

Four-story Holiday Inn application hits another snag

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The Taos Planning and Zoning Commission did not recommend approval of a pair of permits for a proposed four-story Holiday Inn Express Wednesday (April 12).

The decision was delayed twice since March to allow the developer, Jay Batra, opportunities to bring the hotel in line with the town's various design standards and ordinances.

Even after the Wednesday vote, Batra is undeterred. He is taking the hotel's architectural design back to the drawing board before presenting it anew to the commission sometime in May or June.

Controversy has plagued the development from the beginning and was on display again Wednesday. About a dozen residents spoke in opposition to the hotel. Bob Silver objected based on what he described as a lack of "community consensus" in regards to the October 2016 ordinance that allows hotels up to 48 feet in a special "hotel overlay zone" at the southern end of the town.

Generally, Taos has a restriction on buildings taller than 27 feet.

But the town's planning department argued the application met the minimum requirements.

As for the commission, the discussion came down to the subjective standard called "massing," or the general shape of a building.

Commissioner Doug Patterson, president of architectural firm Living Designs Group, explained that, according to the town code, any building larger than 30,000 square feet is required to appear as two or more "massing blocks." Even after multiple redesigns and with added features, like a large portal, protruding vigas and step-backs in the facade, the building doesn't meet the code, he said.

"If you squint your eyes, it's still a four-story hotel block," Patterson said.

The commission — which acted in an advisory role — voted to recommend neither the hotel's large-scale hotel development permit nor its provisional permit (town code requires both).

The final decision about the hotel will come before the town council, but Batra is again going to try to get the planning commission's approval.

"Even though the path has been more difficult than normal, we're going to be persistent on the path we have to stay on. We are not going away," Batra said.



Taos resident Bob Silver speaks in opposition to the Holiday Inn Express at the Taos Planning and Zoning Commission meeting Wednesday (April 12). The commission voted to not recommend approval for the hotel application because it did not meet certain requirements in the town code. The developer is planning to present another redesign of the hotel to the planning commission.

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