

Advisory Board on the Environment

Park County Planning Department

P.O. Box 1598
Fairplay, Colorado 80440

Phone: (719) 836-4254 • Fax: 719-836-4268 • E-mail address: jdeagan@parkco.us

Referral Response

Comment Deadline Date: April 12th, 2022 **Submitted Date:** March 3rd, 2022

Case #: 22SET-02 **Case Name:** Pieper Height Variance

Request: The applicant is requesting a twenty-eight foot variance from the thirty-five foot residential structure height limit, resulting in a residence that is sixty-three feet tall.

Legal Description: Mineral Survey #4325 (Belle of the Buckskin), addressed as 3187 County Road 8, Alma.

Date of Board of Adjustment Hearing: Wednesday, April 13th, 2022

We have reviewed this referral and find no conflicts with our interests.

A formal recommendation is under consideration and will be submitted to you prior to _____.

Please refer to the enclosed letter.

We offer the following comments regarding this referral:

Signed: John Reiber Date: 3/17/22

Title: ABE Chairman

Building Department

Park County Planning Department

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We offer the following comments regarding this referral:

- There is no indication of rooftop equipment that would further increase the height of the tower structure. *(on the plans)*
- Will Fire, Police + Forest Service personnel have access to the tower at all times as a 'fire lookout' as stated in the applicants letter? If so, additional means of egress would be applicable.

Signed: _____ Date: 3/8/22

Title: Senior Bldg Inspector/Plans Examiner

File Code: 2700
Date: March 22, 2022

Park County Board of Adjustment
856 Castello Avenue
Fairplay, CO 80440

Park County Board of Adjustment,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Case No. 22SET-02, variance request for Bruce Pieper. The request is for a twenty-eight-foot variance from the thirty-five-foot residential structure height limit which will result in a residence that is sixty-three feet tall. Just for reference, this is equivalent to a six-story building.

The Forest Service surrounds the Belle of the Buckskin property (Pieper ownership) located along Alma Town Road #8 to Kite Lake. Kite Lake is the fourth most popular trailhead in the state for climbers and provides access to three 14,000-foot peaks. This trailhead has over 30,000 visitors per year, making it one of the most popular destinations in Park County.

A 63-foot tower would be very visible on the way to the 14,000-foot peaks and would rise above the spruce and pine trees in this area. The beautiful viewshed of the Buckskin Creek corridor would be negatively impacted. Instead of visitors marveling at our majestic mountain peaks, people would see a six-story stone building rising above the trees.

This six-story building could negatively impact wildlife, specifically birds and bats moving through the valley. The tower would be visible to bighorn sheep in the area and may limit usage on slopes near the private land. The night sky would be negatively impacted by light from this tower, drawing in wildlife species and increasing the chance of collisions and mortality. There is growing evidence that American crows preferentially roost and nest on tall man-made structures. This gives them a predatory advantage which negatively affects a wide range of songbirds, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals. In particular, there are concerns about increased predation on white ptarmigan eggs and chicks, which is a Forest Service sensitive species in the Rocky Mountain region.

There have been some community discussions about the addition of a communication-type structure to the top of this tower. The addition of such a structure to the top of the 63-foot tower would only exacerbate the above issues and should not be considered as it is not part of this proposal.

The current design of the building with the large amount of glass and the addition of a tower would allow a significant amount of light to escape. This unnatural nighttime glow would directly affect the quality of darkness of the surrounding National Forest. This increase in light from the vast surface of windows and the tower could disrupt wildlife movements and migrations within the Buckskin Creek corridor. The south side of Buckskin Creek is known for its elk



usage, particularly during rutting and for migration.

Overall, there are a multitude of reasons to support a denial of this request for variance to balance against approving the desire of a single homeowner to have a special feature added on to an already spectacular home. [The property owner was already granted a special request in rezoning a mining claim property to residential use.]

In summary, the Forest Service is opposed to the approval of this variance. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

X

JOSHUA VOORHIS
District Ranger