

MINUTES
THORNTON DEVELOPMENT PERMITS AND APPEALS BOARD
April 19, 2011

ROLL CALL:

Val McDannel (Chair)	Present
Bruce Thomas (Vice-Chair)	Present
Paul Hepner	Present
Allan Inge	Excused
Jeffrey Tompkins	Excused
Donald Schieferecke	Present
Leon Reed	Present
Rick Zetterman	Present
Parnel Aubry	Present

Also attending were Greg Thompson and Mike Mallon of the City Development Department; Gary Jacobson, Deputy City Attorney; and Melissa Beary and Randi Avogardo-Clemente, Recording Secretaries.

The meeting was called to order at **6:00** p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. ZETTERMAN AND SECONDED BY MR. HEPNER TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. HEPNER AND SECONDED BY MR. THOMAS TO APPROVE THE MARCH 15, 2011 MEETING MINUTES. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

NEW BUSINESS – PUBLIC HEARINGS:

At this time, individuals wishing to provide testimony during the public hearings were sworn in by the Recording Secretary.

DP 2011-001:

A Resolution for a Development Permit (DP) to consider approval of the architectural elevations, site plan and landscape plan to develop an approximate 9,300 square-foot Free-Standing Emergency Department (FSED) medical building. (Bramming Farm North Suburban Medical Center medical campus - located at 12793 Holly Street – Bramming Farm.)

The floor was opened at **6:01** p.m.

Mr. Thompson introduced Mr. Mike Mallon as the case presenter for DP 2011-001. Mr. Mallon was sworn in, presented a staff report, slides, and entered into the record *City's Exhibit A, the Affidavit of Posting* and the legal notice for the case from the Thornton/Northglenn Sentinel which is *City's Exhibit B*.

Mr. Schieferecke asked how far south Hudson Street will be developed with the first phase. Mr. Mallon advised that the roadway improvement would be down to the southern edge of the subject property. Mr. Schieferecke also asked if an emergency department is covered under the City Code. Mr. Mallon advised that a hospital is a use by right under the PD Zoning District.

Mr. Zetterman asked if a westbound ambulance on East 128th Avenue would turn left and have to enter the complex from Holly Street. Mr. Mallon said yes, but that they could also continue to Hudson Street and turn left there. Mr. Zetterman asked where an eastbound ambulance would turn. Mr. Mallon said they would most likely turn at Hudson Street or Holly Street. Mr. Zetterman wanted to know if there would be appropriate signage to direct traffic. Mr. Mallon confirmed that the developer has included a comprehensive sign package for the development as a whole.

Mr. Aubry asked if there is an established flight path for the helicopter. Mr. Mallon advised that the plans show entry to the site from the south and exit towards the north. Mr. Mallon advised that the applicant would be discussing the flight for life operations in more detail.

Mr. McDannel inquired about the three-foot fence that will encircle the helipad. Mr. Mallon advised that the FAA does require fencing, but that the applicant would be available to answer that question in more detail.

Mr. Aubry asked if a wall will be built on East 128th Avenue to mitigate the helicopter noise. Mr. Mallon advised that no wall will be built.

Jennifer Alderfer of North Suburban Medical Center, 9191 Grant Street, Thornton, Colorado advised that currently the residents of this area face a 20 minute drive for emergency services, depending on traffic, to North Suburban Medical Center on East 92nd Avenue, and the drive time to Brighton or Lafayette for emergency medical services is significantly more. Thus, North Suburban felt the community showed a need for this type of facility. She reviewed the size and capabilities of the proposed facility. She described the designation of a Level 4 Trauma Center, specifically, that there are no in-patient beds and no long term observation beds. It is an emergency use only. The plans for the medical office buildings are to fill one at a time. Ms. Alderfer also reviewed the use of the helipad. It is only for picking up severe trauma patients. No helicopter will be housed at this location. She also indicated that ambulances will not be using lights and sirens unless necessary. The benefits of this new facility are immediate and long-term, and include jobs, access to emergency services and, eventually, closer proximity to medical offices and enhanced imaging services.

Mr. Thomas asked for confirmation on the overnight stay issue. Ms. Alderfer said there would be no in patients and no observation patients. Mr. Thomas also asked what kind of emergencies are expected. Ms. Alderfer listed several including scrapes, fractures, falls, abdominal pain, chest pain and others.

Mr. Aubry asked how many jobs are expected. Ms. Alderfer replied about 47.

Mr. Reed asked if Ms. Alderfer attended the community meeting and answered the concerns of the attendees. Ms. Alderfer felt she did the best she could within her realm of expertise. Mr. Reed also inquired if the flight path of the helicopter is an FAA regulation. Ms. Alderfer responded that she is not qualified to answer that, but other witnesses are.

Mr. Zetterman asked for the difference between urgent care and emergency care. Ms. Alderfer replied that urgent care is not open 24 hours 7 days a week. Also, the staffing of an emergency department includes emergency medicine trained physicians. Mr. Zetterman then requested clarification on observation beds. The observation beds are for outpatient emergency stays, which are 1-12 hours.

Mr. Aubry asked for clarification of what a Level 4 facility is. Ms. Alderfer advised that a Level 1 Trauma Center handles catastrophic events whereas a Level 4 emergency facility is for more everyday injuries and illnesses.

Mr. McDannel wanted to know if the Board granted the Development Permit without including the helipad, where would a helicopter land if one was needed. Ms. Alderfer said that an ambulance would be used.

Mr. Thompson indicated the helipad was included in the Conceptual Site Plan that City Council approved. Mr. Jacobson advised that the issues before this Board are the architectural review, compatibility with the neighborhood, local impact, traffic flow, landscaping and items of that nature. The Board is unable to redesign the site. Ms. Alderfer added that their estimated projections are that only five patients per month would potentially require helicopter transport.

Chris Duran, North Suburban Medical Center, 9191 Grant Street, Thornton, Colorado also represented the applicant. Mr. Duran advised that North Suburban Medical Center is at capacity for emergency room services. This satellite emergency facility will alleviate some of the burden. Mr. Duran advised that approximately 12 to 13 percent of people annually that come in to an emergency facility are admitted. In real numbers at North Suburban, that amounted to 10 to 15 out of the 145 patients seen on average a day. He also compared this community to the one that is serviced by Swedish Southwest and advised that they utilized a flight for life helicopter eight times last year. Mr. Duran also addressed Mr. Reed's concerns about the flight path of the helicopter.

Mr. Reed asked if a helicopter could come in from the north. Mr. Duran advised that weather conditions would determine that. He further advised that the FAA requires plans for two flight paths and the three-foot fence is also a requirement of the FAA. Airlife dispatchers monitor the helipad 24 hours a day from a camera set up for that purpose and there is also on-site security.

Mr. Aubry asked how many times a month it is expected that ambulances would use their lights and sirens. Mr. Duran advised that because a severe trauma would automatically be routed to another facility, only a handful of times per month.

John Napp, Perkins + Will Architects, 1681 Red Poppy Drive, Brighton, Colorado is the senior project manager for the design of the space. The Board had no questions for him.

Edwin Smith, 5371 East 129th Way, Thornton, Colorado is opposed to the noise. Mr. Reed asked if he went to the community meeting. Mr. Smith replied that he either did not get a notice or he ignored it.

Michele Zweig, 12610 Elm Street, Thornton, Colorado is opposed to the emergency medical facility because this is a residential area and does not feel it is the right location. Ms. Zweig mentioned that Platte Valley Medical site is in the Mission Trace Shopping Center. Mr. Aubry asked Ms. Zweig what she felt could be done to mitigate the noise. Ms. Zweig replied there should be a zone where ambulances cannot run lights or sirens. Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Zweig to confirm that she does not feel there is a need for the emergency facility and does not want the noise. She confirmed same. Mr. McDannel asked if she felt that the urgent care facilities have the services that this emergency facility will provide. Ms. Zweig replied yes and that she has utilized them before.

Mr. David Burr, 5391 East 129th Way, Thornton, Colorado. Mr. Burr is opposed to the noise. He further agrees with Ms. Zweig that it is not needed in this residential area. He asked several questions as follows: Will a traffic light be installed at East 128th Avenue and Hudson Street; if the multi-story buildings shown in the presentation are for the future and who pays for the widening of East 128th Avenue and Holly Street. He also had further concerns about the helicopter flight patterns. In addition, Mr. Burr said that he is concerned about the quantity of traffic. Mr. McDannel advised that City Staff would address his questions. Mr. Zetterman advised Mr. Burr that tonight's meeting is for the approval of the emergency center only.

Mr. Michael Wheatley of 5736 East 129th Place, Thornton, Colorado, was sworn in. Mr. Wheatley's major concern was the noise the helicopters would produce and the danger of a helicopter accident. He is also concerned about the narrow roadway over the Brantner Gulch and the traffic back up that will occur if an ambulance has to try to come through that area. Mr. Thomas clarified with Mr. Wheatley that his main objection is the noise and the possibility of children from the local school being hurt. Mr. Wheatley said yes.

Mr. Jacobson advised that the buildings of the future are not in the purview of this Board at this time. He also advised that it is not in the purview of this Board to re-analyze the traffic study. Lastly, the zoning is not in the purview of this Board.

Ms. Alderfer reported that the concerns voiced this evening were addressed at the community meeting as well.

Mr. Duran indicated that the flight path guidelines dictate that the pilots must use the roads as flight paths. The helicopters fly at 1,000 feet above ground level. An in-flight helicopter at 1,000 feet registers 90 decibels at the ground which equates to the noise level of a lawn mower.

Mr. Aubry wanted to know if there was a serious accident, would this facility handle things like that. Mr. Duran advised that emergency help would be provided, but the patient would be transported to a higher level hospital.

Mr. Jacobson asked Mr. Mallon to address the helipad site. Mr. Mallon indicated that a great deal of thought was put into the location. It was felt that having the site along side a roadway would mitigate helicopter flight over residential areas as well as providing buffering to the nearby developments. He advised that a traffic light will eventually be installed at Hudson Street and East 128th Avenue when traffic warrants the need. East 128th Avenue will be widened in conjunction with this project. The Brantner Gulch bridge will be widened under the City's capital improvement budget some time later.

The floor closed to further testimony at **7:35** p.m.

MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. ZETTERMAN AND SECONDED BY MR. HEPNER TO APPROVE.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Zetterman said that the owners have a use by right and that the facility conforms and even exceeds City Code. He sees a real need for this medical facility. He will vote for approval.

Mr. Hepner will vote in favor. He said the building appears to be nice looking and it is a much needed addition to the community.

Mr. Reed will also vote in favor. The applicant has met all the requirements.

Mr. Aubry empathized with the residents over their noise concerns, but supports the emergency services for the betterment of the community. He will vote in favor.

Mr. McDannel will vote in favor as well. The inconvenience to the residents is worth the benefits.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED AT 7:42 P.M.

OTHER MATTERS:

- A. Scheduled public meetings – there are currently no items scheduled for the May 3, 2011 meeting.

B. Election of Officers

Mr. Zetterman nominated Mr. McDannel for Chairperson. Mr. Thomas seconded the nomination. Mr. McDannel was elected for a second term.

Mr. Reed nominated Mr. Thomas as Vice Chairperson. Mr. Hepner seconded the nomination. Mr. Thomas was elected for a second term.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:51 P.M.

DEVELOPMENT PERMITS AND
APPEALS BOARD OF THE
CITY OF THORNTON, COLORADO

Val McDannel, Chairperson

ATTEST:

Randi Avogardo-Clemente, Recording Secretary