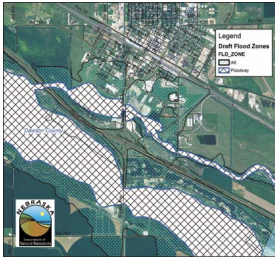


Floodplain map presents development problems

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Wednesday, 10 March 2010 22:40 - Last Updated Thursday, 11 March 2010 22:35



Could be costly for developers, new insurance customers.

Local restaurant owner and city council member Jeff Whiting isn't anxious to approve a federally-proposed floodplain map for Dawson County.

Although his Runza eatery is already in the floodplain, land adjoining the restaurant will be included in a new floodway. which Whiting said will affect futher development.

In addition, most of the Fourth Street industrial tract is in the floodplain.

"That will add cost," Whiting said last week.

Whiting and other council members learned at their March 1 meeting that impacted property owners have 90 days to appeal the plan.

The 90 days begin a day after notice is printed for the second time in the Lexington Clipper-Herald which is March 11.

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But there's a catch.

City administrator Bruce Clymer said an engineering study, which can cost up to \$60,000, would be needed for property owners who may want to build in what has been designated as floodway in the new map.

The Platte River, its immediate overbank and the Cozad Canal are considered regulatory floodways in the proposal.



WHITING

Building in the floodway and floodplain is unlikely to happen, Whiting said, because of the Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations that make it cost prohibitive.

FEMA is proposing the new map.

Property Whiting owns to the south and west of Runza is in the new floodway which borders the Cozad Canal—a channel of the Platte River.

As explained to him by a FEMA representative, Whiting said every gallon of water displaced through new construction must be somehow replaced.

With development in a floodway, a Department of Natural Resources floodplain management specialist said the same amount of water as before has to flow in the waterway after construction.

Bill Jones, who visited with Gothenburg property owners about the proposed map last

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November, said the flow cannot be obstructed at all.

“Any new construction must show that it won’t increase flood elevations and an engineer would have to provide no-rise certification,” Jones explained.

How that might be achieved, he said, is using an existing building or removing trees.

Because the floodplain increases in the new map, more people will be required to buy flood insurance including Baldwin Filters.

Baldwin Filters is not included in the current floodplain.

“For some, it could be a lot of money especially if they come in later,” Whiting said.

Floodplain insurance of property owners under the current plan, adopted in 1990, will be grandfathered in when the new plan is adopted if the insurance is not allowed to lapse.

Building or adding to existing structures in the floodplain also means more FEMA regulation in some low-lying areas, Jones said, that could mean the use of more fill.

That’s because Gothenburg’s base flood elevations, in some places, have risen two to three feet since 1990.

“The plan is going to affect any development,” Whiting said.

City councils within the county must adopt the plan at some point or their communities won’t

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have federal flood insurance.

Land in the designated floodplain which was adopted in 1990 has a 1% chance of flooding each year.

Generally, areas within the proposed floodplain are from Interstate 80 north to First Street on the west side of Highway 47 and to Fifth Street on the east side of Highway 47.

Lake Helen on the north end of Gothenburg is considered within the floodplain as is the trail race that flows from the lake south to the Cozad canal.

For more information, contact Jones at 402-471-3932.

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