

Planning Commission Workshop



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STAFF REPORT

DRAFT PRIVATE ROAD NAMING AMENDMENTS

- Date:** March 29, 2024
- Staff:** Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner
- Attachments:** A – Proposed Amendments to LCC 12.60.280, Driveways and private roads
B – Proposed Amendments to LCC 16.12, Large Lot Subdivisions
C – Proposed Amendments to LCC 16.02, General Provisions (Subdivisions)
D – Private Road Naming Policy

SUMMARY

Site addresses are a critical component of public safety because addresses aid emergency services in locating homes and businesses. Over time, different approaches to and inconsistent implementation of private road naming requirements in Lewis County have resulted in many unnamed private roads. This decreases public safety.

The issue of road naming is more complex than simply requiring all private roads to be named. There are different ways that new lots are created and those may or may not trigger the need for naming a private road. There are different ways existing unnamed roads are extended or branched, which expands the problem.

This code amendment package is intended to create a consistent approach that requires new private roads that provide access to two or more lots to be named. In addition, when an existing unnamed private road is going to be extended then the entire road must be named. This will increase public safety by creating site addresses that include a private road name. This will also benefit the current or future property owner when selling the property because it will provide locational information to perspective buyers. It will also benefit people living on the newly created lots because delivery vehicles will be able to locate the home more easily.

This code amendment package does not address the issue of naming unnamed roads when no new lots are being created nor does it address private road names when no road extension is necessary.

HISTORY

Countywide readdressing was initiated in the 1970s when rural routes were eliminated. The county chose an addressing method of 200 #s per mile. Over time it was realized that structures which shared private roads or driveways did not fit into this scheme, because not enough #s were available to allow for several structures on a single private road or driveway. At first, a solution of alphanumeric subunits of A, B, C, etc. were assigned to structures on shared drives, but this caused problems because the letters could not reliably be assigned in order.

A solution in the 1990s, known as dashed addressing, was devised to assign subunit numbers based on how far down the drive and what direction each branching private road or driveway turned. This theoretically allows for orderly assignment of subunit numbers, but it is confusing to use in practice.

General dissatisfaction with the dashed addressing method has been noted on numerous occasions by county staff from all offices that manage site addresses, especially from 911 Communications, and by staff from other agencies, including emergency responders, postal officials, and utilities. It also differs significantly from methods used by other surrounding address authorities, so it is unfamiliar and unintuitive. Since the format is unfamiliar, addressing is often misunderstood with parts of the number being left out. In addition, because these long and complicated addresses are difficult to memorize and transcribe in the 911 Spillman database, addresses are often incorrectly noted with the risk of truncating numbers.

Currently, private road names are required when a land division creates three or more lots. The Private Road Application and process is found [here](#) and summarized below:

1. The proposed road name shall not duplicate any other road name in Lewis County.
2. The proposed road name shall not exceed 10 characters or letters, including spaces between letters or characters excluding the words private, road, drive, lane, etc.
3. Lewis County reserves the right to veto any proposed name they believe would be either confusing to the public or inappropriate.

The Private Road Naming Program and process has not been applied to land divisions that create two lots. For example, a simple segregation land division may split a lot that is 10 acres or larger in size into two 5-acre lots, when located within the Rural Development District – 5 acre (RDD-5) zoning district. In this scenario, the lots must have access from a public road or a private road, but unlike land divisions that create three or more lots, when two lots are created the lots do not need an address and the road does not need to be named.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Update LCC Title 12.60.280, Driveways and private road standards to clarify that any land division that creates three or more lots must be accessed by a private road. If one lot is being divided into three, then it must be accessed by a private road. This is already the practice, but the code was not sufficiently clear. See Attachment A – Proposed Amendments to LCC 12.60.280.
2. Require that during a simple segregation, the created lots be addressed and the private road named. This is already required during short and long plat subdivisions and would now be required for simple segregations. However, the private road serving the simple segregation would not need to be built during a simple segregation. See Attachment B – Proposed Amendments to LCC 16.12.
3. Prohibit extension of dashed road names. If any new land division is proposed that requires extension of a private road, and that private road is named with dashes, then the entire private road shall be renamed. This will require agreement from 50% of the property owners on that private

road. Note, this is already an administrative requirement for short and long plats; however, this practice has not been codified. Adding it to the development regulations will ensure property owners know the requirements upfront. See Attachment C – Proposed Amendments to LCC 16.02.

4. The Private Road Naming Program and the Addressee’s Acknowledgement Form should be updated to clarify the applicability and process, as described in Attachment D – Policy. In addition, the program approval criteria will require a new spur off an existing private road to receive a new private road name. If the private road is an extension of an existing private road then it will need to have the same name, unless it’s a dashed road name then a new name must be chosen (see Attachment C).

NEXT STEPS

The Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a workshop on amendments to LCC 16.12 and Private Road Addressing Program on April 9, 2024. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for May 14, 2024 to receive public testimony. Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission may deliberate and vote to transmit a recommendation to the Board of County Commission. The recommendation may be to approve a proposal, approve the proposal with changes or deny the proposal. After the Board of County Commissioners reviews the recommendation, they will hold a public hearing before making a final decision.