



UPCOMING COUNTY COMMISSION HEARING ON RE-ZONING FROM RESIDENTIAL TO COMMERCIAL AND ACCOMPANYING AMENDMENT TO ALBANY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PROPERTY AT EAST GRAND & BLUEBIRD LANE

THE HEARING WILL BE HELD TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2020 AT 9:30 AM IN THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' ROOM IN THE BASEMENT OF THE COURTHOUSE.

The Albany County Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) has approved amending the Albany County Comprehensive Plan to reclassify a parcel across Bluebird Lane from the former Tumbleweed gas station.

The proposed reclassification would take the property from Priority Growth Area 4 (PGA 4) to Priority Growth Area 1 (PGA 1).

According to the comprehensive plan: "Conservation and protection of agricultural operations, wildlife habitat, and sensitive lands is a high priority in PGA 4. Low-density residential uses are encouraged." (page 33)

On the other hand, "The intent is for properties in PGA 1 to develop to City densities and standards, and annex or eventually annex to the City of Laramie." (page 27)

[The Albany County Comprehensive Plan can be viewed at <http://www.co.albany.wy.us/documents-and-reports.aspx> Chapter 3 contains the information about Priority Growth Areas.]

P&Z approved this amendment even though everyone who spoke at the hearing - including the commissioners themselves - opposed annexation or anything leading to annexation. Yet, this is a stated goal of Priority Growth Area 1.

This amendment to the county comprehensive plan is being driven by a proposed *re-zoning* of the same property from small-lot residential to commercial. Many readers will remember fence poles, railroad ties and logging machinery piled on this property, as the county failed to enforce the residential zoning.

P&Z has also approved the proposed re-zoning. Criteria for approval of a zoning change are as follows (Albany County Zoning Resolution [law] page 3-20):

F. Findings Necessary for Approval: As a condition for approval of the request for a zoning change, the Board of County Commissioners must make the following findings:

1. The applicant has provided such site plans and/or survey maps as required.

2. The proposed zoning change generally follows the suggestions of the Albany County Comprehensive Plan, including, but not limited to the Long Range Growth Plan and the Priority Growth Areas (see Chapter 3 of the Albany County Comprehensive Plan).

3. The applicant has adequately addressed the following impacts:

a. Compatibility with Surrounding Properties: The proposed zoning change is compatible with the existing land use of surrounding properties.

b. Screening and Buffering of Incompatible Zoning Districts: Screening and buffering must be provided if Industrial or Commercial zoning is proposed adjacent to a Residential zone.

c. Consistent Patterns of Development: The proposed zoning change results in a logical and orderly development pattern in the area and will not create undesirable patterns of development such as leapfrog developments or strip patterns of development.

d. Economic Impacts: Any complaints submitted as public comments concerning negative economic impacts must be addressed.

e. Natural and Environmental Resource Impacts: The proposed zoning change will not result in significant adverse impacts to natural and environmental resources such as water quality, air quality, crucial wildlife habitat, wetlands, streams, etc.

f. Cultural Resource Impacts: The proposed zoning change will not result in significant adverse impacts on cultural resources such as historical or archeological sites.

g. Road Network Impacts: The existing road network can accommodate any increase in traffic generated by the zoning change.

h. Impacts on Public Services, Utilities, and Public Facilities: Public services, utilities, and public facilities will adequately meet the needs of the proposed zoning change.

Policy is made by those who show up. Again, the public hearing and decision on the proposed amendment to the Albany County Comprehensive Plan and the rezoning of the parcel across from Tumbleweed will be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2020, at 9:30 am in the County Commissioners' room in the basement of the courthouse.

If you cannot attend, you may email the commissioners at commissioners@co.albany.wy.us.

Further, there is controversy over the proper location for the Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone boundary through this six-acre parcel. This is important because if a commercial use involving hazardous materials is allowed to go forward because the protection zone is incorrectly mapped, there is the potential to contaminate our drinking water.

Several residents around the property across from Tumbleweed followed the procedure laid out in the county zoning law to request consideration of a boundary adjustment. The request was turned down by the Albany County Planning and Zoning Commission without any evaluation (November 13, 2019). The majority of Albany County Commissioners then ignored the zoning law's requirement that a public hearing on a boundary change request "shall" be held, and instead voted 2-1 to deny the request without a hearing (November 17, 2019).