**Borrego Springs to Render Opinion on Rudyville**

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The Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group will meet on March 1, 2018 at 4:30 PM in the Community Meeting Room at the Borrego Springs High School to hear public comment on the now decade-long development scheme known as “Rudyville.” Officially referred to by the county as DS-24, Rudyville is a request by developer Rudy Monica to increase the zoning of his 170-acre parcel from one house per ten acres to one home per acre.

Rudyville is located in the flood plain west of Borrego Springs Road and northwest of the mile 9 marker. It is home to an ancient ocotillo forest, a relic san dune, as well as threatened and endangered species. This tract of land forms a large part of the iconic southern entrance through ocotillo forests into Borrego Springs that has been depicted on visitors maps dating as far back as the late 1940’s. (See map)

The last time the Sponsor Group held a public hearing on Rudyville was April 7, 2016. At that meeting not one of the comments provided by the more than 150 attendees were in support of Rudyville. Despite the overwhelming public opposition at the 2016 meeting, the Sponsor Group was unable to vote because of a lack of a quorum due to vacancies and recusals.

This time, on March 1, 2018, there will be a vote. Vacancies have been filled, and the current members of the Sponsor Group do not have conflicts of interest that would require recusal. This time, residents of Borrego Springs will have an opportunity to make known their thoughts and feelings about Rudyville through an official vote of their Community Sponsor Group.

Although the Sponsor Group is “advisory only” to the county Board of Supervisors, it nevertheless expresses the will of residents who will be impacted by decisions of the Board of Supervisors. Staff from the Department of Planning and Development Services will be present at the March 1st Sponsor Group meeting and are obliged to include the decision of the Sponsor Group as well as the tenor of the public comment in their final report to the Board of Supervisors.

As Borregans know well, the votes of our local Sponsor Group do not determine the final outcome of projects that come before the County Board of Supervisors. The vote of the Sponsor Group is not binding upon the Supervisors.

After the Sponsor Group takes a vote on March 1st and sends its formal recommendation to the county, there will be two more public hearings that will ultimately determine the outcome of the Rudyville saga. The first hearing will be before the County Planning Commission. The second, and final, hearing (and final vote!) will be before the County Board of Supervisors. Dates for these two hearings have not yet been set, but the earliest possible dates for them are June 2018 and July 2018 respectively, which, in the middle of summer, are not good times for Borregans. And both hearings will be in San Diego, not a convenient location for Borregans.

Because many people concerned about Rudyville will not be in Borrego during the summer, or may be unable to travel to San Diego for the hearings, the Tubb Canyon Desert Conservancy has arranged for videographers to be present at the March 1st meeting of the Sponsor Group. These videographers will record the proceedings of the meeting, and they will make a brief video of any member of the community who would like to make a statement to the Planning Commission and to the Board of Supervisors but would not be able to do so in person. These videos of Borregans’ comments will be used to create a “movie” that will be presented at the hearings of the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

For a decade now, the community of Borrego Springs has opposed Rudyville. The Sponsor Group first voiced its opposition in a March 1, 2012 letter to the Department of Planning and Land Use. The Borrego Water District signaled its opposition to Rudyville in its public statement of March 23, 2016. The Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce elaborated its opposition to Rudyville in a letter to the Department of Planning and Development Services dated April 7, 2016. And now, it appears staff from the Department of Planning and Development Services is poised to formally recommend the “No Project Alternative,” i.e. deny Rudyville’s request for increased density, because of multiple inconsistencies with the General Plan that are described in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report published in December 2017.

Among the many inconsistencies and undesirable impacts of Rudyville are: 1) The Rudyville proposal does not conform to the principles of the General Plan, or the Borrego Springs Community Plan, which prohibits new development on undisturbed desert land. 2) At a time when Borrego Springs is confronting the necessity of reducing water consumption by 70%, the Rudyville proposal would increase residential water demand. 3) Even without Rudyville, at the current rate of sales there is a 30-year inventory of vacant residential lots in Borrego Springs. 4) The abandoned dike to the west of Rudyville that used to partially protect it from flood waters from the Tubb Canyon-Culp catchment areas was breached in the flooding of 2013. Any attempt at flood mitigation for Rudyville would require the taking of private property adjacent to Rudyville and would be opposed by impacted landowners and by property rights activists in perpetuity.

