

Los Alamos County Community Development Department BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS STAFF REPORT

Public Hearing Date:	July 27, 2020
Subject:	Case No. WVR-2020-0090
Owners/Applicants:	Christine Sweeney, Owner/Applicant
Case Manager:	Desirae J. Lujan, Associate Planner

Case No. WVR-2020-0090:

Christine Sweeney, property owner/applicant, is requesting a waiver from front yard fence height restrictions at 933 TEWA LOOP, within the Eastern Area 1 subdivision. Approval of this application would approximately allow 48.85 linear feet of solid fencing along the southern property line, and 25 linear feet along the east property line to be a maximum of 6' in height. Los Alamos County Development Code restricts the height of solid fencing in the front yard to 3'. The property, EA1 017, is zoned Single-Family Residential District (R-1-8).



Motion Option 1: I move to **approve** Case No. WVR-2020-0090 – a request for waiver from front yard fence height restrictions at 933 TEWA LOOP, within the Eastern Area 1 subdivision. Approval allows 48.85 linear feet of solid fencing along the southern property line, and 25 linear feet along the east property line to be a maximum of 6' in height.

Approval is based on the reasons stated within the staff report and per testimony entered at the public hearing, subject to the following condition(s):

1. ...

I further move to authorize the Chair to sign Findings of Fact for this case and, based on this decision, to be prepared by County staff.

Motion Option 2: I move to **deny** Case No. WVR-2020-0090 – A request for waiver from front yard fence height restrictions at 933 TEWA LOOP, within the Eastern Area 1 subdivision.

Denial is due to the proposal failing to meet the Los Alamos County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 16 — Development Code, §16-157, Waiver Review Criteria Permit review criteria for the following reasons:

1. ...

SUMMARY: In September 2019, Ms. Sweeney approached the Community Development Department to discuss the placement of 6' fence along her property. She was advised that the Los Alamos Development Code, Sec. 16-271 (a) allows for a fence to be up to 6' in height, but subsection (1) does not allow for solid fences to exceed 3' in required front yards:

- (a) Solid or open fences or hedges shall not exceed six feet in height, with the exception of:
 - (1) Front yard. Solid fences shall not exceed three feet in height and open fences or hedges shall not exceed four feet in height, or five feet in height in the R-A district.

The required front yard (shown in blue) is defined as the open area extending across the full width of the lot, the depth of which is measured in the least horizontal distance from the front lot line to the main building setback; for the R-1-8 zoning district, that area is from the front property line to the 25' front setback.



Currently there is a 4' high chain link fence that runs an estimated 30 linear feet west from the southeast property point and 25' north; the ownership of the fence has been unknown and pre-dates all owners it serves, but their research has concluded that such chain linked fences were placed by the federal government before the sale of the subdivision lots. The neighbors involved have agreed that if approved, the existing chain linked fence would be removed and replaced with the planned fence: a 6' solid wood fence that would run from the southeast corner, 48.85' linear feet west, along the southern property line – the front property line – where 3' is maximum. This length would guarantee that the remaining 25' linear feet, shared with 935 TEWA LOOP, and the required front yard for both lots, would comply with Sec. 16-271 (a)(1). On the east, the applicant plans to continue the 6' height from the southeast point – 25' north, which would connect to a recently built 6' cedar fence that runs along the eastern side property line, or side yard (BLDR-2020-03506, issued 5/15/20) and align with an existing 6' wooden fence between 935 TEWA LOOP and 973 NAMBE LOOP.



The property's interior corner lot configuration makes it so that the applicant's front yard has views of the eastern property's front yard and the side and rear yards of both the south and southeast properties (see Exhibit A). Approving a waiver from Section 16-271 (a)(1) would allow a height that could adequately provide screening and added privacy for all. Installation of the fencing, if approved, requires the issuance of a placement permit. During the permit process, coordination with NM One Call locates will be required to ensure a safe installation, and conditions would be made for compliance of Section 16-271 (f), which states that the finished side of the fence must face the adjacent properties, or public right-of-way.



View of Side & Front yard of 935 TEWA LOOP, south – from subject site's front yard





IDRC REVIEW: The Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC) independently reviewed the requests from July 1 – July 10, 2020 and provided no conditions or concerns with this request.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice of this virtual public hearing has been given per the requirements of the Los Alamos County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 16, Development Code, Sec. 16-193, which includes:

(a) On *July 14, 2020*, notice of the request and meeting information was given by U.S. mail to the owners of real property within 100 yards (see below) of the exterior lot lines of the property or properties affected, at least ten days prior to the public hearing.

As of July 22, 2020, staff has received letters of support from six parties, and no opposition:

- 1. Garrick Snider, 931 TEWA LOOP
- 2. Keith Lepsch, 941 TEWA LOOP
- 3. Daryl & Shana Grunau, 964 OTAWI PL
- 4. Carrie Walker, 973 NAMBE LOOP
- 5. Dan Berisford & Erika Swanson, 975 NAMBE LOOP
- 6. Tina R. Sibbett, 923 TEWA LOOP



- (b) A notice setting forth the nature of the request, the specific parcel of property affected, and the date, time and place of the public hearing, was published in the Los Alamos Daily Post newspaper on *July 9, 2020*, at least 15 days prior to the public hearing.
- (c) Notice of this request and meeting information was posted at the county municipal building and the community development office on *July 16, 2020*, at least ten days prior to the public hearing.

WAIVER REVIEW CRITERIA: Sec. 16-157 of the Los Alamos County Development Code states that the Board of Adjustment shall approve, approve with conditions and limitations, or deny the request depending on the extent to which the request meets or fails to meet these criteria:

a. Granting of the waiver will not cause an intrusion into any utility or other easement unless approved by the owner of the easement.

Applicant Response: This does not cause an intrusion into any utility easement.

<u>Staff Response:</u> Public Works and the Department of Public Utilities have reviewed the request and did not submit any concerns. Any existing easements will still be accessible with the placement of a 6' solid fence. During the permitting process a NM One Call will also be required to ensure a safe installation.

b. The waiver request is caused by a practical difficulty or hardship inherent in the lot or lot improvements and the difficulty or hardship has not been self-imposed.

<u>Applicant Response</u>: The waiver request is caused by the hardship inherent in the lot, because it is a interior corner lot and the front of our house faces the neighbor's side yard storage area and two neighboring lots (south and southeast) have dogs. The storage is a boat and an unhitched trailer.

Staff Response: The configuration of the lot makes it so that 42% of the required front yard abuts the southern lot's side and rear yard. The southwest property point is shared by three other properties; this creates a practical difficulty for screening and privacy that is not self-imposed.

c. Granting of the waiver will not create a health or safety hazard or violate building code requirements.

<u>Applicant Response</u>: The granting of the waiver does not create a health or safety hazard and it does not violate building code requirements. The fence is not blocking the line of sight for any vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

<u>Staff Response</u>: The proposed fencing will not create a health or safety hazard. The proposed south section, if applied for by the owners of 935 Tewa Loop, would not require a waiver to be 6' in height.

d. Granting of the waiver will not create any significant negative physical impacts on property within 100 yards of the subject property such as reduced sight lines, loss of privacy, decreased security, increased noise, objectionable odors, intrusion of artificial light, the casting of unwanted shadows, or similar negative impacts.

Applicant Response: It is not blocking line of sight for any vehicular or pedestrian traffic. It increases privacy and security, because it is a fence and will increase privacy for all four lots that meet at the corner. It reduces noise since two of the neighboring lots (south and southeast) have dogs. There is no objectionable odor or intrusion of artificial light. The fence does not cast unwanted shadows or have any negative impacts.

Staff Response: The granting of this waiver will not create a negative impact on properties within 100 yards: fencing will be placed between lots, which will not reduce sight lines, but will increase security, privacy and comfort to the subject site, and adjacent lots whose yards are visible. Additionally, as it is a solid fence, it has the potential to decrease noise and provide peace to the property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff has applied the Waiver Review Criteria and recommends approval for the request for waiver.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

- The application, WAIVER #2020-0090 is to waive from the Los Alamos County Code of Ordinances, Section 16-271 (a)(1) which would allow for a 6' solid fence within a majority of the required front yard.
- The solid fence would be approximately 48.85 linear feet along the southern property line, and 25 linear feet along the east property line
- The Waiver Review Criteria, Section 16-157, has been applied.
- Notice of this public hearing, setting forth the nature of the request, the specific parcel of property affected, and the date, time and place of the public hearing, was announced and published in <u>The Los Alamos Daily Post</u>, the official newspaper of record; and property owners of real property located within 100 yards of the subject property were notified of this public hearing by U.S. mail, all in accordance with the requirements of §16-193 of the Los Alamos County Development Code and as the format complies with the New Mexico Department of Health's public emergency order governing mass gathering due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EXHIBITS:

- A. Application & Submittals to include Property Survey and Pictures
- B. Vicinity Map
- C. Required Front Yard Illustration
- D. 100 YD. Notification Map and Property Owner mail listing
- E. Letters of Support



L S ALAM S

Community Development

WAIVER APPLICATION

Los Alamos County Community Development Department

1000 Central Ave, Suite 150, Los Alamos NM 87544

(505) 662-8120

Note: The Board of Adjustment considers Applications for Waivers at a public hearing. Waiver means an adjustment of dimensional requirements, parking regulations, or design standards contained in the Land Development Code. Waivers shall not apply to regulations controlling density or land use.

Development Code. Waivers shall not apply to regulations controlling density or land use.				
Describe the Waiver request: Our house is in an interior corner lot and the view from the front of the house and from our front and side yards has direct line of sight to the neighbor's side yard storage area. Also, there is direct line of sight to the two neighboring lots (south and southeast) that have dogs. There is a four foot chain link fence along the side of the front (south) neighbor's back yard and a four foot chain link between our front yard and our side (east) neighbor front yard. We would like to have a six foot privacy cedar fence along the property line between us and our south neighbor's house east to the southeast corner of our lot (which is about 56 feet) and then along the property line between us and our side east neighbor starting from the southeast corner of our front lot going north as far as the front setback of our house (which is about 25 feet). See diagram.				
Address of Property to which the Waiver Request applies:				
933 Tewa Loop, Los Alamos, NM 87544				
Zoning District: Acreage: Lot Coverage: Related Applications (if any):				
APPLICANT (Unless otherwise specified, all communication regarding this application shall be to Applicant):				
Name: Christine Sweeney Phone: 505-661-0916 Cell #: 505-412-3820				
Please Print				
Address: <u>933 Tewa Loop, Los Alamos, NM 87544</u> Email: <u>icahrens@gmail.com</u>				
Address: <u>933 Tewa Loop, Los Alamos, NM 87544</u> <u>Cinan: <u>j</u>canfens@gmail.com</u>				
6/25/20				
SIGNATURE DATE				
PROPERTY OWNER (If different from Applicant) Check here if same as above				
Name: Cell #:				
Please Print				
Address: Email:				
Owner's Address				
My signature below indicates that I authorize the Applicant to make this Waiver application on my behalf.				
SIGNATURE DATE				
THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT <u>For County Use:</u>				
Date of Submittal: JUNE 5, 2020 Staff Initial:				
CDD Application Number: WVR-2020-0090 Fees Paid:				



WAIVER REVIEW CRITERIA:

The Los Alamos County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 16, Development Code, Sec. 16-157 establishes four (4) criteria upon which the Board of Adjustment shall base its decision to approve, approve with conditions and limitations, or deny the waiver request. The Board's decision shall depend upon the extent to which the request meets or fails to meet these criteria. Please review each of the criteria listed and provide short comments on how your application meets the criteria in the space provided. (Attach additional sheets if needed.)

(a) Granting of the waiver will not cause an intrusion into any utility or other easement unless approved by the owner of the easement; and

This does not cause an intrusion into any utility easement.

(b) The waiver request is caused by a practical difficulty or hardship inherent in the lot or lot improvements and the difficulty or hardship has not been self-imposed; and

The waiver request is caused by the hardship inherent in the lot, because it is a interior corner lot and the front of our house faces the neighbor's side yard storage area and two neighboring lots (south and southeast) have dogs. The storage is a boat and an unhitched trailer.

(c) Granting of the waiver will not create a health or safety hazard or violate building code requirements; and

The granting of the waiver does not create a health or safety hazard and it does not violate building code requirements. The fence is not blocking the line of sight for any vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

(d) Granting of the waiver will not create any significant negative physical impacts on property within 100 yards of the subject property such as reduced sight lines, loss of privacy, decreased security, increased noise, objectionable odors, intrusion of artificial light, the casting of unwanted shadows, or similar negative impacts.

Granting of the waiver does not create any significant negative physical impacts. It is not blocking line of sight for any vehicular or pedestrian traffic. It increases privacy and security, because it is a fence and will increase privacy for all four lots that meet at the corner. It reduces noise since two of the neighboring lots (south and southeast) have dogs. There is no objectionable odor or intrusion of artificial light. The fence does not cast unwanted shadows or have any negative impacts.

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Provide all information necessary for a complete review of the Waiver request. Check each of the boxes to indicate which information you have provided, and, if possible, also provide one complete copy of all materials on disk:

- Existing and proposed lot coverage.
 - Show and label the footprint of all existing buildings and structures on the site.
 - Show, dimension and label all existing and proposed easements.
 - Show, dimension and label all existing and proposed setbacks.
 - Show, dimension and label building/structure elevations.

└ Other. Describe: _

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PLAT REFERENCES: Bearings, distances and/or curve data are taken from the following plat:

Lot numbered seventeen (17) in Eastern Area No. 1 as the same is shown and dedicated on the Plat thereof, filed in the office of the County Clerk of Los Alamos County, New Mexico on April 13, 1965 in Plat Book 1, Page 55.

 NOTE: The error of closure is one foot of error for every 19,000
 feet along the perimeter of the legal description provided.

 Easements shown hereon are as listed in Title Commitment No.
 (NONE)
 provided by Title Company.

THIS IS NOT A SURVEY FOR USE BY A PROPERTY OWNER FOR ANY PURPOSE



PAGE 1 OF 2

LA06-192

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View of 933 Tewa front and south neighbor storage area from street.

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View of south neighbor storage from our 933 Tewa Loop front door.





View of south neighbor storage area from our east front yard of 933 Tewa Loop





View of southeast corner of 933 Tewa, shows east, southeast and south neighbors (left to right). We are putting in grass within this corner.







View from our 933 Tewa front yard toward east neighbor.





Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BV-SA|







PUBLIC NOTIFICATION MAP



100 YD BUFFER

STULL JAMIE A & SUMMERSCALES 950 SANTA CLARA PL LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 PAIR RANDAL T 948 SANTA CLARA PLACE LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 MICHALAK SARAH ELLEN PO BOX 1154 LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 SIBBITT RANDY R& DEBORAH & 702 MADISON AVE HELENA MT 59601 ROKOP KATHLEEN S 961 OTAWI PL LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 ALLEN SHARON E 926 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 GURLEY JESSICA K 86 ENSENADA LOS ALAMOS NM 87547 CAPELLI JEAN MARIE LIVING TRUST 925 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 MIKO DAVID K 927 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 PAINTER JAMES WALTER& ALICE 958 OTOWI PL LOS ALAMOS NM 87544

DELAMATER NORMAN D & YVONNE 960 OTOWI PL LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 APODACA VERNOCIA C & LAWRENCE 962 OTOWI PL LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 GRUNAU DARYL W & SHANA L 964 OTOWI PL LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 LOYA GENEVIEVE D REVOC TRUST 929 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 DAWALD STEVEN L & MELANIE K 942 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 SUTPHIN IRMA L 940 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 STOUT MICHAEL G % MANUEL PO BOX 1702 **ESPANOLA** NM 87532 **GROW JACK & FIENGO MEAGON** 936 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 SNIDER GARRICK W REVOC TRUST 931 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 **TABOR CAROLINA E & LEPSCH KEITH** 941 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544

SIBBITT WILMER L JR & RANDY R & 3509 HANNETT AVE NE ALBUQUERQUE NM 871061116 CARRENO JOSE L & ROANNA R 937 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 GRIEGO DAVID 935 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 AHRENS JAMES P & SWEENEY 933 TEWA LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 WINDLER GARY K JR & KARA R 967 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 LOS ALAMOS COUNTY PO BOX 30 LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 MCCALLUM JACOB B 969 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 MILLER GUTHERIE 509 CAMINO LEJO SANTA FE NM 87505 WALKER CARRIE & ZECK BRYAN 973 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 **BERISFORD DANIEL F & SWANSON** 975 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544

SNYDER SHARON 966 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 COY JAMES D & HEATHER J REVOC 968 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 DOYLE TIMOTHY O & CHRISTINE L 4244 RIDGEWAY DR LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 ARCHULETA LEO P & GLORIA J 972 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 CONTARINO JOAN SCHAFFNER 984 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 MILLER MAURA DYLAN 977 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 **O'NEIL BRIAN E & CHRISTIANSEN** 982 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 SMITH CHROSTOPHER H & NATALIE 980 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544 GOGGIN DAVID B & JUDITH A RHODE-979 NAMBE LOOP LOS ALAMOS NM 87544

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arrick Snider <garricksnider@gmail.com></garricksnider@gmail.com>
aturday, July 18, 2020 11:44 AM
ujan, Desirae J.
cahrens@gmail.com
VVR-2020-0090

I see no reason the Ahrens should not be able to continue their newly built fence from their side yard extending to their front yard.

1)There doesn't appear to be any easement issue

2) The lot hasn't changed layout since the home was built

3) It(the fence) doesnt appear to create any health, safety hazards. Rather, the fence will create a safe social distance and offer more privacy/safety for the Ahrens family.

4) I see no negative impacts to the surrounding property. I am one of their immediate next door neighbors.

Please grant this waiver! WVR-2020-0090

Regards, Garrick Snider 931 Tewa Loop

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Lujan, Desirae J.

From:	Keith Lepsch <lepschk@mac.com></lepschk@mac.com>
Sent:	Saturday, July 18, 2020 12:20 PM
То:	Lujan, Desirae J.
Cc:	jcahrens@gmail.com
Subject:	WVR-2020-0090 (To build a fence)

Re: WVR-2020-0090 (To build a fence)

This letter is meant to indicate the support of myself and my wife Keith and Carolina Lepsch. We live at 941 Tewa Loop.

As the neighbors of Christine Sweeney and Jim Ahrens we are supportive of their proposed fence project.

- We believe that this will not create any negative impacts to our neighborhood, and likely will increase the beauty and value of our neighborhood. We believe this to be a well planned and conceived project.
- We believe that this will not create a health or safety hazard or violate any building code
- We believe this is due to a practical difficulty or hardship inherent in the lot
- Is our understanding that this will not cause any easement intrusion

If you have any questions or should we be able to help in any other way please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you

Keith Lepsch 941 Tewa Loop Los Alamos NM, 87544 KE5WQ0 505-920-0712

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From:	Daryl & Shana Grunau <grunaus@gmail.com></grunaus@gmail.com>
Sent:	Saturday, July 18, 2020 4:05 PM
То:	Lujan, Desirae J.
Subject:	Support for WVR-2020-0090

To whom it may concern,

Let the record show that we are residents of the Eastern Area in Los Alamos:

Daryl & Shana Grunau 964 Otowi Pl. Los Alamos, NM 87544

We believe that the proposed waiver *meets* the following criteria:

- 1. It does not cause an easement intrusion
- 2. It is due to a practical difficulty/hardship inherent in the lot location
- 3. It does not in any way create a health or safety hazard, or violate building code
- 4. It does not create a significant negative impact on property within 100 yards (e.g. reduced sight line, loss of privacy, decreased security, increased noise, objectionable odors, intrusion of artificial light, casting of unwanted shadows, etc).

We are in *favor* of granting this waiver to Jim and Christine. Thanks for your consideration!

Daryl & Shana Grunau

From:	T Sibbitt <trsibbitt@gmail.com></trsibbitt@gmail.com>
Sent:	Tuesday, July 21, 2020 5:11 PM
То:	Lujan, Desirae J.
Cc:	jcahrens@gmail.com
Subject:	Letter of Support for WVR-2020-0090 (to build a fence). Scheduled for hearing before the Board of Ad justments on July 27 at 5:30

Hello, I live at 923 Tewa Loop and I am writing this letter in support of the above referenced waiver application of my neighbors, Christine Sweeney and Jim Ahrens, 933 Tewa Loop, for a waiver to build a privacy fence. As far as I can tell, the fence as proposed does not intrude into any easements, is meant to cure some difficulties or hardship of the lot itself, and does not create any health or safety hazard. In addition, the fence as proposed does not reduce sight lines or cause any other apparent negative impacts.

However, I disagree that any dogs in this neighborhood cause excessive noise. As a dog lover myself and as a very long time resident of this neighborhood, I do not consider any existing dogs to be problematic. However, I think the other criteria set forth in the waiver application are more than sufficient to support the waiver request request, and I have no objection to the privacy fence as proposed.

Sincerely,

Tina R. Sibbitt 923 Tewa Loop

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sent: To: Cc: Subject: Dan Berisford <danberisford@gmail.com> Tuesday, July 21, 2020 10:30 AM Lujan, Desirae J. Erika Swanson Support for fence at 933 Tewa Loop



To whom it may concern,

The purpose of this letter is to support the proposal to construct a wooden privacy fence at the boundary between 933 Tewa Loop and 975 Nambe Loop, Los Alamos, NM. The proposed fence will add minimal visual impact, and provide a desirable upgrade from the existing chain link fence. While the impacted yard areas are officially considered "front yard" by the county, the usable space is back yard for all practical purposes and is barely visible from the street. The fence will mate to an existing fence at the property line, and closely match another existing fence on the backyard line of neighboring properties 935 Tewa Loop and 973 Nambe Loop. We, Daniel Berisford and Erika Swanson, own and reside at the property of 975 Nambe Loop, and we have no objections to the fence project.

Sincerely, Daniel Berisford Erika Swanson

From: Sent: To: Cc: Subject: Carrie Walker <carrie.lynn.walker@gmail.com> Tuesday, July 21, 2020 9:24 AM Lujan, Desirae J. jcahrens@gmail.com support for WVR-2020-0090

To whom it may concern:

I understand that our neighbors have applied to build a 6' fence on portions of their property, 933 Tewa Loop. We reside in the house catty-corner to the property in question.

We have no objections to or concerns about this fence, and we do not believe it creates any significant negative impact to our property. We support the approval of this application.

Regards, Carrie Walker 973 Nambe Loop, Los Alamos, NM 87544