

Comments Regarding Burnt Fork Estates Subdivision

Dear Chairman Chilcott, other board members, Town Clerk

Thank you for this opportunity to at least be able to communicate my concerns regarding the proposed Burnt Fork Estates Subdivision. First of all, there seems to be many unanswered questions regarding this proposal. The application is obviously incomplete and contains some misleading information. It seems to me that many of these questions need to be answered before moving forward with any recommendation. Also, it does not appear that numerous requirements have been met or approved by agencies and government jurisdictions. The following are some of my concerns:

1. School – request regarding future impact on school population growth and potential cost to the tax payer.
2. Review and approval of agency reports from the DNRC and DEQ regarding the issue of the water rights as it relates to Burnt Fork Estates and Creekside Meadows. Current water wells have never been legally permitted by the state.
3. Need for updated traffic study as it relates to a possible increase of 50% while also increasing the population by 20% to 25%. It is my understanding that the traffic study that was privately done was some time last spring during the state lockdown, including but not limited to, only essential business being open, schools closed for virtual learning, people not driving to work, etc.
4. Cost for improvement to county and state highways as it relates to safety concerns. It has been pointed out that the county has not approved access off of Middle Burnt Fork Road. There was a long discussion at your last meeting regarding an increased impact on the intersections of Middle Burnt Fork Road and Logan, Logan and the East Side Highway. One further problem that was not discussed was the increase in the further congestion at Main Street and East Side Highway. There was a discussion regarding the former chief of police recommendations in relationship to electronic signs being placed at Logan and Middle Burnt Fork Road and Logan and East side Highway. There was also a discussion about rumble strips. In my opinion the towns requests are irrelevant in that East Side Highway, Logan and Middle Burnt Fork Road are state and county roadways. MDT needs to be contacted along with addressing the mitigation for the county.
5. Towns water and sewer capacity as it relates to an additional 220 users along with the fact that more users have been added in the past few years at Twin Creeks and Creekside Meadows since the 2016 growth policy that stated that even before these additions the town did not have capacity. It has been stated by the former public works director that the town does not have capacity for this new subdivision. The town of Stevensville is already under watering restrictions. Two summers ago, residents could not water for many days due to a pump break down.
6. Still need to address further concerns about safety issued in relationship to proposed retention ponds
7. Still many questions regarding proposed 16 commercial lots, type of businesses and access to businesses
8. New fire station – it was stated that the developers were going to donate a lot or two to the town for a future fire station, that's nice. What about the cost to the taxpayer to build a new station, equipment costs including firetrucks, and additional firefighters?

Finally, and most importantly, the public needs to be made aware of any meetings so that they can be allowed to participate before any recommendations can be considered. At your last meeting, January 6th and 7th, at 1am Thursday morning it was decided that you would have another meeting on the 13th. How many people would know and were present when this was streamed? The mayor stated he would not have time to submit the public notice to the Bitterroot Star regarding the meeting scheduled for the 13th – not true. There was already a publication previous to this meeting and all that would have to be changed was a new date and that should take maybe 5 minutes. I called the Bitterroot Star on Thursday and they stated that they needed the information no later than Monday morning of January 11th but would prefer to receive it at the end of the workday Friday January 8th. The mayor stated that the notice would be on the town's website. How many citizens go to this website daily? I would assume that the majority of the Stevensville population never go there or even know that it exists. With the aforementioned issues in mind, I don't see how any recommendation could move forward at this time.

All the citizens of Stevensville should be allowed to be heard. This could be done with hybrid virtual and in person meeting, in a larger area that masks and social distancing requirements could be adhered to.

The last meeting seemed to focus more on the needs of the developer by some board members. Also, it seems unfair that the developers' paid consultants were permitted to sit at the table with the board and make comments at any time throughout the entire six- and one-half hour meeting, while the public was given the opportunity to call in on the phone with comments at the beginning of the meeting and at 1 am. The best way for the public to be heard is to give them the opportunity to be heard in person. We are all aware of the sacrifices that have been made in relationship to Covid-19; no in school learning, loss of income to businesses and wage earners, not being allowed to visit our relatives at Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, not being allowed to visit our relatives at nursing homes and hospitals. Unfortunately, that is the way it is right now.

I believe that any further meeting or hearings be delayed until some people are vaccinated in the hope that we can return to in person meetings in a place that would allow, virtual, social distancing and masks. This can be enforced. Even though it is clear that the developers want to move forward as quickly as possible they need to be patient like all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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