

Taos County commission keeps public input, approves new land use regs

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During a regular Taos County Commission meeting Tuesday (Sept. 4), the commission voted to accept some changes to the Land Use Regulations with the exception of two chapters that some residents felt limited their abilities to speak on issues.

Omitting changes to Chapters 7 and 9, the commission voted 3-2 to accept the revisions to the LURs. Commissioners Mark Gallegos and Gabriel Romero voted against the changes.

Proposed changes to public comment and appeals of land use projects sparked concern from more than a dozen residents. Several citizens argued against the proposed language changes to the regulation, which would have only allowed those who were parties in a specific land use application, such as nearby property owners but not renters, to offer public comment for the record in a hearing. Others could offer comment, but in writing to the planning director.

“This just seems wrong,” said Taos County resident Ken Manning. “Continue to let the people be heard.”

Manning was among a group of citizens who challenged the new language in the land use regulations during the commission meeting.

No one spoke in support of the proposed changes to the two chapters related to public comments and appeals and instead encouraged the commission to reconsider the language in the regulations. After a brief discussion by the commission, following nearly two hours of public comment, the commissioners decided to vote to accept the other proposed amendments, omitting the changes to sections 7 and 9.

“I have always appreciated the public input at these hearings,” said commissioner Romero when it was over.

The two public-comment chapters will remain as they are in the current LURs, meaning the public at large will still be able to comment on planning and zoning applications before the project goes into final stages of implementation regardless of where they live in relation to the projects.