

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR  
GROUP**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, April 4, 2024, 5:00 p.m.

**THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS**

**WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES**

**A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - All present with exceptions noted:**

John Peterson  
Judy Haldeman  
Nancy McRae  
Bill Berkeley  
Jim Dax  
Bruce Durbin - ABSENT  
Rebecca Falk  
Bill Haneline  
Seat #7 - VACANT

**B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of March 7, 2024**

Motion to Approve - Rebecca Falk  
Second - Jim Dax  
Approved - All voted yes, except Haldeman who Abstained

**C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (may be limited to 3 min):** Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject matter within the Group's jurisdiction that is not on the posted agenda.

**D. ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Review of Rams Hill Permit Application SPA24-001. Presentation from Daniella Hofreiter, Planning Manager, San Diego County DPS and Cathy Milkey T2 Borrego LLC. Note that the presentations by T2 Borrego LLC and the County are "non-action" items and are presentations for information only. The potential "action" item is **"Should the SG draft a letter to the County DPS to reflect the concerns and/or issues that the community has regarding the proposed project?"** It is important to note that the County DPS has **not** requested the Sponsor Group to review and make any recommendations on the proposed project. However the Sponsor Group is looking for input and comment from the community regarding the project. **This is not an action to either recommend approval and/or denial of the proposed project.**

Nancy McRae and Bill Berkeley were recused at the direction of county counsel because they own property in Rams Hill.

Presentation by T2 team - Shannon Smith, Kathy Milke, Mark Lehman/Development Consultant, Rodney Bruce/Construction Director

Intro: Continue the conversation from the 2019 presentation to the SG, plan for future ensures that golf is sustainable, affordable housing in place for workers, economic and environmental benefits. Reminded us that golf has been in place since 1957.

Mission statement slide. T2/Rams Hill (RH) is part of the fabric of Borrego - 5 ways: Environmental Stewardship - they are using less water than previous owners, non-potable water for irrigation, native plants; Teammates/90 employees - 65 year-round; Community financial and volunteer support, for example Borrego Ministers Association, Youth & Center, many others; Borrego schools; Arts & Culture support; Investment in Borrego - bring 15K visitors annually,

Project Update: 40 yrs of failure, broaden appeal by adding desert-centric neighborhoods, sustainability of golf - not to burden homeowners with its cost, destination golf doing well in remote, rural destinations, 40% of players in stay and play program;

Community and legislative process; Asking for rezoning for flexibility in location of currently approved uses. Development Agreement (DA) gives 30-year timeline for development, provides extraordinary benefit for the community. Relocation of private open space easement. Specific Plan Amendment (as was done in 1986): completed scientific studies, will come forward for public review, studied cultural and biological resources, over 40% of mitigation land already purchased, visual resource, added workforce and attainable housing as a new benefit. Water use does not burden Borrego Water District (BWD) customers.

Additional Community Benefits: Voluntary reduction in groundwater pumping; low cost renewable energy for BS (financial grant), maintenance of groundwater in fallowed lands, 10% increase in open space, workforce/attainable straw bale housing. Hope to build 25 dwellings in next 4 years.

Presentation by Daniela Hofreiter, Project Mgr at County: Main project is Specific Plan Amendment - lays out uses that are going to be in an area and how it will be built out, becomes part of SD County General Plan.

In 1980 -350-room hotel, 780-unit residential complex, golf course, medical clinic, sewage treatment plant, 1666 acres of open space, 880 acres of potential development.

In 1986 addition of 232 acres of open space, allocation of remaining 790 units (for a total of 1570), added another golf course, added commercial area.

In 2019 new application for DA Threshold Decision, CBOS agreed to allow submittal of DA - develop over long period of time in exchange for public benefits. RH submitted the Development Agreement in March 2024 - not reviewed yet. All large

projects are required to submit pre-application, RH submitted in 2020, also submitted studies. County reviewed, issued letter September 2021, major project issues, requested variety of technical studies, project issue checklist.

In March 2024 new submittal for Specific Plan Amendment - vacate 1600 acres open space and replace with a new easement. Will be retaining 1,196 acres of open space in new configuration with new land use descriptions including Golf Course and Community Open Space, Resource Protection Open Space.

What is Next? County staff will review studies and application, listen to community input, will issue new project checklist and scoping letter which carries forward prior requests from the county. RH will respond to comments, county will respond - the process can take years, this will not happen in the next few months. What is being requested now is a layout for the future, no implementing permits have been requested. If any specific uses want to be built, there will be additional permits for those. There are currently 16 open employee positions in planning department, so expect delays. Daniela is the liaison and between public and planning commission

PUBLIC DISCUSSION: (MP means Member of the Public)

MP - Q: Who is T2? Shannon answer: T2 is a Borrego entity formed to acquire RH assets, owned by Considine family.

MP - Q: Slide showed an aerial view of land - was it the entire project or is there more beyond that? Shannon answer: Certain # of 1-1/2 acre lots, the photo did not show the entire project which is 3,140 acres total. Q: Will all of lots be developed by T2 or will they be sold as empty lots? Shannon answer: National homebuilder will not be interested. This is a debt-free project which enables T2 to move slowly and deliberately, don't have to build a large quantity quickly.

MP - Q: Any restrictions on what individual owners can build? Shannon answer: These is a single family home development, site built construction (so no manufactured houses).

MP - Q: Is T2 taking open desert and turning it into golf course? Shannon answer: Replace existing 1600 with 1760 acres, its character will change, part left as natural desert and additional golf course.

MP - Q - Is there precedent for gifting open space to developer? County answer - not being gifting, it's called "vacation of open space," requires approval from CBOS. Before vacation can be approved, developer has to show they have replaced open space and mitigated for impact of vacating open space - must be equal to or better than what is being vacated.

John Peterson - Comment: Had worked at County 20 years and doesn't know of any cases where 1600 acres of open space has been vacated. County: This is a nuanced vacation, replacing with another easement, will be doing a floating vacation - will be vacated piece by piece.

MP - Q: hundreds of vacant lots could be reconfigured to create desert centric building sites away from golf course, what is going to happen with those? Shannon answer: Broaden appeal of RH offering, not abandoning golf-centric communities.

MP - Expressed deep disappointment in trying to grab land

MP - Q: Projecting into future, if approved, would that mean that if the property would flipped and sold, would the amendment still be in effect? County answer: Yes.

MP - Q- Stand up for protecting open space. Open space has been designated open space, but this is priceless desert ecosystem, visually its priceless for community. Were you planning on honoring open space designation when you bought the property?

Shannon answer: They are trying to fix problems, what is it going to take for RH to be successful? Trying to avoid failure, what changes need to be made, doing the same thing over and over again won't work.

MP - What is private open space? Answer: privately owned, not dedicated for public use.

MP - Q: Project is privately funded, where does funding come from, dues increase?

Shannon answer: No adverse impact on existing owners.

MP - Comment: 600 additional homes, impact on infrastructure, relationship with CalFire - in their service area, has to be paid for by developer.

MP - Q: Re law enforcement, would we get more deputy sheriffs? Shannon answer: support for public services, but how it impacts county planning - can't speak to that

MP - Comment: planning to build hotel, golf cottages separate from single family area.

MP - Q: when permanent doesn't mean permanent, exchanging this for other space that is already open doesn't add open space, how does 600 homes reduce water usage?

Shannon answer: All pumpers in basin have to reduce water, acquired additional water rights, have to stop one water use to start another.

MP - Q: about community plan, whose responsibility is it to enforce particularly around buffer zones, will they be identified in plans. County answer: county has responsibility has to conform to general and community plans, large projects which have a civic impact but also have impact on the park, involve park as a stakeholder early on.

MP - Q: reconfiguration of open space, is golf course part of the open space?

MP - Q: economic impact, stay and play be expanded? Bring in additional people to stay for additional time, have you put numbers on how that might impact local economy?

Shannon answer: Not yet.

MP - Q: will any of vacated land become dedicated public space? Shannon answer: yes, through the state park and other areas.

MP - Comment: RH doesn't have any debt, T2 in it for the long haul, don't have to pick up and move on when things "go south."

MP - Q: What about changing the healthcare situation? Shannon answer: It's going to be a perennial problem, additional growth would help bring better healthcare, want to improve response time to RH

Bill Haneline - Q: you are pumping water from your site, what about the groundwater dependent ecosystem just down the hill, are you drying it up? Shannon answer: there is a study about groundwater ecosystems, will follow the science wherever the science leads us.

John Peterson - Comment: RH has plenty of water credits, but there is a whole bunch of questions where it will come from, quality, conveyance. Shannon response: right now there are no answers in terms of water conveyance and infrastructure, credits are in one part of the valley and RH is in another part. What has happened historically? The peak

amount of water was 2730 acre feet in a single year - the infrastructure moved a whole lot of water at one point in time. Incremental infrastructure work is a cost to RH, not the community

Rebecca Falk - Q: RH has purchased water credit from north area, RH is in south area, how much water will their plan use and where exactly will it come from? Central area has the best water. Shannon response: water quality in the basin is critical, still gathering info, that info will change the application.

Jim Dax - may have already found exchange land, not with respect to open space, but with respect to biological impact - 300 ac to the north, mesquite bosque, view corridor will change to houses, non-native trees. Shannon response: no golf course activity in that area, restricting landscaping activities to be desert centric.

John Peterson - asked Bri Fordem (Anza Borrego Foundation) what are her concerns about exchanging open space for park land, does the park have any position or questions about that? Fordem response - until we know the exact layout of plan and impact to surrounding area of park, we don't have a position, very early in the process, will continue open dialog. Additional response from Ray Lennox, Regional Superintendent of State Parks - this submittal was brought to his attention last week, didn't have much info about what is going on, wants to gather as much info as possible, park is an interested stakeholder in future development, trying to get something positive out of this.

Rebecca Falk - Q: The 2000 ac feet of water is a one time benefit? Answer: Yes, and could come from anywhere in the basin.

Bill Haneline - Q: do you see RH as the only golf course left in the valley by 2040? Shannon answer: DeAnza and Roadrunner are both working well towards water reduction, he sincerely hopes RH won't be the only one left.

Judy Haldeman - Comment: Thank you for presentation, thank you for what you're doing, I want to see something thrive and bloom and bring progress, I'm rooting for you.

Merris Brancheau asked for a show of hands to see who was pro/con the development

**MOTION:** Jim Dax - To draft letter highlighting concerns/issues, not supporting or recommending denial of the project, include input from the community.

**SECOND:** Judy Haldeman

**MOTION APPROVED. Voting as follows:**

**John Peterson - YES**

**Judy Haldeman- YES**

**Nancy McRae - RECUSED**

**Bill Berkeley - RECUSED**

**Jim Dax - YES**

**Bruce Durbin - ABSENT**

**Rebecca Falk - YES**

**Bill Haneline - YES**

**Seat #7 - VACANT**

2. Vote to recommend a nominee to fill vacant Seat #7. Nominees include Chris Vassar, Anne O’Conner and Nancy Burke.

Update from John Peterson: As of today, Chris Vassar withdrew application.

Comments from candidate Anne O’Connor - in BS for 10 years in RR club, mother and grandmother, very involved in community, very interested in future of Borrego, has a home in Encinitas, interested in community as a whole, year-round and seasonal residents, comes with an open mind, thinks methodically when she makes decisions, managed 450 employees in 15 imaging centers, was involved in planning, permitting and compliance.

Question from Falk: What made you think of SG? O’Connor answer: Had heard of it, didn’t know a lot about what it does, is neighbor of John Peterson.

Comments from candidate Nancy Burke - started in BS in 2016 at Desert Sands, moved to RR, now on Ocotillo Circle, we love the community, retired urban planner, zoning hearing officer, understand CEQA impacts, how an application goes through the planning department, asks the right questions, speaks this language.

**MOTION: Nancy McRae - To recommend Nancy Burke to fill Seat #7.**

**SECOND: Judy Haldeman**

**MOTION APPROVED: Voting as follows:**

**John Peterson YES**

**Judy Haldeman. YES**

**Nancy McRae. YES**

**Bill Berkeley YES**

**Jim Dax NO**

**Bruce Durbin - ABSENT**

**Rebecca Falk YES**

**Bill Haneline YES**

**Seat #7 - VACANT**

3. Reimbursement for Post Office Box #1372 to John Peterson for \$72.00

Sponsor Group voted to approve expense reimbursement.

**E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Discussion regarding compliance with Rosenberg Rules of Order for Sponsor Group meetings.

Peterson: There was a breakdown of rules of order at recent meeting. Someone grabbed the mic out of his hand. Rules of order very clear. Peterson is appointed as Chair - think of it as the traffic cop in the intersection.

Falk passed out Parliamentary Procedures Cheat Sheet - Pointed out that all comments should go through the Chair, would take a super majority motion to limit debate. Point of Order - means "can we please talk about process."

#### **F. GROUP BUSINESS:**

1. Chair Report, 1) report on the quarterly Chair meeting held on March 9, 2024

1. Falk is point person for Dark Sky issues

2. Topics for future discussion at BSCSG meetings, Transportation issue regarding speed limits on Palm Canyon Drive, SDG&E service update on power grid, other?

Falk - drew attention to the minutes when things are said for future discussion, try to get them in future discussion. Questions that don't get answered in meeting, follow up to get answers.

Briefing on Dark Sky Ordinance

SC next meeting is April 24 @ Library and May 1 @ Community Resource Center in The Mall (CRC) and May 8 @ UCI

3. Subcommittee Reports: None

4. Meeting Updates: None

5. Correspondence received: Application for the Rams Hill SPA 24-001. This will be discussed on action item #1

#### **G. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION: Bill Berkley**

**SECOND: Jim Dax**

**APPROVED: Meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm**

**Correction to agenda item below: Next meeting is at 4:30 pm.**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 1, 2024, 5 pm at the Borrego Springs Library Community Room, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs, California and via Zoom.

UPCOMING STANDING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS:

The Chair has appointed the following BSCSG Members to serve as points of contact for the following areas:

a) Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline

Emails sent to the Chair at [petersonenv@hotmail.com](mailto:petersonenv@hotmail.com) will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

To sign up for County of San Diego email or text notices about various programs and topics that you can choose, visit: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASAND/subscriber/new?preferences=true#tab1> or search for the program at the county you want to find and scroll down to their email sign up link.

