

Sorry Charlie, Condemnation Is the Only Option

I appreciate that SMVC representative Charlie Haas has addressed the community regarding the Valley Floor. An open dialogue is always preferred.

GUEST COMMENTARY

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Mr. Haas is, of course, entitled to his opinions about condemnation, but I'd like to counter with a different point of view:

The right of a government body to condemn is embedded in both state and federal constitutions. According to condemnation lawyer

tion easements, etc., which will be lost through condemnation. If condemnation goes through to the end it will be more expensive, but possible.

In the city of Boulder, which has acquired over 47,000 acres of open space in over 400 separate land acquisitions, condemnation has been used roughly ten times. According to Boulder Open Space's Delanie Wheeler, condemnation is used "only when there has been no other choice and the land has been in danger of development." I believe we are in a situation where a parcel of land that we cherish as open space is in danger of development.

Finally, the cost of the land is certainly up for debate. The best appraisal in the world can be debated. That's why a jury will decide the price based on both town and

Mr. Blue to undermine the desire that this community has expressed year after year to see that land preserved? Is it fair to destroy the ecological integrity of functional wetlands, a large animal habitat and a river corridor? The Telluride region has long held the Valley Floor as its number one priority for open space acquisition. Money is available in the Open Space Fund, without raising taxes or taking from other accounts. The landowner has consistently refused to sell and the community will is stronger than ever to acquire the land, and to do it now.

There is a large faction of people I've been speaking with who say, "I don't want to see anything built on the Valley Floor, ever, but I'm not sure condemnation is the way to go." What the proponents of

Sheep Mountain Alliance's proposed condemnation plans to eliminate some of the more expensive parcels of land (the Texaco Station and the building-friendly north side and west end). The South Side is currently assessed as agricultural, which is how it will be appraised. It consists of 65 percent wetlands and 15 acres of tailings.

Leslie Fields (in a phone conference call last year with town council), condemnations have prevailed in about nine out of 10 cases in Colorado. Yes, Telluride has a very good chance of prevailing. Successful condemnations happen every day across the country for schools, power lines, highways, open space and other public needs.

I agree with Mr. Haas that condemnation is expensive if carried through to the end. But if the landowner cares anything about profit, he will eventually agree to sell the land to the town at a fair price, reaping the tax benefits of conserva-

SMVC's appraisals, as well as other factors. But keep in mind that the entire land was conservatively appraised at \$26 million a year ago. Sheep Mountain Alliance's proposed condemnation plans to eliminate some of the more expensive parcels of land (the Texaco Station and the building-friendly north side and west end). The South Side is currently assessed as agricultural, which is how it will be appraised. It consists of 65 percent wetlands and 15 acres of tailings.

Condemning someone's land may seem "unfair" in the spirit of American values, but is it fair for

the condemnation ordinance are trying to convey is that condemnation is our only option if we do not want to see building on the south side of the Valley Floor. If somebody has a better plan let him come forward. If Neal Blue wants to act in good faith to this community, let him either sell the land to a conservation group (he's had offers) or put the land under a conservation easement. He will be given fair market value. If we don't do this NOW, we will be weighed down with regret and shedding tears as we watch the backhoes digging and the cement trucks pouring.