

OURAY COUNTY

Wildfire hardening could raise construction costs

BY TORI SHEETS
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New homes built in the county may be subject to a wildfire vulnerability rating system in the future. The Ouray County Planning Commission met in a work session on Tuesday to discuss the financial impact if home owners are required to "fire harden" the new construction.

The OCPC met with a representative from West Region Wildfire Council in March to go over an updated fire rating system for homes built in the "wild land interface" of Ouray County.

The new system, if implemented, would require revising the Land Use Code to go more in depth on new home construction requirements. After the planning commission hammers out the details it would go to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

Under the proposed system, all new buildings would have to comply with certain factors such as a class A roof, ignition resistant siding and a perimeter of non-combustible protection three feet around the home. Other required factors are properly screened vents, non-combustible doors, proper driveway clear-

ance for emergency vehicles to access and visible address signs.

Commissioners were concerned that the new requirements would add significant cost to new construction. For the work session Tamara Knutson, county building inspector, collected and presented a cost estimate sheet for different types of building materials. The sheet compares the cost of non-hardened homes to homes that are built with high cost hardening materials.

To compare the costs of a non-hardened home and a high cost hardened home, commissioners used an example

of a \$500,000 home. The increase in price would be about \$10,000, or two percent of the overall cost of constructing the home.

Planning commissioners said the next step will be to talk with insurance agencies to see if these fire prevention methods could qualify homeowners for discounts on their insurance rates to help mitigate the cost of materials.

Commissioners also want to meet with builders and architects to discuss the feasibility of the system.

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Revised Section 23 recommended

BY DALTON CARVER
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The Ouray County Planning Commission recommended a second draft of the proposed communication tower code section at an audience-less public hearing on Nov. 1 at the county land use office in Ridgway.

The recommendation came without much discussion, aside from a few language and definition tweaks throughout the Section 23 document.

With Board of County Commissioners approval, Section 23 will allow a maximum of 80-foot-tall communication towers, allowing for efficient service co-location and sufficient height to reach service areas. Any entity proposing



applicant in response, but it isn't the county's job to enforce HOA covenants.

"The HOA can enforce its covenants however it feels best, but it's not the county's job to enforce covenants," she said. "Certainly this county attorney would not advise the county to not move forward with the issuance of a permit."

Whitmore made it clear that HOA covenants don't dictate any other county permitting process either.

The recommendation will be forwarded to the BOCC for its consideration at a future regular meeting.

County commissioners had already viewed the proposed code draft once but kicked it back to the OCPC on Aug. 23. The board was concerned the first draft would have unintended consequences for the county, including a restriction of any future broadband communication rollout and that the 50-foot tower height maxi-

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