

TO: City of San Luis Obispo Architectural Review Commission
FROM: Neil Havlik

SUBJECT: FROOM RANCH PROJECT PROPOSAL AGENDA ITEM, December 2, 2019

Dear Commissioners:

At your meeting of December 2, 2019, you will be asked to provide input into the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) of the Froom Ranch Specific Plan Project (the "Project"), located at Los Osos Valley Road and Calle Joaquin.

I believe it is premature for your commission to be considering architectural details of this project at this time, because (1) the project is nowhere near being approved, (2) the land is nowhere near being annexed into the City, (3) many land uses proposed by the project sponsors are in conflict with the City's General Plan, especially its Conservation and Open Space Element, (4) there are significant land use and environmental issues surrounding the project which have not been publicly discussed, let alone resolved, and (5) resolution of these issues by the City Council and other agencies having jurisdiction, including superior (i.e., State and Federal) agencies, may affect the project's layout, scale, and appearance, and possibly even whether or not the project even happens at all. These overarching issues seem to me to argue for your commission waiting until a more appropriate time to review matters within your purview.

This potential for significant change has already been demonstrated by the recent news article in the San Luis Obispo Tribune of November 27, 2019, in which a project spokesperson is reported to have stated that the developers will not seek to develop above the 150 foot elevation.

With particular regard to items (3) and (4) above, and despite the statement in the newspaper, the project still proposes to go above the 150 foot elevation in at least one important location, with significant visual and aesthetic impacts upon an important community resource (Irish Hills Natural Reserve), and in violation of long-standing City policy. The project also proposes to move Froom Creek in order to get it out of the way of the proposed development, thus turning the City's Creek Setback Ordinance upside down. Because of these and other impacts, which still need adjudication, I recommend your commission make clear that your comments do not constitute endorsement of the project, and that you retain the right to revisit the project at some future date when it has advanced (if it does) to a point where such review is more timely.

Commissioners may wish to offer their own opinions on matters within the DEIR; however, I am concerned that the project sponsors may interpret comments by the commission as a whole as an endorsement of the project and may then make statements to the effect that your commission supports the project, unless specifically stated otherwise. Therefore again I urge you to be very careful and avoid any actions that might be construed as such an endorsement. Thank you.

Neil Havlik, PhD,
City of San Luis Obispo Natural Resources Manager (retired)