

HEARING – Tuesday, Oct. 12th Try to arrive by 9:30 AM!

Location: Travis County Administration Building, 314 W. 11th St., Commissioners Courtroom, 1st Floor

URGENT - IF YOU CAN ATTEND, PLEASE DO!

Travis Co. Commissioner Daugherty's assistant Bob Moore announced that the preliminary plat for Rocky Creek Ranch (Rebecca Hudson's property) will be up for review and approval by the Travis County Commissioners Court this coming Tuesday, October 12th.

It's important that plenty of neighborhood people and other supporters show up (and sign up to speak) at the meeting, sending a message to the Commissioners that we don't want this development as platted, and/or that it should be delayed. This will be difficult because the meeting will take place during the weekday and it is downtown near the courthouse - - but it is necessary to make the effort.

If the preliminary plat is approved on Tuesday, Rocky Creek Ranch (all phases) will be “grandfathered”, not subject to any future rules that the County or LCRA may come up with to mitigate urban sprawl or to protect the Barton Creek watershed. Of course we will still be lobbying the LCRA to rescind or at least delay the planned HPR water line, but it would be great to get some relief from the Commissioners. Their email addresses are:

sam.biscoe@co.travis.tx.us
gerald.daugherty@co.travis.tx.us
karen.sonleitner@co.travis.tx.us
ron.davis@co.travis.tx.us
margaret.gomez@co.travis.tx.us

The agenda has been posted at www.co.travis.tx.us/Commissioners_Court/default.asp. Rocky Creek Ranch is agenda item #14, not very far down the list. The Commissioners are not willing to set a specific time, but Bob Moore's best guess is that the item will come up some time between 10:00 and 11:30. So I suggest that people show up at 9:30 and bring something to read (unless you enjoy seeing the wheels of county government in action). I'm sorry I can't be more specific. Take into account the time it takes to find a parking place and walk to the Administration Building on the corner of 11th and San Antonio.

Note that anyone who wants to comment must register as a speaker.

For people who would like to speak Tuesday (or send an email to the Commissioners before Tuesday), here are some thoughts. Consider this as a starter set:

* As Colin Clark points out, the Court is under no legal obligation to approve this preliminary plat. Given the problems and the amount of opposition, it would be appropriate for the Commissioners to postpone approval subject to addressing the key issues.

* What's the rush? There is no need to approve this subdivision today. Although she has applied for it Ms. Hudson does not yet have her MUD. She does not yet have a wastewater permit from TCEQ. She has a letter from LCRA saying that LCRA will provide surface water, but that is subject to approval from the LCRA board, which will not happen until mid-December, and maybe not at all. Furthermore, the plat has not yet gotten a green light from the LCRA with respect to compliance with the Fish & Wildlife guidelines. Let's postpone preliminary plat approval until these milestones are reached.

* Rocky Creek Ranch is in the sensitive Barton Springs watershed. It should not be approved until the Regional Water Quality planning project is complete, and the site plan should be subject to the rules that come out of that effort. The LCRA may have set a December deadline, but the County is not bound by that deadline. The County is in an independent position to require that a risky development in the Barton Springs watershed be on hold until Regional Water Quality Planning is complete.

* Last April and May we got 900 local signatures on a petition asking the LCRA to wait until Regional Water Quality planning was complete. We gave Commissioner Daugherty an early copy of most of those signatures. We can produce a complete copy for any Commissioner who would like to see it. These 900 people are obviously not against water. They are against the kind of unchecked urban sprawl that surface water can cause if there are no controls in place. Rocky Creek ranch was the poster child for that kind of development and it still is. On behalf of these 900 neighbors, we ask the Commissioners to delay approval of Rocky Creek Ranch until adequate controls are in place.

* [Colin Clark will handle this one] Lauren Ross has reviewed the proposed plat and concluded that the development will definitely pollute Rocky Creek, hence Barton Creek, Barton Springs and the Edwards Aquifer. The clustering and open space arrangement does not mitigate damage from storm water. The design does not conform to the Fish guidelines (construction of BMPs in the channels) and even if it did, this would not be sufficient to prevent degradation.

* [Christy Muse?] The Commissioners have set up the Southwest Travis County Growth Dialogue Process. This stakeholder group was set up to respond to the acceleration of growth in our area, with an eye to recommending new ordinances. We ask that the Rocky Creek Ranch preliminary plat not be approved until those ordinances are in place.

* The 1000 or so cars related to 468 new homes will increase accidents and fatalities on Hamilton Pool Road.

* The development will place a burden on services, including schools and emergency services, without creating enough new taxes to provide such services ... it's a tax negative for the county.

* Both the quantity (density) and the quality (cookie cutter suburb) are inappropriate for a rural community. This is the kind of development that we moved out here to get away from. We want to preserve the rural character of the area. This is an unwelcome form of urban sprawl.