

8/17/23

**SAN JUAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

135 Rhone Street  
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Friday Harbor, WA 98250  
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Dear Planning Commission

We are opposed to the school's application to designate both North and South school properties as Rural Farm Forest. We were told by school board member, Del Guenther, that the school was applying for a change in designation for the South portion in order to develop a small, clustered housing development of six units for affordable teacher housing south of the tennis courts and along Center Road. When we received the Notice of Public Hearing: Docket Request 23-0005 from the county, we were shocked that the North parcel, which includes the baseball fields and track, were included in this application.

The designation of Island Center is appropriate for the north parcel which contains the ball fields and track. The designation of Rural Farm Forest is more appropriate for the southern portion which historically was agricultural and part of a view corridor. Development of clustered housing "in an open space conserving manner" which preserves the forest and view corridor as much as possible is appropriate for the southern parcel.

We were informed by School Board member, Del Gunther that the school wished to build six units on the south property and would submit an application to allow for this. Instead the San Juan County Department of Community Development has made an application to the county to change the designation of both properties. The Lopez School has not made a formal request for this designation change and we were told by Sophia Cassam, county planner, that there was never a formal request for this designation change from the Lopez School. School Board member Del Gunther had conversations via phone and email with the previous planner concerning the schools desire to develop clustered affordable housing on the south property. The result of these conversations led to the planner applying to change both parcels to Rural Farm Forest.

We feel misled. If the school wishes to develop one clustered housing project on the southern parcel, it does not need to change the designation of the north parcel to do this.

Some background history for the planning commission: The South school property was owned by Lyle Summers and was in a conservation easement with the San Juan Preservation Trust. The willow woodland and the south field/meadow were designated as an island view corridor by the San Juan Preservation Trust. The school removed the conservation easement by eminent domain so the school could develop tennis courts, even though Mark Brown had offered to sell his 10 acre property North of

the school at a discounted price. This property north of the school which had been owned by Mark Brown now houses the UPS sorting building and the future Lopez Pool.

We are not opposed to thoughtful affordable housing development and in fact, Liz is a founding member of the Lopez Community Land Trust. We are in favor of affordable housing but want to see small, low impact development that honors the historical nature of this land. The neighbors surrounding the school purchased their property when the south parcel was in a conservation easement and this is what we envisioned for our surrounding area. The school changed all of that when it condemned the conservation easement, the only easement the San Juan Preservation Trust has ever lost by condemnation.

The planning commission should, when the school submits an application to develop the south parcel for affordable housing take this historical nature of the property into consideration and as the RFF guidelines instruct design in "an open space preserving manner" and preserve the woodland, the Island Marble butterfly habitat and as much of the open meadow as is possible by limiting the clustered housing to six affordable housing units as presented to us by school board member Del Gunther.

We object to the North School property which contains the ball fields and track, being designated Rural Farm Forest. We wish to see this parcel remain in the Island Center designation. We do support the South school parcel being redesignated to Rural Farm Forest. There is no reason that both parcels need to be lumped together as Rural Farm Forest.

Sincerely,

*Liz Scranton*  
*Teri Linneman*

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