

The sky is falling, or is it?

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There's a well-known fable about Chicken Little, a chicken who is hit on the head by a falling acorn. Rather than looking up and investigating what caused the bump to her head, she races across the countryside stirring up panic that the sky is falling.

There are plenty of acorns bopping Teton Valley residents on the head. People are rightly concerned about whether they'll be able to continue to afford living here, whether their child's school will have the resources it needs, whether roads will be safe, and whether they'll still see wildlife regularly. Most residents of Teton Valley agree that a better plan to manage growth is essential. A system that worked well for processing small subdivisions just doesn't cut it when thousands of units on thousands of acres come up for review. But while almost everyone agrees that new and better strategies are needed, when solutions are proposed the knee jerk reaction is panic. It's as if we can't distinguish between the proposed solution and the underlying problem.

A year ago the valley was rife with emotion over the county moratorium. Today and tomorrow it might be any number of changes coming down the pipeline. Victor is considering a traditional neighborhood overlay district and expansion of their impact area. Driggs is introducing new zoning to facilitate in-fill development in town. Teton is updating their 1984 Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code. The county has been working for months on a number of planning tools, including the Planned Unit Development ordinance, to help address the issue of new development outpacing the county's ability to provide services to those new homeowners.

True, the solutions are usually technical and political in nature (what the heck is a Traditional Neighborhood Overlay or a Capital Improvements Plan?). This makes some of us want to respond like the proverbial ostrich, burying our heads in the sand and pretending it doesn't affect us, with the caveat that "I can always move if it gets too bad." Others respond in fear and contribute to rumors in Chicken Little fashion.

We have a choice. We can choose to take the bull by the horns and help chart Teton Valley's own course into the future. Let's make the choice to understand the issues and the proposed solutions. Attend educational workshops. Come to public hearings with an open mind to learn. You don't have to understand all the technical details to speak at a hearing. The most important thing is to express what you care about and what possible solutions you see.

Let's steer the course between Chicken Little and the ostrich with its head in the sand. Let's find out the facts, provide thoughtful and respectful input and together determine the future of our beautiful valley home.