Speed-it-up request for ERS review

PAM BOYD
pboyd@eaglevalleyenterprise.com

It was an unusual request for the Eagle River Station project that's racked up years of town board review.

Tuesday night Eagle Town Board Trustee Yuri Kostick asked to speed up the process a bit.

After an evening spent looking at architectural elements, parking plans, landscaping standards and other details surrounding the large commercial-residential proposal planned at the eastern end of town, members of the Eagle Town Board noted that many of the plan particulars haven't changed since the proposal was vetted during 2008-09. For instance, the project still proposes 3.5 parking spaces for each 1,000 square feet of residential and building heights of up to 55 feet (four stories). The general architectural styles have been tweaked but not totally redesigned and landscaping particulars remain consistent with the previous proposal. The biggest difference in the plan revolves around the elimination of for-sale housing units and a phasing proposal that leaves the southwestern portion of the property undeveloped until a second phase. The proposal calls for an additional 150,000 square feet of commercial space of up to 300 additional residential units in the second phase. Additionally, the new plan has reconfigured the layout of retail buildings and parking areas.

However, in the coming months, ERS and the town will focus on the financial details and other make-it-or-break it aspects of the deal and Kostick suggested condensing the review of elements that haven't changed in favor of spending more time on those aspects of the development plan.

Eagle River Station is a project proposed by Trinity RED Development of Kansas City, Mo., on the eastern end of town south of Interstate 70 and north of U.S. Highway 6. The 88-acre property would include 582,000 square feet of commercial space and 250 rental units in the first phase. Back in 2009, the town board approved a plan for the development but in a municipal election in January of 2010, voters rejected the proposal. RED Development has since retooled the plan and resubmitted to the town last May. This fall, members of the Eagle Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the revised ERS plan, clearing the way for the town board to begin its review of the project.

Tuesday night, the biggest change noted in the ERS proposal was the addition of a retaining wall along Interstate 70 for the project. The RED Development representatives said they are still working on the details for the retaining wall, including what materials will be used and its height and length. Town Board members voiced concerns about the addition of a retaining wall and noted they wanted to return to that issue for additional discussion.

The next ERS hearing is slated at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 4, and the topics for discussion include lighting, signs, pedestrian access, streetscape, storm water management and erosion control. The town board instructed staff to examine the overall ERS plan to determine if discussion could also be included for other plan elements.

Tuesday night also saw a massively reduced public comment crowd. Only three people offered comment — longtime ERS opponents Brandi Resa, Suzanne Shepard and Rosie Shearwood. Resa called out several specifics in the plan that she questioned and said the proposal features too many parking spaces and too little landscaping. "I don't think this sketch plan is brilliant," she said.

"I think it is very obvious from the lack of public participation that people are very frustrated," said Shearwood. She said the ERS plan is a rubber stamp shopping center model similar to other shopping centers located in communities throughout the nation.

"I think Eagle deserves to be different," she said.

Enterprise – Dec. 15, 2011