

**Alta Planning Commission Meeting Summary
Community Center/Library, 10361 E. Hwy 210, Alta, Utah
February 2, 2015, 4PM**

IN ATTENDANCE:

Planning Commissioners: Joan Degiorgio (Chair), Jon Nepstad, Roger Bourke, Rob Voye and Mayor Tom Pollard (ex-officio).

Town of Alta staff: John Guldner, Chris Cawley, and Liz Schulte (counsel).

Members of the public: Mark Haik, Ryan the Videographer, Jen Clancy, Allyn Hart, Jerry Oyama, Margaret Bourke, Craig Heimark, Bill Stahly, Diane Stahly, Creighton Hart, Watler Krebsbach, Brent Pratt, Dave Eichel, Adam Long, Dave Abraham, Onno Weiringa, Jen Clancy, James Chickvary.

PUBLIC HEARING ON A PROPOSAL TO ADD A RIDGELINE PROTECTION ORDINANCE TO THE TOWN OF ALTA'S LAND USE ORDINANCES

Planning Commission Chair **Joan Degiorgio** opened the public hearing, and prompted **John Guldner** to introduce the proposed ordinance. **Mark Haik** suggested that the quality of views and vistas in Alta is related to more than just the ridgelines, and asked the planning commission to describe why the ridgelines are so important. **Mark** opined that visitors to Alta appreciate vistas from so many more places than just those identified in the proposed ordinance, and suggested that the ordinance should include "carve-outs" in certain places where ski area infrastructure is likely.

Onno Weiringa reminded the planning commission that Alta is a ski town, and that nearly all ski lifts in Alta disrupt a ridgeline view in some way. **Onno** is pleased by the language indicating that the "Town Council may hear an exception if there is no practical alternative" to disrupting the view of a ridgeline, and hopes there will be an opportunity to propose camouflaging or otherwise mitigating the impacts of ridgeline construction.

Allen Hart observed that "improvement" too often implies building and development, and opined that Alta is already a beautiful place.

Craig Heimark suggested that the language regarding the "grandfathering" of current structures needs to be clarified. **Mr. Heimark** agreed with the need to consider more than just ridgeline views when protecting scenic quality in Alta, but suggested that a different ordinance could be created to meet that goal. **Mr. Heimark** opined that language regarding the granting of exceptions should be clarified, and suggested the ordinance include a timeline by which the planning commission will respond to proposals which could disrupt ridgeline views.

Hearing no further comments, **Joan** closed the public hearing.

13:25 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

14:00 DISCUSSION WITH POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION TO THE TOWN COUNCIL ON A PROPOSED RIDGELINE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

Joan summarized comments from the public hearing. **Liz Schulte** observed that the proposal refers to Town of Alta Land Use Ordinance Chapter 9 (10-9-2), which describes conditional uses, applications for which are reviewed by the planning commission under guidelines and timelines described in the

ordinance. **John** stated that under current zoning, any proposed use of ridgeline areas in Alta would be considered conditional. **Roger Bourke** opined that the language regarding existing structures is sufficient. **Roger** also acknowledged **Mark Haik's** suggestion that ridgeline views are not the only scenic element of the Town of Alta, but stated that the ridgeline protection ordinance should be pursued in its current state rather than attempting to expand the ordinance into broader restrictions at this time. **Jon Nepstad** observed that language in the final paragraph of the proposed ordinance provides appropriate flexibility. **Joan** asked for a motion to forward the proposed ordinance to the Town Council. **Rob** made a motion and **Roger** seconded the motion. The motion was carried.

26:40 UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS-STAFF

John Guldner stated that staff is in contact with individuals who could fill the Planning Commission seat vacated recently by Jan Striefel. **John** reported on recent correspondence from the Utah State Property Rights Ombudsmen, who contacted the Town on behalf of a property owner in Albion Basin. **John** also described the status of Salt Lake Valley Health Department and State of Utah "inversion"-related wood-burning restriction.

32:17 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 15, 2014 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Planning commission members agreed that a phrase in the draft minutes from the December 15th, 2014 planning commission meeting regarding the planning commission's intent to consider state water requirements in regards to allowing condominiums in the base facilities zone was inaccurate. **Jon Nepstad** noted that the minutes reflect a statement by **Jan Streifel** suggesting the planning commission was in agreement on the subject of condominiums, and opined that the commission is not in such agreement. **Joan** acknowledged those comments, requested the errors be addressed in the final draft of the minutes, and the planning commission approved the December 15th, 2014 minutes given these inaccuracies be addressed.

34:30 UPDATE AND STATUS OF TOWN CENTER CONCEPT SKETCH AND MASSING STUDY BY LOGAN SIMPSON DESIGN

Mayor Pollard described The Town Center Concept Sketch and Massing Study presented in rough-draft form at the November 2014 planning commission meeting. **Mayor Pollard** stated that the study has been completed, and suggested that the purpose of the document is to illustrate concepts that have been discussed in Alta for many years. **Chris Cawley** noted that there were several minor edits that delayed the finalization of the document, but that it was ready to be made public. **Joan** observed that the study is based on the 2005 Town of Alta General Plan Vision Statement, adopted in 2011, General Plan section 4.3 "Commercial Element," adopted in 2013, and records of comments from public meetings dedicated to those documents. **Joan** asked if the study was in response to Mountain Accord, and **Mayor Pollard** observed that the study will help the Town of Alta visualize challenges and opportunities Mountain Accord may create, and that the study is the first step toward a possible general plan update.

Roger recommended that color copies of the document be prepared and distributed, and that public meetings dedicated to the study be conducted.

Joan prompted **Mayor Pollard** to discuss a document related to the Mountain Accord Cottonwood Canyons Negotiation Taskforce (CCNTF) proposal. **Mayor Pollard** described the CCNTF as being

comprised of representatives from Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, the Town of Alta, the United States Forest Service (USFS) the four cottonwood canyons ski areas, Save Our Canyons, and the Outdoor Industry Alliance, and observed that the CCNTF was created when it became apparent that issues relative to the upper cottonwood canyons discussed in Mountain Accord needed to be negotiated by agencies with jurisdiction, ownership, or popular interest in the cottonwood canyons separate from the rest of the process. **Mayor Pollard** described that the proposal includes exchange of large parcels of privately held land in areas like Flagstaff Peak and Albion Basin for up to 288 acres of land near the four cottonwood canyons ski area base facilities. **Mayor Pollard** observed that issues regarding Alta Ski Area's private property in Grizzly Gulch are still in consideration.

Mayor Pollard stated that the Mountain Accord Blueprint, which includes the CCNTF proposal, will be released on February 4th, which will begin a 6-week public comment period. **Rob Voye** asked if the USFS supported the CCNTF proposal, and **Mayor Pollard** opined that the USFS seeks to avoid management of land where commercial businesses operate such as ski area base villages and facilities. **Joan** and **Mayor Pollard** reminded the commission and the audience that public comment is critical for Mountain Accord to move forward with formal proposals.

Jon asked whether the Town Center Concept Sketch and Massing Study had considered land ownership as a parameter, and **Chris** stated that the study considered public ownership of land in the Town of Alta Commercial Core to be "present but non-binding" constraint.

Roger opined that the CCNTF proposal seemingly opens the core of the Town of Alta to privatization and development, and that this could "be the end of Alta as we know it." **Mayor Pollard** observed that any significant privatization of land in the town commercial core will be subject to Town of Alta zoning regulations, which will be up to the Town to shape. **Mayor Pollard** suggested that concerns about land privatization and transit connections in Alta are not the only reservations about Mountain Accord proposals, noting in particular that Park City and Summit County does not see a transit connection to the Wasatch Front through the mountains favorably. **Jon Nepstad** observed that the CCNTF proposal could either be a "death knell," or it could be an opportunity to shape change positively. **Mayor Pollard** suggested the CCNTF proposal for Alta base area land exchanges includes significant restrictions on total disturbance. **Craig Heimark** observed that details on those restrictions are not publicly available and expressed concern about the privatization of base area land. **Joan** reminded the audience that base area land would become private in exchange for significant acreage in high-value recreation areas. **Joan** also described the contrast between the general Mountain Accord Blueprint, which largely makes proposals for future study of alternatives, where the CCNTF makes much more detailed proposals about property issues.

Creighton Hart asked whether the current Town of Alta General Plan is available online, and members of the planning commission indicated that the General Plan is posted on the Town of Alta website (http://www.townofalta.com/gov_plan.php).

Mark Haik opined that the CCNTF proposal could introduce critical challenges to the Town of Alta's planning outlook, and stated that the town council and planning commission needed to strategize for those challenges.

1:09:40 DISCUSSION WITH POSSIBLE ACTION ON AMENDING THE BASE FACILITIES ZONE ORDINANCE TO ALLOW CONDOMINIUMS

Jon stated his hesitation to allow condominiums in the base facilities zone given a variety of concerns. **Roger** agreed, opining that Mountain Accord could create changes in the Town of Alta and that allowing condominiums would be imprudent until Mountain Accord proposals are clearer. **Jon** opined that he doubted condominiums are a good way to enliven the Town of Alta and make it more viable. **Rob** observed that building condominiums could be a way to acquire financing for larger hotel projects, and acknowledged the concern that condominiums could be occupied less often than hotel rooms. **Brent Pratt** asked whether there has been any hotel expansion since condominiums were forbidden in the base facilities zone, and the Rustler Lodge's recent expansion was offered as an example. **Mr. Pratt** opined that investing in Alta is a challenge given the short season of hotel operation, and expressed uncertainty regarding whether condominium lenders would look favorably on the proposed requirement for condominiums to be in a "rental pool." **Mr. Pratt** agreed that allowing Mountain Accord proposals to solidify before making a decision about allowing condominiums was prudent, while adding that fears regarding an explosion of development in Alta were not warranted given how unattractive the Alta market is to lenders.

Allyn Hart opined that the Town of Alta should not be concerned with issues related to business finance, stating that it should focus on helping everyone, particularly individuals and lower-income people. **Jerry Oyama** described the inconsistent basis on which condominiums at Blackjack have been rented in the past and at present.

Joan asked **Onno Wieringa** whether Alta Ski Lifts had been involved in negotiating the land swap described in the Mountain Accord Cottonwood Canyon Negotiation Task Force recommendation, and also asked whether Alta Ski Lifts intended to build hotels if the land swap occurred. **Onno** stated that Alta Ski Lifts and the United States Forest Service were discussing privatizing base area land outside of Mountain Accord, adding that USFS has been trading base area public land for upper mountain land at other ski areas. **Onno** acknowledged that pursuing such a land swap through Mountain Accord could be a particularly good opportunity for the Town of Alta to shape what happens on base area land, and stated that part of the impetus to privatize base area land was to facilitate development of a transit facility if a transit system is implemented. **Joan** asked **Onno** to clarify whether Alta Ski Area was thinking about building condominiums on land acquired through a Mountain Accord land swap, and **Onno** stated that the ski area had not yet considered condominiums. **Onno** added that Alta Ski Area was considering its own long-term financial sustainability as well as the sustainability of doing business in the Town of Alta in regards to a possible land swap.

Joan invited audience members to comment. **Creighton Hart** opined that it would be better to enhance business in Alta by being creative than by pursuing development. **Mark Haik** debated an earlier comment regarding the Town's interest in facilitating business viability by giving examples of businesses that had been subsidized by the Town, such as the Alta Resort Shuttle. **Walter Krebsbach** observed that nearly every room in Alta was dark most of the year, opined that condominiums would be more frequently occupied in the summertime than hotel rooms, and suggested the Town consider facilitating a more diverse market of options for visitors.

Joan asked whether the planning commission wanted to “table” the condominium issue. **Jon Nepstad** stated he was interested in learning more about hotel improvement financing and suggested the commission host a presentation by a market expert.

1:30:20 DISCUSSION ON THE COMMISSION’S PRIORITIES AND FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

The planning commission agreed to hold 2015 meetings on the first Monday of every month. The commission discussed holding joint meetings with the Town Council, and discussed a presentation of the Town Center Massing Study at the March 2nd, 2015 planning commission meeting.

Joan began discussion of the planning commission priority list;

-**Joan** stated her interest in pursuing an ordinance regarding *invasive weeds*.

-*Moving forward with a Master Development Plan for the Base Facilities Zone*. **Jon** stated that this priority is related to *closer partnership and information sharing with Alta Ski Lifts, influencing Mountain Accord*, and several long-term planning commission priorities.

-*Climate Change*. **Roger** clarified that the Town needs to consider mitigation of and adaptation to the changing climate.

-**Joan** described the Mountain Accord Environmental Scorecard, an ecological monitoring program, as well as a similar, local effort being undertaken by Friends of Alta, the Alta Environmental Center, and the Wild Utah Project, and suggested that the planning commission consider those processes.

-*Clarify the 50’ stream setback*. **Roger** clarified that the regulation of construction relative to natural waterways needs attention.

-*Design guidelines*. **Jon** emphasized the need to focus on whether design guidelines were necessary or not, rather than starting by trying to decide what such guidelines would imply.

-*Develop better communication with and support the Town Council, residents and businesses, in an attempt to gain consensus on responsible and sustainable growth in Alta*.

-*With ski area announcement of resort interconnect, study and understand what effect that might have on town land use, facilities, and infrastructure*.

Jon recommended that the commission commit to an annual walking tour of some kind.

Rob opined that the open, conversational nature of this meeting was valuable and productive.

1:57:00-MOTION TO ADJOURN

Rob moved to adjourn the meeting, **Roger** seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

The content of the minutes is not intended, nor are they submitted, as a verbatim transcription of the meeting. These minutes are a general overview of what occurred at the meeting.

These minutes were passed and approved on March 2nd, 2015.

S/ Chris Cawley
Assistant Town Administrator

*Audio Recordings are available on <https://soundcloud.com/townofalta>.