

Bayfield County Board OKs Shadow Wood rezone

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WASHBURN — Following nearly three hours of passionate and even tearful testimony, the Bayfield County Board Tuesday voted 7-4 to approve a request to rezone 380 acres in the Town of Russell from forestry and agricultural to agricultural, residential-recreational business and commercial. The rezoning clears the way for Minnetrista, Minn.-based landowner CFS LLC to move forward in planning a proposed fly-in resort called Shadow Wood Landing.

The vote is the second such undertaken by the board, as an earlier vote to approve the rezone was remanded back to the board by Bayfield County Judge John Anderson in February in a ruling on a suit by a citizens group calling themselves the Committee for Responsible Land Use.

Tuesday's vote was at odds with the wishes of the majority at a public hearing held before the board voted on the rezone. About 80 people packed the boardroom, with the overflow standing in the hallway. Fifty people offered testimony, with 43 of those testifying against the proposed development.

Many of the arguments against the development were those expressed at a March 18 Zoning Committee meeting in which the committee voted unanimously to recommend the rezoning to the full county board.

Many of those who spoke felt the development — which could include 65 condominium units and a 200-unit luxury resort hotel — flies in the face of the Town of Russell comprehensive plan, which places a high value on preserving the town's rural character. Town of Russell resident Nancy Trapp came with a list of 16 different areas in which she felt the Shadow Wood Landing project conflicted with the town comprehensive plan.

Town of Russell resident Theron O'Connor said he felt the project represented "impermissible spot zoning" that placed the interests of an individual party above the interests of the county as a whole.

Others expressed concerns over the possible environmental degradation that could be created by the project, especially as it is located at the headwaters of Pike's Creek.

Nearby fruit growers Rick Dale and Eric Carlson, who operate Highland Valley and Blue Vista farms, respectively, said the project had the potential to harm their livelihoods, as the traffic and noise would be disruptive.

However, Craig Johnson, owner of Sunset Valley Orchard, also near the proposed development, said he supported it.

Marian Vaughn of the Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation told the board that the type of vacationer who would be interested in a development like Shadow Wood could be people who may end up wishing to locate businesses in the region and contribute to future economic development.

After the public hearing was closed, the board discussed the decision.

Supervisor Dave Good, who represents the Town of Russell on the county board, and is also the Town of Russell clerk, explained why he felt the rezoning was appropriate.

He said because about 67 percent of the town is already protected by being in federal, state or county ownership he felt the rural character of the town was not endangered.

He noted the site did make sense, as it was close to "the backdoor" of Bayfield, relatively close to the city, marina, and golf course. He also felt that because the orchard region already is dotted with other businesses and homes, it fit the nature of the region.

He also noted the Town of Russell has the most restrictive development guidelines in the county, requiring a minimum of 20 acres for building, that CFS would have to come before the town and county for approval for building plans.

Supervisor Jim Crandall noted when he first moved to southern Bayfield County, his first job was working for Telemark — a big resort complex.

"Telemark provided a lot of jobs," he said. "I'm under no illusion that this will create high-paying jobs, but that part of this whole thing doesn't bother me. What does bother me is 44 acres devoted to commercial zoning."

Supervisor Bucky Jardine made the motion to approve the rezoning, adding in the same four stipulations that the

Town of Russell made, including:

- managing stormwater to existing standards;
- requiring CFS LLC to be subject to additional oversight to the Town of Russell and Bayfield County Zoning Committee, including having a requirement to have a minimum of 35 percent of the project dedicated to open space in areas zoned residential recreational-business and 45 percent open space in areas zoned agricultural;
- that CFS LLC hire local contractors during the construction phase of the project and that persons living in and using the project will support the tourism-related businesses that the comprehensive plan seeks to encourage, and
- that CFS LLC shall conform to the "guiding principles" of the comprehensive plan, including items such as green construction, cluster home siting, and design standards that reflect the characteristics of the town.

Supervisors Jardine, Crandall, Good, Brett Rondeau, Wayne Williams, Jim Beeksma and Shawn Miller voted in favor of the rezoning. Tom Gordon, Dee Kittleson, John Blahnik and Marco Bichanich voted against.

Following the vote, someone in the audience shouted "see you in court," a possible reference to continued efforts by the Committee for Responsible Land Use.

Other Bayfield County Board proceedings will be highlighted in Thursday's Daily Press.