community with high density), and whether the land use(s) will be compatible with the adjacent airport.

GPA12-049: Fulton Homes at QC Station: located on the west side of Ellsworth Road, north of where Queen Creek Road would extend west of Ellsworth, up to Ryan Road, plus the property on the east within the red line shown on land use map. This case stems from an original case filed in 2007, which included a substantial amount of commercial and mixed use development. The previous General Plan Amendment application resulted in two new land use classifications (MHDR-A –up to 5 units/acre and MHDR-B up to 8 units/acre), with transitional areas between the higher and lower density neighborhoods. At that time, one property owner represented the entire group. The new application includes six different property owners with different interests. The new application proposes to have Ellsworth and Queen Creek roads remain on their current alignments. The commercial and mixed use areas previously were smaller, with most of the residential areas being designated 3-5 units/acre (as opposed to 5-8). Mr. Balmer explained the major differences between the 2007 approved plan and the new 2012 proposal, emphasizing the 2007 plan had more traffic but an alternative transportation plan that realigned the roads to a location that would have less of an impact on residents, as well as more mixed use amenities, while the 2012 proposal keeps the roads on their current alignments with more conventional type developments.

GPA12-050: Aggregate Resources: This is a State-mandated amendment, requiring all jurisdictions in Arizona to identify sand and gravel deposits so they can be protected by developments. Mr. Balmer noted Queen Creek does not have areas with aggregate deposits, so this requirement has little impact to the Town.

GPA12-051: Realignment of Signal Butte and Meridian roads: In 2009, Resolution 780-09 amended the Transportation and Circulation Element to designate an area for the realignment of Signal Butte to

Meridian roads, to get better north/south access between Germann and Ocotillo roads. In 2010 a case was filed by Barney Farms which proposed to realign the road within a two-mile parcel of land. Mr. Balmer stated traffic studies with the Maricopa County Department of Transportation and Arizona Department of Transportation are nearing completion. He illustrated the proposed re-alignment of Signal Butte and Meridian roads.

GPA12-052: Transit Oriented Design: This is a proposed modification of Town Center and Transportation and Circulation elements to encourage and promote Transit-Oriented Design, in order to get people out of their cars and using facilities more in the Town Center area. Possible modifications include:

- A reduction in travel lanes;
- On-street parking;
- Pedestrian amenities (shade structures, street furniture, wider sidewalks, etc.)
- Bicycle facilities, bike lanes, bike racks, etc.
- Traffic calming options

This General Plan Amendment application encourages coordination of street design to provide access for future light rail/commuter rail terminal locations in the Town Center, and also encourages higher density in the Town Center, especially at locations where future transit and rail facilities are proposed adjacent to the railroad. Mr. Balmer noted ADOT is currently conducting a study for passenger rail service between Phoenix and Tucson, with two alignments: one east of the San Tan Mountains, and one west of the San Tan Mountains. The Town is working with ADOT on connections within Town Center.

Item C. Presentation on Housing and Permit Activity

Wayne Balmer

Mr. Balmer gave a presentation entitled, Home Construction Soon and Sooner. He stated the Town is on the edge of a major change coming to the community regarding growth.

The following data was presented:

- **Regional Growth** – showing building permits issued by all cities and towns in this area through June 30, 2012. Mr. Balmer pointed out the data illustrates increases in Gilbert and Queen Creek from June 30, 2011 to 2012 of 110 percent and 128 percent, respectively. Other surrounding areas have also had increases, but not to the same extent as Gilbert and Queen Creek. The Town is focusing on growth potential for Southeast Valley before the Pinal County boundary.
- **FY2011-12 Single Family Building Permits** – illustrates the Town’s budgeted average was 14 homes per month in FY2011-12. In April and June, Queen Creek issued more building permits than the previous nine months combined.
- **Single Family Monthly Permit History** - In July, 97 permits were issued compared with 15 during the same period in 2011. This year, approximately 120 permits were budgeted, based on last year’s trend. Permits issued in August, 2011 totaled nine, while in August, 2012, 59 permits were issued. Mr. Balmer noted this does not include permits processed in August, but not yet picked up by the applicants. The data shown on this table illustrates that the entire year’s quota has been surpassed in the first two months of this Fiscal Year.
- **Building Permits** – this slide illustrated numbers of Single Family Homes from 2006 through September 1, 2012; and Total Permits for the same period. There has been a huge increase in the number of permits being issued. Mr. Balmer provided an explanation, stating for every single family permit issued, there would be an additional two related permits for things such as bar-be-

que pits, swimming pools, tenant improvements, etc. Mr. Balmer noted more building permits have been issued through August 2012 than any previous year going back to 2006.

- **New Home Sizes** - Chart illustrating sizes of homes being built in Queen Creek dating back to the year 2000. Homes on this chart represent sizes greater than or equal to 2,200 square feet in area. Mr. Balmer noted last year 88 percent of all homes built in Queen Creek were at or above 2,200 square feet. In 2008-2009, 38 percent of the homes were 2,200. This year homes are starting in middle 2,000s going up to low 5,000s in size.
- **Active Subdivisions** - Chart showing all active subdivisions in Queen Creek. The data on this table included: Subdivision name, Builder, Number of Lots approved, Number of remaining lots: sizes; average livable square feet, average prices, and single family permits issued by quarter for Fiscal Year 2012. Mr. Balmer pointed out several builders are now looking for new subdivisions on which to build, since there are very few lots remaining. As of now, there are 883 shovel-ready lots.

Mr. Balmer listed the active/upcoming subdivisions, including:

- Victoria Estates
- Hastings Farms East
- Ocotillo Heights, Phase II
- Pecans
- Cielo Noche
- Emperor Estates, Phase IV East
- Villagio
- Montelena
- Sossaman estates, III A
- La Jara Farms
- Ash Creek, Phase Two.
- Charleston Estates
- La Sentiero

Mr. Balmer illustrated the calculation of existing/upcoming lots, including those coming from previously approved subdivisions not yet built (Church Farms, Queen Creek Station, Bellerio, Box Canyon) which totals 6,500 lots, and projected a population growth of 31,337 new residents. He added the Town needs to be prepared to issue at least 500-600 building permits per year based on this growth potential.

Mr. Turley noted the sizes of the homes are getting bigger, but the sizes of the lots are getting smaller. He stated this is in conflict, and suggested the Town will have to maintain some type of minimum lot size. Mr. Balmer agreed, but noted in many cases the lots are being reconfigured and homes are being redesigned to alternate footprints to fit on smaller lot frontages. He explained the challenge is most people want garage doors facing the street and this relates to the permitted percentage of home that is comprised of the garage versus house. The Town Ordinance now states 40 percent of the front can be garage, and 60 percent can be house. Many variance requests are filed on this condition in order to make homes longer/go deeper on the lot.

- **Regional Issues** – slide lists issues facing Queen Creek, including:
 - Gilbert is approaching build-out
 - Builders are reluctant to go to San Tan Valley

- Mesa is building first leg of SR 24 freeway off Ellsworth Road
- DMB and Pacific Proving Grounds are starting construction on former GM property
- PMGA/ASU are continuing to grow, which will result in additional traffic in and out of PMGA. Mr. Balmer stated the airport expects to grow to 20 Million passenger service.
- Queen Creek is closer to services and shopping now, but most of this retail is in Gilbert
- With increasing population will come increasing interest in new commercial uses in Queen Creek.
- E-Commerce

Chris Clark noted the housing industry responds the least well to outside stimulus, and when you look at the velocity of money on macro sale, which is difficult to apply to a micro-scale, many are gearing up for a housing boom that simply does not exist yet. A lot of permits being pulled are houses that will not ever be occupied. Many of the 2008 homes were bought on speculation to flip, and today's permits are for homes being built for rentals. He stated he's not sure if this is a legitimate demand or not; therefore, he does not want to jump through hoops and gear discussions on a huge amount of growth if it doesn't ultimately happen. As an example, based on previous years' projections, the Town should've already hit the 30 to 40K population figure.

Mr. Balmer stated one difference is, the population will come, it's just a question of sooner or later.

Mr. Clark pointed out a year and a half ago, Lucia's attorney came in asking to change designs to smaller homes because no one was buying larger homes; however, the current data being presented by Mr. Balmer suggests the new trend is larger homes. Mr. Balmer pointed out Victoria, which was approved in 2004, and is now moving ahead. In 2009, they again approached the Town to change the plan from 400 lots to 550 lots. Now they are going back to the 2004 plan for single family homes approved at that time.

Discussion took place on the schedule of meetings for the 2012 Major General Plan Amendment applications. Mr. Benning noted the 2012 major GPAs will be coming back to the TAC in more detail for specific comments, more specifically how the Town will address infrastructure needs required by all the new development. Mr. Benning agrees the speed of growth may not approach 50 permits per month regularly, but as new developments are approved, the Town is required to improve infrastructure, widen roads, etc. He asked TAC to be conscious of the impact of these proposals to the Transportation infrastructure. He would like Mr. Balmer to come back to TAC for a more detailed discussion – probably sometime in October or November. Public Works Manager Troy White stated if the Meridian DCR is ready from MCDOT in October, the October agenda may be too full and Mr. Balmer will have to come back in November.

Chairman Nichols stated the purpose of TAC is not to focus on Planning and Zoning or water issues, or anything but transportation components of growth and how that affects the Town, although the TAC is certainly interested in the other components. He also stated the TAC is welcome to attend all meetings to provide input (Commission, Town Council, Open Houses, etc.).

Further discussion occurred on the Box Canyon Major General Plan Amendment application. Mr. Clark stated that Mr. Balmer had mentioned taking a large portion out of construction due to the extreme slopes and grades, and asked if all of this will occur on 1,000 acres or less. Mr. Balmer responded there is no specific number yet, but probably out of 2,000 acres, construction will occur on no more than 1,500.

Mr. Clark asked if the 1.8 du/acre is calculated on the entire 2,090 acre parcel, but actual building will only take place on 1,000 acres, will this will translate into smaller lots and larger homes. Mr. Balmer responded some development will be single family homes on large lots (example: a three-acre lot with small building envelope); others may be two-story condos looking out onto the ridge.

Mr. Clark noted that would result in a lot more cars. Mr. Balmer stated this is the first time all entities involved are talking at the same time.

Chairman Nichols clarified that the maximum range would be 3,700 units, but it is unlikely it would be developed this way when it is zoned; however, it is correct that there is potential for this much traffic.

Discussion took place on the Queen Creek Road alignment for the Queen Creek Station Major GPA proposal. TAC members questioned if the applicant is permitted to make changes to their application before the proposal goes to Council in December. Mr. Balmer responded as long as the applicants meet the June deadline, the remaining timeline is a discussion and review period. Changes are permitted as staff and the applicants discuss the proposed amendments.

Council Member Benning suggested the Traffic Consultant on the General Plan Amendment applications be invited to attend the TAC meeting to provide perspective on how the proposals affect transportation. Mr. Balmer pointed out the applicant will also be submitting their traffic study shortly. Chairman Nichols noted he would like to have that traffic engineer/consultant attend the TAC. Mr. White confirmed staff will bring this back with the consultant and their submitted plan to the October TAC meeting. He will see if the transit study can be sent out to TAC members in advance of the meeting, and requested members come to the meeting with ideas for what they want to see added to the transit study scope. This will provide an opportunity to get through the Transit Study more quickly in order to spend more time on the GPA cases relative to transportation.

Item D. Discussion On Potential New Meeting Day Ryan Nichols

Chairman Nichols reminded TAC at the last meeting the idea of changing the meeting day/time came up. Discussion followed on potential meeting days and times.

Alan Turley made a motion to change the regular meeting date for TAC to the second Thursday of the month, same time. Council Member Benning seconded the motion. All ayes. Motion carried unanimously 9-0.

The next meeting date will be October 11, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

Item E: Request for future agenda items Vice-Chair Clark

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 11, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. Items for future agendas include:

1. Update/Discussion on Meridian Road Design Concept Report
2. Transit Study
3. General Plan Detailed discussion

In response to a request from Mr. Clark, Troy White provided an update on the relocation of the signal at the railroad crossing on Ellsworth Road, stating a preliminary traffic study was received showing the Town won't have volumes of a sufficient nature that would prevent it from going according to the Town Center Access Management Plan and making this one lane in each direction up to Barnes Parkway. Once the formal report is received, staff will email it to the TAC. Once this is received, staff can begin to work with the railroad on relocating the railroad signal. Council Member Benning requested a quick three-minute update on how railroad is moving forward at a future TAC meeting.

Mr. White provided a status update on the traffic signal at Chandler Heights and Sossaman roads, noting the permanent signal is currently under design, and the new signal should be installed in mid-November. Until the new light is in, MCSO will be directing traffic during peak travel times in the mornings, Monday through Friday.

Mr. Clark stated items brought up at his HOA meeting included: 1) no bike lanes are present going north on Ellsworth from the connector to Germann Road. He asked if it will be part of this year's GPA or does it need to be a future agenda item. Mr. White responded this is part of the long-range development plans.

2) Intersection at Crismon and Barnes – several people noted the design of this intersection leads people to want to drive out into intersection to look for oncoming traffic. There is no bike lane or shoulder on one side, but there is room on the other side – so if you move out, you're already in the lane of traffic.

5. Announcements

None.

6. Adjournment

Chairman Nichols made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Benning. All ayes. Motion carried unanimously 9-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

PREPARED BY:

Laura Moats, Development Services Assistant

PASSED AND APPROVED ON: October 11, 2012

Ryan Nichols, Transportation Advisory Committee Chairman