

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

APPROVED

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

This meeting was conducted via teleconference in accordance with Governor Newsom's Executive Orders N-20-20 and N-35-20 and COVID-19 pandemic protocols.

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ROLL CALL

The teleconference meeting of the Planning Commission of January 13, 2021 was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Brown.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Ritter.

Staff Members Present: Shweta Bonn, Senior Planner; Ellen Clark, Community Development Director; Melinda Denis, Planning and Permit Center Manager; Julie Harryman, Assistant City Attorney; Eric Luchini, Associate Planner; Stefanie Ananthan, Recording Secretary

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Nancy Allen, Brandon Pace, Herb Ritter and Chair Justin Brown

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Greg O'Connor

AGENDA AMENDMENTS

None.

CONSENT CALENDAR - *Consent Calendar items are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion unless a request for removal for discussion or explanation is received from the Planning Commission or a member of the public by submitting a speaker card for that item.*

Item 3 - Approval of the November 18, 2020 meeting minutes were pulled off the Consent Calendar for edits by Commissioner Allen:

Page 6, third paragraph: "Ms. Clark stated it would be helpful to understand the Commission's tolerance regarding setbacks... Commissioner Allen reiterated she was not comfortable with a 32-foot setback, but could support a 50-foot setback, as the worst-case scenario."

Clarification was added to the section of the above paragraph to include "Commissioner Allen clarified her comments related to the 50-foot setback, stating it was a minimum of 50 feet to be

validated by streetscapes, which have not yet been seen but will need to be seen in the future; if the streetscapes don't support it, then the 50-foot setback might not be sufficient."

1. **Actions of the City Council**
2. **Actions of the Zoning Administrator**
3. **Approve the meeting minutes of November 18, 2020**
4. **Approve the meeting minutes of December 9, 2020**
5. **P20-0987, Sean Wells/Gilman Brewing Company, 706 Main Street – Application for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to operate a bar. Zoning is C-C (Central Commercial), Downtown Revitalization, Active Ground-Floor Overlay, Core Area Overlay, Downtown Hospitality Central Core Area District.**

**Commissioner Ritter moved to approve Items 1-5 on the Consent Calendar with Commissioner Allen's change to Item 3.
Commissioner Pace seconded the motion.**

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Allen, Brown, Pace, and Ritter
NOES: None
ABSENT: Commissioner O'Connor
ABSTAIN: None

The Actions of the City Council were approved, as submitted.

The Actions of the Zoning Administrator were approved, as submitted.

The Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2020 were approved, as amended.

The Meeting Minutes of December 9, 2020 were approved, as submitted.

Resolution PC-2021-01 approving Case P20-0987 was adopted, as motioned.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

6. **Public Comment from the audience regarding items not listed on the agenda –
*Speakers are encouraged to limit comments to 3 minutes.***

There were no members of the audience wishing to address the Commission.

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND OTHER MATTERS

7. **P20-0989, Objective Design Standards – Work session to review and discuss the process of creating Objective Design Standards for residential development.**

Senior Planner Shweta Bonn presented the specifics of the item in the Agenda Report.

Mr. Rick Williams of Van Meter Williams Pollack (VMWP) continued the presentation and provided additional specifics of the item as presented in the Agenda Report.

Commissioner Allen asked how the expertise of the consultants and best practices of other cities would be provided since the Commission did not have a lot of experience with high density buildings. Director of Community Development Ellen Clark explained the review was very specific and the Commission should rely on Mr. Williams and Mr. Andrew Faulkner of VMWP to articulate the technical components. She stated the draft standards, which would return to the Commission in a couple months, would contain a lot of detail that would be based on recommendations from Mr. Williams and Mr. Faulkner. She stated additional opportunities for input would be available. Commissioner Allen confirmed the Planning Commission was just one piece of input in the process. Mr. Williams explained they toured Bay Area cities to determine the components of successful development and they would be providing examples from other cities to be translated to Pleasanton.

Commissioner Pace expressed confusion on the purpose of the item. He stated his understanding of the State's requirement for cities to permit more higher density projects in order to accommodate greater access to homes and living spaces for California and, to prepare, the City was determining principles to manage the growth. He asked for confirmation that the Commission was being asked to provide its opinion so when specific issues come forward there was a guideline or policy to address it. Ms. Clark confirmed the purpose of the exercise was to develop standards instead of guidelines, removing areas of discretion that may not be enforceable under State law. She explained the questions posed to the Commission for guidance. Mr. Williams requested the Commission provide input on design standards and priorities.

Commissioner Ritter stated he would like to meet the State's standards without overregulating. Ms. Clark explained the State was not prescribing development standards, rather mandating the cities had to have standards instead of guidelines to prescribe project and building design. Mr. Williams further clarified the ten questions before the Planning Commission were similar to factors other cities were considering.

Chair Brown inquired whether the objective of the State was to fast-track approvals and reduce the ambiguity of submissions by having design standards and less opportunity for the Planning Commission to provide input during the application process. Ms. Clark confirmed. Chair Brown asked who had been provided the opportunity to take the survey. Ms. Clark explained it had been made available to others, but she was not sure if others had taken it. Chair Brown inquired if there was a plan for the public or interested parties to take the survey and the timeline for having approved design guidelines. He also asked if other commissions would be taking the survey. Ms. Clark replied that the goal was to complete the standards in 2021. She explained the existing standards were being updated and refined, versus creating a whole new set of regulations. Chair Brown expressed concern that people would become aware of the standards closer to finalization and would want to provide feedback. He discussed the need for sufficient outreach. Ms. Clark explained that, in the next phase, the draft document would be introduced to key stakeholders, such as Hacienda and Simon Properties, Pleasanton Downtown Association (PDA) and Pleasanton Heritage Association (PHA). Chair Brown asked

if there was any chance the State requirements would extend beyond residential, affecting commercial properties. Ms. Clark stated the State's concern was around streamlining housing projects. Chair Brown inquired if the standards would apply to anything in the interior of buildings. Ms. Clark explained the majority of standards were focused on site layout and building design. Mr. Williams suggested potential discussion on active uses to prevent unappealing blank walls in publicly visible areas. Chair Brown asked if the City could regulate where amenities were located within a project. Ms. Clark stated the City could establish regulations regarding onsite amenities.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS OPENED

There were no members of the audience wishing to address the Commission.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED

Discussion Point #1:

Should the "sides" of infill and multifamily development be required to provide the same articulation as street-facing facades?

Commissioner Allen stated sides of a building, street or public facing, should be required to provide the same articulation. She referenced the example of the east facing side of the St. John property shown during the presentation, stating it should have been designed with public facing articulations. She stated she would not prioritize articulation if it were only facing the interior of the development and would not be public facing, particularly given the added expense. Mr. Williams explained that minimum articulations could be used for creating dimension and depth and he would provide proposed regulations. Commissioner Allen stated she would prefer money be spent on high quality, compatible public viewed areas and allowing flexibility in design areas that were not as visible to the public.

Commissioner Pace concurred with Commissioner Allen in that there be more requirements for areas visible to the public from the exterior.

Commissioner Ritter stated he would like to see articulations used to compensate for height and agreed the public facing sides should be the priority.

Chair Brown stated that buildings which can be viewed publicly from an interior alley or roadway should have a cohesive design and be articulated with purpose; he mentioned he saw some examples on the site tour which had articulation seemingly without purpose or unnecessary accents. He suggested defining the utility side of a building (i.e., air conditioning units, utility pipes, etc.) and including regulations regarding screening.

Discussion Point #2:

Should future projects "tier" height and density such that taller and denser buildings are away from public streets?

Commissioner Allen suggested taller buildings be set back where possible but denser buildings that appeared smaller and more attractive might not need to be set back. In general, she suggested more dense projects using less land, around 40 to 60 units to the acre and

designed well, if in the right location. She stated tiered height was dependent on location and applies more when in a highly visible central location but is not as important when located in a shopping center, commercial area or next to a freeway.

Commissioner Pace concurred with Commissioner Allen and that height allowances depended on the location.

Commissioner Ritter agreed concerning height and added that open and outdoor space was critical. He suggested high heights be kept away from busy streets and blend into their location.

Chair Brown stated there seemed to be more open space opportunities for higher density projects as opposed to zero lot line homes close together with minimal backyards. He stated location needed to be considered and it might not be appropriate for downtown infill but might be for the area around Stoneridge Mall or Hacienda.

Discussion Point #3:

Should infill housing developments be designed to maximize public street parking by reducing curb cuts and driveway width?

Commissioner Allen stated parking needed to be specifically considered, especially in the downtown area. She stated it was a travesty that the City lost four public parking spaces on the Peters Avenue project. She mentioned she liked the projects at 446 Peters Avenue and 1037 Division Street that had one driveway which came around and the parking lot was on the backside of several townhouses. She stated she understood that some lots might not be deep enough, but parking should be considered in design.

Commissioner Pace added the City was inevitably headed towards denser housing, which could create parking challenges. He suggested prioritizing the retention of as much public parking as possible.

Commissioner Ritter agreed with Commissioner Pace stating parking within the infill development was ideal, but State guidelines did not require that. He suggested the width of the street be considered when determining public parking.

Chair Brown stated curb cuts should not be permitted in infill that would prevent a minimum of one car between adjacent residences. He suggested flexibility in the design guidelines regarding double garages in an effort to retain some public parking.

Discussion Point #4:

Should a percentage of garages in lower density developments be allowed to utilize tandem parking to reduce *visible* double garage doors?

Commissioner Ritter agreed that flexibility should be provided for denser developments.

Commissioner Pace agreed, stating the denser the development, the more likely the design aesthetic of a large number of garage doors at street level would matter less.

Commissioner Allen stated she would prefer parking be in the rear, especially in the downtown area, to avoid double garages with a curb cut and tandem parking.

Chair Brown stated tandem parking reminded him of older developments but was a reality. He suggested parking in the back where the site layout permitted but acknowledged the challenge with turn around space.

Discussion Point #5:

Should design standards be required to use recesses to reduce the mass of larger buildings?

Commissioner Pace stated standards should depend on the visual point of view.

Commissioner Ritter referenced the Stanley Boulevard project as being well done. He stated it was necessary to use all available tools to reduce the appearance of size to accommodate the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements.

Commissioner Allen and Chair Brown concurred with Commissioners Pace and Ritter.

Discussion Point #6:

Are smaller private balconies or larger shared open spaces more preferable?

Commissioner Allen stated private balconies generally created an articulation and attractive design element to the public. She stated larger shared open spaces were good for people to gather. She stated both options were necessary, one for design and appearance and the other for community use.

Commissioner Pace agreed with Commissioner Allen stating both options were desirable and served different purposes. He suggested open space for higher density developments and private balconies on the exterior as an attractive design feature. He stated the question was where to have them, not if to have them.

Commissioner Ritter stated both were desirable, but it would depend on the type of development and price of property. He would support private balconies in a higher density project but not necessarily require them in a lower density project.

Chair Brown stated he would prefer public open space rather than the smaller balconies, as in the Vintage development, particularly if the size of the balcony was such that it was not usable.

Discussion Point #7:

Are design standards needed to control location of air conditioning units and other mechanical equipment?

Commissioner Allen said design standards were necessary on the location of air conditioning and other mechanical equipment. She stated they should be screened or placed on the roof.

Commissioner Pace and Commissioner Ritter concurred.

Chair Brown agreed but stated he would not mind an AC unit on a wide walkway. He stated it was necessary to account for the utility side of a building where there were three open sides and the best location for utilities.

Discussion Point #8:

Would it be desirable to require a POPOS (privately-owned public open space) at projects with large land areas?

Commissioner Ritter discussed challenges with community benefits and ownership. He suggested publicly owned opens space.

Commissioner Pace agreed with Commissioner Ritter stating he did not see the benefit of privately owned public space and his preference for publicly owned open space. He stated amenities for residents of a community were important, but he did not want to see a large park in the middle of a development that the entire community could not use. He suggested publicly owned space funded by a donation from a private entity like Public Storage donating to the bicycle trails near their project. Mr. Williams clarified that many of the examples of POPOS were small entry plazas to a larger development or alongside a horizontal mixed-use center like a plaza with other activities coming off commercial development. He stated part of the requirement for POPOS was to be on the exterior of the public street and accessible to the public.

Commissioner Allen agreed with Commissioners Pace and Ritter and stated it was a low priority for residential-only projects, and that if there was leftover land to accommodate such a plaza, then the project should have been denser to make best use of the land.

Chair Brown inquired if a playground maintained by an HOA but usable by the public would be considered POPOS. Mr. Williams confirmed that it could be and may be located in an existing neighborhood. Chair Brown stated that an added benefit would be that cleaning and upkeep would not come from the City's budget. Mr. Williams said that cities often did not want to get involved with small public spaces, but the development wanted it maintained because it was in their area.

Discussion Point #9:

What other standards could help ensure that future development is more like Vintage and less like the Galloway?

Mr. Williams clarified the question requesting input on the desired elements.

Commissioner Ritter stated Galloway was a result of litigation. He indicated support for the lot lines in the Vintage project. He discussed the need for outdoor space with increased density.

Commissioner Pace acknowledged the similar housing capacity but meaningful difference in experience between the two projects. He discussed the importance of visuals from the street and interior. He stated he did not want to restrict higher density and open space and that visual impacts were important concepts.

Commissioner Allen stated she preferred the high-quality materials, such as natural stone, brick and high-quality use of metal and the use of porches and decks in the Vintage project. She stated sporadic decks created a feeling of community and that the podium building worked well. She stated she did not like the stucco and concrete used for Galloway and she did not like the block style, design of the building without porches. She disliked the high use of concrete and the lack of contrasting and varied materials.

Chair Brown described Galloway as a stacked container model with brighter colors without enough articulation. He also mentioned that the guest parking did not work and reminded him of the 1970s though he liked the angular parking separated from the bike path. He stated the adjacent retail was empty and would not be used if parking was in the front. He stated the plaza front was bare, without distinction or definition, which a POPOS should have.

He stated he did not like the location of the garbage containers, nor small size of the balconies at the Vintage project. He stated he liked the brick around the bottom of the building as it hid the fact that there was a difference in slope. He stated the project reflected higher density, with more open space. He discussed the minimal backyards at the Brookline Loop project. He also expressed disappointment in the Irby Ranch development because the three properties facing First Street seemed fine, but the back side was blank, and it was confusing trying to find specific properties.

Discussion Point #10:

Does the Commission have any other feedback?

Chair Brown stated he liked the added cobblestone walkways and organization at the Brookline Loop properties. He said there was a good community area in the center and the private amenity in the back was great, although it was next to a highway. He also liked the walkways across the roads.

Commissioner Allen stated it was important to define the location of community space, such as near entrances and public walkways for safety and an integrated feel. She stated she did not want "home office" zoning, rather clearly zoned as either residential or business. She suggested a more geometric street design with verticals and horizontals would be easier to navigate than the circular, winding street design of the Irby Ranch development.

Commissioner Pace stated the concepts discussed were the most important to him. He stated project location was important to consider for design. He discussed the need to retain City control and preserve the look and feel of the community with design guidelines.

Commissioner Ritter expressed the importance of ensuring the guidelines were simple and efficient for the citizens of Pleasanton.

Mr. Williams commended the Commission on its input.

Commissioner Brown suggested others participate in the exercise and suggested consideration of design guidelines for commercial as well.

Commissioner Allen suggested the City Council and developers take the survey. She recognized it may slow the process, but the more people involved in coming up with the guidelines, the more people would buy into the end product. Ms. Clark stated there was no harm in slowing down and allowing others to participate. Commissioner Allen asked the Commission if it agreed. Chair Brown agreed and reiterated his concerns with last minute input. Commissioner Pace indicated support for obtaining input from others and feedback from stakeholders made sense. Commissioner Ritter expressed his agreement with the other Commissioners and suggested an easier format. Chair Brown suggested the Council complete the same exercise as the Planning Commission.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION'S REVIEW/ACTION/INFORMATION

8. Reports from Meetings Attended (e.g., Committee, Task Force, etc.)

Commissioner Ritter reported on his attendance at the 2020 Chamber Forum, stating housing sales spiked in 2020 to a four-year high, with the average time on the market being five days and the median price of \$1.2 million.

9. Future Planning Calendar

Planning and Permit Center Manager Melinda Denis gave a brief overview of future items for the Commission's review.

MATTERS INITIATED BY COMMISSION MEMBERS

Commissioner Allen requested an update on landscaping at the Lucky's Shopping Center. Ms. Denis reported the property management group stated they would upgrade the landscaping after the remodel. Commissioner Allen further inquired about the letters regarding the U-Haul building's lighting located on Sunol Boulevard. She asked if there was an ambient light study for the project. Ms. Clark explained the agreement between the City and U-Haul which included a requirement for a lighting plan and stated code enforcement was involved in obtaining compliance.

Commissioner Ritter requested an update on Costco. Ms. Clark stated the appeal period ended early next week.

Commissioner Pace asked what the City was doing to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on small and locally owned businesses and if there was an effort to invite any new businesses into the City. Ms. Clark discussed the City's small business loan program and Deputy City Manager Pamela Ott's involvement in a task force taking on those issues.

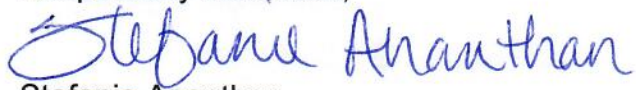
Chair Brown asked if the City was offering any support for those seeking Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. Ms. Clark stated the City did not offer technical support. Commissioner Ritter announced the services provided by the Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner Allen added the Small Business Association had several resources.

Chair Brown ended the meeting reminding the public of the deadline for the Planning Commission applications and encouraging people to apply.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Brown adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Stefanie Ananthan
Recording Secretary