

City Council Meeting - Tuesday September 12th, 2023

Agenda Item #6

Discussion and Consideration of an Ordinance to Change the Zoning of Parcel K-7-2-Annex Located in the Area of Chinle Dr. and Hillside Dr. from Rural Residential (RR-1) to Single Family Zone (R-1-8). (Applicant Michael Stewart / Mike and Jamie Little).

Public Comment by Lynda Marpole, 565 S. Hillside Drive, Kanab, UT84741

My name is Lynda Marpole and I live on Hillside Drive, directly opposite parcel K-7-2-Annex, or “the hill” as we call it. It is our understanding that the proposal is to build multiple single-family homes per acre on “the hill”. I’m here to represent myself and my neighbors on Hillside Drive who live opposite the hill.

“The hill”, which is very steep for the most part, is substantially made up of blue clay. This bluish-purple layer of clay called the Chinle formation is made up of ultra fine sediments left by ancient lakes and rivers, even volcanic ash. Their properties cause them to absorb moisture like a sponge and as they absorb water they expand, giving the ability to severely damage roads, building foundations and sidewalks.

For example, in 2019 the St. George Regional Airport required extensive excavation down to approximately 17 feet to undertake significant repairs to the runways that had only been open 8 years and were expected to last at least 20 years before the blue clay caused damage. In fact, within about one year of the new airport opening, 1-inch cracks were already visible on the runways.

In 1993 a proposed Condo development on the hill on Hillside Drive was voted against due to danger of the instability of building on blue clay.

Over the years that “the hill” has been for sale, there have been a number of soil engineers employed by prospective buyers. Using excavators, they dug deep in various spots across the hill, north to south. I have personally spoken with two of those engineers, who, independent of each other, said they will not recommend building on the hill due to the amount of blue clay.

During the Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday September 5th, there was extensive discussion about the complications, expense and potential dangers of building on blue clay. At one point, there was even discussion as to whether the city, if sued, could be liable for any disaster resulting from approval to build on the blue clay. The answer was, quote, “a soft no”. Two of the five planning commissioners in attendance at the Sept 5th meeting voted against the RR-1 to R-1-8 re-zoning request.

We understand that Kanab is growing and there is a need for affordable housing. However, we must be mindful of the potential dangers of building on land where substantial deposits of blue clay exist. We must express our extreme concern that if building on “the hill” proceeds, it is a disaster waiting to happen, both physically and financially. Not just for existing residents, but for anyone who builds a home on “the hill”. Informed judgement is extremely important.

We respectfully ask that this Ordinance Change be denied.

Thank you.



Lynda D Marpole
On behalf of Hillside Drive Residents