



BIG SKY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

May 12th, 2022

To: Gallatin County Planning Board and County Commissioners

From: Board of Directors, Big Sky Owners Association, Big Sky, MT

Re: Proposed PUD and Variance Request for Riverview Employee Housing

The BSOA represents a majority of property owners and residents of Big Sky. As our community navigates the challenge of addressing employee housing, we are also confronted with the challenge of preserving the protected entry corridor and regulations for Big Sky that were adopted in 1996.

Workforce Housing: The applicant claims their development will alleviate the workforce housing crisis in our community yet, there is no formal, transparent, or approved mechanism ensuring that this “workforce” housing project will be available for the larger Big Sky employee or employer pool of applicants, with the exception of the units beholden to the Big Sky Housing Trust. The Big Sky Housing Trust has yet to publish or specify exactly how these housing units will be made available, under what circumstance or what a proposed rental agreement or term will be standard, with regard to this specific project.

Gallatin County Zoning Regulations: We ask the county to uphold the core components of Big Sky’s zoning regulations. Sections 2.1.a, b, and 25.1 of the resolution clearly state:

“The purpose of this regulation is to:

- a. Preserve the scenic beauty and natural environment of the district.
- b. Protect significant views.
- c. 25.1: The intent of this overlay district is to enhance the visual quality and identity of the Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky Planning and Zoning District by providing guidelines for development along designated entry corridors and protecting key views from encroachment by development.”

The applicant’s plan would create a tunnel effect, which is objectionable according to Section 25 of the resolution. The applicant’s variance request goes against the very purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance.

Variance Request: In your deliberations, we encourage you to recall a similar 20-foot setback that was requested and denied in March of 2015. The applicant claims hardship to justify approval of the variance request, however; establishing 'Hardship' requires that the strict adherence to a particular regulation or standard would render a property unable to be reasonably used. If the properties can be put to use in compliance with a permitted use and its applicable standards as established in Community Commercial zoning, then there should be no legitimate basis for a variance to be approved.



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We recommend the County consider abandonment of the 'jeep trail,' north of Highway 64, which was the original county road leading into Big Sky. Such an abandonment would allow the applicant adequate additional space for a more significant setback of 50-60 feet from the Highway Right of Way. The applicant may want to reconsider their plan, incorporating the abandonment of the 60-foot Lone Mountain Trail as a condition. The applicant may also want to consider lowering the density of the project or modify the variance request from 10 feet to 40 or 50 feet to be more compliant with the entry corridor setback in an effort to minimize the sought-after variance and generally deemphasize the stark and urban nature of their development.

Crosswalk: In the staff report and application, there is no mention of an improved crosswalk for foot traffic to safely cross HWY 64 as a condition. The $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile stretch of MT 64, 1.5 miles west of the intersection of MT 64 with US 191 is demonstrably a busy thoroughfare, as virtually every car, truck or trailer traveling to or from any developed area in Big Sky must pass through this part of Section 31. Numerous vehicle and wildlife interactions in that area result in fatalities each year. We recommend the County Commission require the applicant install an elevated ADA-compliant crosswalk for pedestrians and bikers or submit a formal plan that will address these concerns.

The BSOA believes that this proposal as it stands, is a misuse of public trust for private interest. The importance of impartiality for any level of variance or PUD approval cannot be over-emphasized. Our community depends on your consideration and leadership to adhere to the framework adopted by Gallatin County, intended to preserve the Big Sky entry corridor through responsible planning and growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Suzan Scott', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Suzan Scott,
BSOA Executive Director