By:  Oliverson, et al. (Senate Sponsor - Hughes) H.B. No. 866

(In the Senate - Received from the House April 13, 2023; April 18, 2023, read first time and referred to Committee on Local Government; May 22, 2023, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 6, Nays 1; May 22, 2023, sent to printer.)

COMMITTEE VOTE

                 Yea Nay Absent  PNV

Bettencourt       X

Springer          X

Eckhardt              X

Gutierrez                   X

Hall              X

Nichols           X

Parker            X

Paxton            X

West                        X

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to approval of certain land development applications by a municipality or county.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Sections 212.001(2) and (3), Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(2)  [~~"Plan" means a subdivision development plan, including a subdivision plan, subdivision construction plan, site plan, land development application, and site development plan.~~

[~~(3)~~]  "Plat" includes a preliminary plat, [~~general plan,~~] final plat, and replat.

SECTION 2.  Subchapter A, Chapter 212, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Section 212.0015 to read as follows:

Sec. 212.0015.  CONSTRUCTION OF SUBCHAPTER. This subchapter may not be construed to restrict a municipality from establishing a submittal calendar to be used by an applicant to facilitate compliance with the approval process described by Sections 212.009, 212.0091, 212.0093, and 212.0095.

SECTION 3.  Section 212.004, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Subsection (f) to read as follows:

(f)  A plat is considered filed on the date the applicant submits the plat, along with a completed plat application and the application fees and other requirements prescribed by or under this subchapter, to:

(1)  the governing body of the municipality; or

(2)  the municipal authority responsible for approving plats.

SECTION 4.  Sections 212.0065(a) and (c), Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  The governing body of a municipality or the municipal planning commission may delegate to one or more officers or employees of the municipality or of a utility owned or operated by the municipality the ability to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat [~~:~~

[~~(1)  amending plats described by Section 212.016;~~

[~~(2)  minor plats or replats involving four or fewer lots fronting on an existing street and not requiring the creation of any new street or the extension of municipal facilities; or~~

[~~(3)  a replat under Section 212.0145 that does not require the creation of any new street or the extension of municipal facilities~~].

(c)  An applicant has the right to appeal to the governing body of the municipality or the municipal planning commission if the designated [~~The~~] person disapproves a [~~or persons shall not disapprove the~~] plat [~~and shall be required to refer any plat which the person or persons refuse to approve to the municipal authority responsible for approving plats within the time period specified in Section 212.009~~].

SECTION 5.  Sections 212.009(a), (b), (b-2), (c), and (d), Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  The municipal authority responsible for approving plats shall approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a [~~plan or~~] plat within 30 days after the date the [~~plan or~~] plat is filed. A [~~plan or~~] plat is approved by the municipal authority unless it is disapproved within that period and in accordance with Section 212.0091.

(b)  If an ordinance requires that a [~~plan or~~] plat be approved by the governing body of the municipality in addition to the planning commission, the governing body shall approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove the [~~plan or~~] plat within 30 days after the date the [~~plan or~~] plat is approved by the planning commission or is approved by the inaction of the commission. A [~~plan or~~] plat is approved by the governing body unless it is disapproved within that period and in accordance with Section 212.0091.

(b-2)  Notwithstanding Subsection (a) or (b), the parties may extend the 30-day period described by those subsections for one or more periods, each [~~a period~~] not to exceed 30 days if:

(1)  the applicant requests the extension in writing to the municipal authority responsible for approving plats or the governing body of the municipality, as applicable; and

(2)  the municipal authority or governing body, as applicable, approves the extension request.

(c)  If a [~~plan or~~] plat is approved, the municipal authority giving the approval shall endorse the [~~plan or~~] plat with a certificate indicating the approval. The certificate must be signed by:

(1)  the authority's presiding officer and attested by the authority's secretary; or

(2)  a majority of the members of the authority.

(d)  If the municipal authority responsible for approving plats fails to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a [~~plan or~~] plat within the prescribed period, the authority on the applicant's request shall issue a certificate stating the date the [~~plan or~~] plat was filed and that the authority failed to act on the [~~plan or~~] plat within the period. The certificate is effective in place of the endorsement required by Subsection (c).

SECTION 6.  Section 212.0091(a), Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  A municipal authority or governing body that conditionally approves or disapproves a [~~plan or~~] plat under this subchapter shall provide the applicant a written statement of the conditions for the conditional approval or reasons for disapproval that clearly articulates each specific condition for the conditional approval or reason for disapproval.

SECTION 7.  Sections 212.0093, 212.0095, and 212.0096, Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

Sec. 212.0093.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: APPLICANT RESPONSE TO CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL. After the conditional approval or disapproval of a [~~plan or~~] plat under Section 212.0091, the applicant may submit to the municipal authority or governing body that conditionally approved or disapproved the [~~plan or~~] plat a written response that satisfies each condition for the conditional approval or remedies each reason for disapproval provided. The municipal authority or governing body may not establish a deadline for an applicant to submit the response.

Sec. 212.0095.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF RESPONSE. (a) A municipal authority or governing body that receives a response under Section 212.0093 shall determine whether to approve or disapprove the applicant's previously conditionally approved or disapproved [~~plan or~~] plat not later than the 15th day after the date the response was submitted.

(b)  A municipal authority or governing body that conditionally approves or disapproves a [~~plan or~~] plat following the submission of a response under Section 212.0093:

(1)  must comply with Section 212.0091; and

(2)  may disapprove the [~~plan or~~] plat only for a specific condition or reason provided to the applicant under Section 212.0091.

(c)  A municipal authority or governing body that receives a response under Section 212.0093 shall approve a previously conditionally approved or disapproved [~~plan or~~] plat if the response adequately addresses each condition of the conditional approval or each reason for the disapproval.

(d)  A previously conditionally approved or disapproved [~~plan or~~] plat is approved if:

(1)  the applicant filed a response that meets the requirements of Subsection (c); and

(2)  the municipal authority or governing body that received the response does not disapprove the [~~plan or~~] plat on or before the date required by Subsection (a) and in accordance with Section 212.0091.

Sec. 212.0096.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: ALTERNATIVE APPROVAL PROCESS. (a) Notwithstanding Sections 212.009, 212.0091, 212.0093, and 212.0095, an applicant may elect at any time to seek approval for a [~~plan or~~] plat under an alternative approval process adopted by a municipality if the process allows for a shorter approval period than the approval process described by Sections 212.009, 212.0091, 212.0093, and 212.0095.

(b)  An applicant that elects to seek approval under the alternative approval process described by Subsection (a) is not:

(1)  required to satisfy the requirements of Sections 212.009, 212.0091, 212.0093, and 212.0095 before bringing an action challenging a disapproval of a [~~plan or~~] plat under this subchapter; and

(2)  prejudiced in any manner in bringing the action described by Subdivision (1), including satisfying a requirement to exhaust any and all remedies.

SECTION 8.  Subchapter A, Chapter 212, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Section 212.00965 to read as follows:

Sec. 212.00965.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: ALTERNATIVE REVIEW PROCESS FOR UNREVIEWED APPLICATIONS. (a) If a municipality fails to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove an applicant's plat earlier than the 15th day after the date prescribed by Section 212.009 or 212.0095, as applicable, the applicant may have the plat reviewed by:

(1)  a person with the authority to review plats for:

(A)  the municipality; or

(B)  a political subdivision other than the municipality if the municipality approves the reviewer; or

(2)  an engineer licensed under Chapter 1001, Occupations Code.

(b)  A person may not review a plat under Subsection (a) if the person:

(1)  is the applicant; or

(2)  prepared the plat that is the subject of the application.

(c)  A person who performs a review under this section:

(1)  has the authority to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat as if the person were delegated authority under Section 212.0065;

(2)  must ensure the plat satisfies all applicable regulations; and

(3)  must provide notice of the review to the municipality not later than the 15th day after the date of the review.

(d)  The municipality may prescribe a reasonable format for the notice provided under Subsection (c)(3).

(e)  The municipality may not collect an additional fee related to the review performed under Subsection (a).

SECTION 9.  Section 212.0099, Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 212.0099.  JUDICIAL REVIEW OF DISAPPROVAL. In a legal action challenging a disapproval of a [~~plan or~~] plat under this subchapter, the municipality has the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that the disapproval meets the requirements of this subchapter or any applicable case law. The court may not use a deferential standard.

SECTION 10.  Section 232.001, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Subsection (g) to read as follows:

(g)  A plat is considered filed on the date the applicant submits the plat, along with a completed plat application and the application fees and other requirements prescribed by or under this subchapter, to:

(1)  the commissioners court; or

(2)  the county authority responsible for approving plats.

SECTION 11.  Subchapter A, Chapter 232, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Sections 232.0012 and 232.0022 to read as follows:

Sec. 232.0012.  CONSTRUCTION OF SUBCHAPTER. This subchapter may not be construed to restrict a county from establishing a submittal calendar to be used by an applicant to facilitate compliance with the approval process described by Sections 232.0025, 232.0026, 232.0027, and 232.0028.

Sec. 232.0022.  DELEGATION OF APPROVAL RESPONSIBILITY. (a) The commissioners court of a county or the court's designee may designate to one or more officers or employees of the county the authority to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat.

(b)  An applicant has the right to appeal to the commissioners court or the court's designee if the designated person or persons disapprove a plat.

SECTION 12.  The heading to Section 232.0025, Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 232.0025.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: TIMELY APPROVAL OF PLATS [~~AND PLANS~~].

SECTION 13.  Section 232.0025, Local Government Code, is amended by amending Subsections (b), (c), (d), (f), (g), (h), and (i) and adding Subsection (f-1) to read as follows:

(b)  If a person submits a plat application to the commissioners court that does not include all of the documentation or other information required by Subsection (a), the commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~] shall, not later than the 10th business day after the date the commissioners court receives the application, notify the applicant of the missing documents or other information. The commissioners court shall allow an applicant to timely submit the missing documents or other information.

(c)  An application is considered complete when all documentation or other information required by Subsection (a) is received. Acceptance by the commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~] of a completed plat application with the documentation or other information required by Subsection (a) shall not be construed as approval of the documentation or other information.

(d)  Except as provided by Subsection (f), the commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~] shall approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat application not later than the 30th day after the date the completed application is received by the commissioners court or the county authority [~~court's designee~~]. An application is approved by the commissioners court or the county authority [~~court's designee~~] unless the application is disapproved within that period and in accordance with Section 232.0026.

(f)  The 30-day period under Subsection (d):

(1)  for a purpose related to Chapter 2007, Government Code, may be extended for a period not to exceed 30 days, if:

(A)  requested and agreed to in writing by the applicant and approved by the commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~]; or

(B)  Chapter 2007, Government Code, requires the county to perform a takings impact assessment in connection with the plat application; or [~~and~~]

(2)  for a purpose unrelated to Chapter 2007, Government Code, may be extended for one or more periods, not to exceed 30 days, if requested and agreed to in writing by the applicant and approved by the commissioners court or the county authority.

(f-1)  The 30-day period under Subsection (d) applies only to a decision wholly within the control of the commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~].

(g)  The commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~] shall make the determination under Subsection (f)(1) of whether the 30-day period will be extended not later than the 20th day after the date a completed plat application is received by the commissioners court or the county authority [~~court's designee~~].

(h)  The commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~] may not require an applicant to waive the time limits or approval procedure contained in this subchapter.

(i)  If the commissioners court or the county authority responsible for approving plats [~~court's designee~~] fails to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat application as required by this subchapter:

(1)  the commissioners court shall refund the greater of the unexpended portion of any application fee or deposit or 50 percent of an application fee or deposit that has been paid;

(2)  the application is granted by operation of law; and

(3)  the applicant may apply to a district court in the county where the tract of land is located for a writ of mandamus to compel the commissioners court to issue documents recognizing the plat application's approval.

SECTION 14.  Section 232.0026(a), Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  A commissioners court or county authority responsible for approving plats [~~designee~~] that conditionally approves or disapproves of a plat application under this subchapter shall provide the applicant a written statement of the conditions for the conditional approval or the reasons for disapproval that clearly articulates each specific condition for the conditional approval or reason for disapproval.

SECTION 15.  Sections 232.0027 and 232.0028, Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

Sec. 232.0027.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: APPLICANT RESPONSE TO CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL.  After the conditional approval or disapproval of a plat application under Section 232.0026, the applicant may submit to the commissioners court or county authority responsible for approving plats [~~designee~~] that conditionally approved or disapproved the application a written response that satisfies each condition for the conditional approval or remedies each reason for disapproval provided.  The commissioners court or county authority [~~designee~~] may not establish a deadline for an applicant to submit the response.

Sec. 232.0028.  APPROVAL PROCEDURE: APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF RESPONSE.  (a)  A commissioners court or county authority responsible for approving plats [~~designee~~] that receives a response under Section 232.0027 shall determine whether to approve or disapprove the applicant's previously conditionally approved or disapproved plat application not later than the 15th day after the date the response was submitted under Section 232.0027.

(b)  A commissioners court or county authority responsible for approving plats [~~designee~~] that conditionally approves or disapproves a plat application following the submission of a response under Section 232.0027:

(1)  must comply with Section 232.0026; and

(2)  may disapprove the application only for a specific condition or reason provided to the applicant for the original application under Section 232.0026.

(c)  A commissioners court or county authority responsible for approving plats [~~designee~~] that receives a response under Section 232.0027 shall approve a previously conditionally approved or disapproved plat application if the applicant's response adequately addresses each condition for the conditional approval or each reason for the disapproval.

(d)  A previously conditionally approved or disapproved plat application is approved if:

(1)  the applicant filed a response that meets the requirements of Subsection (c); and

(2)  the commissioners court or county authority responsible for approving plats [~~designee~~] that received the response does not disapprove the application on or before the date required by Subsection (a) and in accordance with Section 232.0026.

SECTION 16.  Subchapter A, Chapter 232, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Section 232.00287 to read as follows:

Sec. 232.00287.  ALTERNATIVE REVIEW PROCESS. (a) If a county fails to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat or an applicant's written response earlier than the 15th day after the date prescribed by Section 232.0025 or 232.0028, as applicable, an applicant may have the plat reviewed by:

(1)  a person with authority to review plats for:

(A)  the county; or

(B)  a political subdivision other than the county if the county approves the reviewer; or

(2)  an engineer licensed under Chapter 1001, Occupations Code.

(b)  A person may not review a plat under Subsection (a) if the person:

(1)  is the applicant; or

(2)  prepared the plat that is the subject of the application.

(c)  A person who performs a review under this section:

(1)  has the authority to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a plat as if the person were delegated authority under Section 232.0022;

(2)  must ensure the plat satisfies all applicable regulations; and

(3)  must provide notice of the review to the county not later than the 15th day after the date of the review.

(d)  The county may prescribe a reasonable format for the notice provided under Subsection (c)(3).

(e)  The county may not collect an additional fee related to the review performed under Subsection (a).

SECTION 17.  The following provisions of the Local Government Code are repealed:

(1)  Section 212.009(b-1); and

(2)  Section 232.0025(d-1).

SECTION 18.  The changes in law made by this Act apply only to a plat application filed on or after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 19.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.

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