



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

City Council Chamber
200 Old Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton, CA 94566

DRAFT

Wednesday, January 8, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Meeting of January 8, 2014, was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Olson.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Commission.

1. ROLL CALL

Staff Members Present: Brian Dolan, Director of Community Development; Janice Stern, Planning Manager; Julie Harryman, Assistant City Attorney; Pamela Ott, Director of Economic Development; Mike Tassano, City Traffic Engineer; Steve Otto, Senior Planner; Natalie Amos, Associate Planner; Jennifer Wallis, Associate Planner; and Maria L. Hoey, Recording Secretary

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Nancy Allen, Arne Olson, Jennifer Pearce, Mark Posson, and Herb Ritter

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner O'Connor

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. December 11, 2013

Commissioner Pearce moved to approve the Minutes of the October 9, 2013 Meeting as submitted.

Commissioner Allen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Allen, Olson, Pearce, Posson, and Ritter
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSED: None
ABSENT: Commissioner O'Connor

The Minutes of the December 11, 2013 Meeting were approved as submitted.

3. MEETING OPEN FOR ANY MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO ADDRESS THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON ANY ITEM WHICH IS NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

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

4. REVISIONS AND OMISSIONS TO THE AGENDA

Janice Stern advised that there were no revisions and omissions to the Agenda.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

Consent Calendar items are considered routine and will be enacted, approved, or adopted 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.

a. P13-2445, Tri-Valley Chinese Bible Church

Application for a Conditional Use Permit to operate a Church and State-registered Heritage School for Kindergarten through 12th grade students at 1035 Serpentine Lane, within Valley Business Park. Zoning for the property is PUD-I (Planned Unit Development – Industrial) District.

Commissioner Allen moved to make the required Conditional Use Permit findings as listed in the staff report and to approve Case P13-2445, subject to the Conditions of Approval as listed in Exhibit A of the staff report. Commissioner Pearce seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Allen, Olson, Pearce, Posson, and Ritter
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSED: None
ABSENT: Commissioner O'Connor

Resolution No. PC-2014-01 approving Case P13-2445 was entered and adopted as motioned.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND OTHER MATTERS

a. P13-2458, City of Pleasanton

Application to amend Chapter 18.88 (Off-Street Parking Facilities) of the Pleasanton Municipal Code to allow the City to waive in-lieu parking fees in exchange for fulfilling Design and Beautification objectives of the Downtown Specific Plan.

Also consider the Negative Declaration prepared for the project.

Janice Stern presented the staff report and briefly described the scope and key elements of the proposal. She stated that this amendment concerns commercial Downtown properties and is the result of an interest in creating some incentives for investments in the Downtown, which comes from two main areas: (1) money that the City invests in the Downtown in terms of streets and public infrastructure such as sidewalks and lighting and the continued maintenance of that infrastructure; and (2) private investment from commercial properties being upgraded through time. She indicated that a recent example of this is the property at 234 Main Street that was upgraded and where Fleet Feet Sports has moved and Mangia Mi restaurant has opened. She noted that it is revitalizing the southern part of Main Street.

Ms. Stern stated that the amendment came from a proposal at 511 Main Street, where Pastime Pool was located, which was considered and approved by the City Council in 2012 and where the City would be very happy to see some investment. She indicated that the proposal was to add some 700 square feet of commercial space to that building which would have resulted in the need for approximately 23 additional parking spaces. She noted that the developer had proposed that rather than providing those parking spaces on site, which would be somewhat awkward because of the need to back out onto the side street there, they would provide a 666-square-foot plaza area with seating integrated into the corner of the building. She added that the developer had calculated the value of the plaza as equivalent to the money they would have contributed to the in-lieu parking fees. She indicated that staff thought that more of these ideas would come forward if the process could be streamlined and make it part of the Pleasanton Municipal Code (PMC). She noted that the City is now initiating the amendment to Chapter 18.88, Off-Street Parking Facilities, to encourage private redevelopment of commercial properties located in the Downtown Revitalization District by waiving parking in-lieu fees for owners and developers of eligible parcels in exchange for an amenity.

Ms. Stern stated that the area of eligible parcels being considered is slightly smaller than the Downtown Specific Plan Area and also slightly smaller than the Downtown Revitalization District; it comprises the Zoning District that mainly encompasses the commercial part of the Downtown. She indicated that what staff is proposing is that eligible parcels would be those contiguous with the Downtown Revitalization District, cuts off the Civic Center area, and the Delucchi Park on First Street. She added that eligible parcels

within this area can provide on-site amenity open to the public, subject to City Council approval, in lieu of providing the required off-street parking, in furtherance of the Downtown Specific Plan.

Ms. Stern outlined the procedure for the criteria and consideration of the onsite amenity described in the Ordinance:

1. Requests shall be made in writing as part of a development or pre-development application and include a conceptual design for the amenity. A hearing shall be scheduled for consideration of the matter by the City Council, and the Council shall consider whether or not the proposed amenity would meet the objectives of the Downtown Specific Plan and whether or not to enter into an agreement with the applicant to reduce parking requirements in exchange for the development of an on-site amenity open to the general public.
2. The on-site amenity shall be open and accessible to the general public at all times, and no portion of the amenity shall be restricted to the exclusive use of on-site business customers only.
3. The on-site amenity should typically consist of a mini-plaza with seating, shade, landscaping, lighting, and other pedestrian facilities. Other forms of amenities may be considered by the City Council if consistent with the objectives of the Downtown Specific Plan.
4. The value of the on-site amenity shall be equal to, exceed, or be less than, if approved by the City Council, the amount of in-lieu parking fees. The value of the on-site amenity shall be based on opportunity costs.
5. In the event the proposed on-site amenity is determined to be of lesser value than the amount of in-lieu parking fees otherwise required, the developer shall enter into an in-lieu parking agreement that pays the difference between the provided amenity and the required fees into the in-lieu parking fund.
6. The on-site amenity shall be installed prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy by the Chief Building Official.
7. The on-site amenity does not create any legal public easement or public property interest, and the owner of the property remains responsible for all maintenance and repair of the on-site amenity.
8. The on-site amenity, its requirement to be available to the general public, and the parking waived by provision of the on-site amenity shall be memorialized in a restrictive covenant recorded against the property.

Ms. Stern stated that the staff report includes a parking study which concluded that parking is tight on Main Street and some of the adjacent side streets during some of the peak times, particularly on weekday evenings, weekday afternoons, and Saturday afternoons, but that parking is available along the Transportation Corridor and on parts of Peters Avenue and farther out areas. She noted that Mike Tassano, City Traffic Engineer, is present to respond to any questions.

Commissioner Allen referred to Peter MacDonald's email regarding valuation of the property and land values per square feet. She noted that Mr. MacDonald's valuation method was very different from that in the staff report, indicating that land in the Downtown has never sold for over \$100 per square foot, versus the methodology used in the staff report which brought up the cost of the land to over \$660 per square foot. She asked staff to explain the methodologies and why one was chosen over the other or if there is flexibility there.

Ms. Stern explained that calculated as an opportunity cost, the formula is basically the number of square feet that the owner is foregoing development on, times the rent that it could have gotten from that area, times 12 months to determine the annual income, and then divided by the capitalization rate percentage. She continued that applied to 511 Main Street, the calculation would be 666 square feet of plaza, times \$3.75 monthly rent per square foot, times 12 months, divided by 6.5 percent capitalization rate = \$461,076. She added that Pamela Ott, Director of Economic Development, is present and may want to add more information on the matter.

Commissioner Allen inquired if that included all the building cost.

Ms. Ott explained that Mr. MacDonald's calculation refers to the cost of acquiring the land and the cost of constructing the building itself, which are the fixed costs that go into the consideration. She indicated that staff is actually looking at current market value of property, which includes the capitalization rate. She added that this formula includes the calculation of what the opportunity gained or opportunity lost to that property owner is as a result of using land for a public plaza rather than for constructing a building.

Commissioner Allen inquired if it included all improvement costs that the tenant needed to make.

Ms. Ott said yes. She stated that the capitalization rate includes the operating income and cost, and factors in the capital cost as well.

Mr. Dolan stated that it might be of interest to the Commission to know, in terms of the history of that one particular site, that the City wanted the plaza, that it was the City's thinking that there had to be some way to make the developer whole instead of just demanding that the plaza be provided, and that it was the City's idea to have a set of rules to use elsewhere.

Commissioner Pearce stated that her understanding is that this is just a mechanism to allow the City Council the flexibility to do this.

Ms. Stern said yes. She added that it does not mandate the City Council to allow everyone to do this. She indicated that the City Council will review the proposal to determine whether or not it is appropriate, and there will be a judgment call by the City Council that the developer meets the criteria and the objectives of the Downtown Specific Plan that the proposed plaza is in the right place, designed properly, and so forth.

Mr. Dolan stated that there is an entire section of the Downtown Specific Plan that talks about providing these mini-plazas. Referring to the slide presented on "Additional Potential Criteria for Evaluating a Proposed Public Amenity," he indicated that with respect to this particular site, the bottom five criteria, Criteria from the Downtown Specific Plan, describe what the proposal would be compared against if it came forward:

1. Mini-plazas should be attractively designed and used for small public gatherings such as musical, dance, or dramatic performances; art displays and special events.
2. Mini-plazas should enhance and be compatible with design elements found in adjacent structures and public streetscape improvements, whenever feasible.
3. Mini-plazas should typically be lighted and contain decorative paving and benches and other forms of seating.
4. Mini-plazas should be accessible and functionally relate to the sidewalk.
5. Provisions for the on-going maintenance of the mini-plazas should be made prior to construction.

Mr. Dolan added that the top three would be some potential additional criteria if the Commission did not think the criteria already provided in the Specific Plan are adequate:

1. The proposed public amenity will contribute to the vitality of the Downtown Revitalization District.
2. The proposed location of the amenity is likely to be well-used by the public based on its visibility, proximity to pedestrian traffic, and relationship to surrounding land uses.
3. The proposed public amenity is not likely to cause safety or nuisance concerns for surrounding land uses.

Commissioner Ritter stated that the parking study indicates that there are 975 spaces in the Downtown area and that there are only three lots that are private: Dean's Café, Round Table Pizza, and Bank of America. He inquired if all the others are public.

Ms. Stern replied that there are a lot more private lots out there and that these three are the ones included because they are the larger private lots. She added that all the rest are either on-street parking or public lots.

Commissioner Ritter stated that it looks like the 975 spaces available in that study never maxed it and that those large ones are only 21 percent of the total. He noted that based on study, it seems like the saturation point has not yet been reached but that is what the concern is.

Ms. Stern replied that was correct. She stated that it is a question of where the parking is in the Downtown: on the periphery at those peak times, not on Main Street and not on the close side streets.

Commissioner Ritter indicated that he loves that plaza concept that staff came up with to support the Downtown area.

Chair Olson referred to letter from the Pleasanton Downtown Association (PDA) and noted that the first paragraph states that the PDA supports the proposed amendments with the provision that the City replenish the funds being waived for the developer in exchange for a public amenity. He inquired if the package being presented to the Commission requires the City to make those deposits to the fund.

Mr. Dolan replied that it does not. He indicated that this was an issue raised by the same people when the item originally came before the City Council. He noted that it was not something that the City Council included in its vote; hence, staff did not include that at this time.

Chair Olson inquired if there is a plan for providing some sort of parking structure for the Downtown. He stated that the reason he is asking is because other communities that Downtown Pleasanton competes with have such parking facilities, such as the parking structure in Livermore.

Ms. Stern replied that the City is in the process of acquiring some additional sections of the Alameda County Transportation Corridor but that the City does not have any plans for a parking structure at this time. She added that if something came up in the Downtown where there might be some partnership with private development that will result in a parking structure that the City can jointly pay for, the City would look at that possibility, but there are no plans for that.

Mr. Dolan stated that the City has actually acquired in fee all of the Transportation Corridor within the Downtown with the one exception of that stretch next to the gas station that is being proposed for remodel, and the City has an agreement to purchase that and acquire in fee as soon as the cleanup of the plume that the gas station created over time is completed. He indicated that the plan is to continue to extend parking up the Transportation Corridor.

Mr. Dolan stated that this all comes down to a reset of the community's willingness to walk a walkable Downtown because right now, even in the busiest times, there actually are parking spaces in the closer Transportation Corridor lot, and there are parking spaces in Peters Avenue. He added that with very few exceptions, there is also available parking in the City Hall lots almost all the time, except maybe when the Pleasanton Library has a big event, during the First Wednesday events during the summer, but that is perceived by many as too far to go.

Mr. Dolan stated that none of these opportunities to provide additional parking are in the City's current Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He noted that they have brought forward for consideration in the last couple of CIP rounds, but there were other priorities that basically got the available funds. He added that certainly at some point, projects for additional surface parking will be included.

Mr. Dolan stated that one of the challenges for a parking structure is having a decent size lot because otherwise they are just not efficient. He indicated that the City does not have the benefit of too many decent size lots, and it also does not have the benefit that Livermore had of participating in redevelopment, which is how that structure was built. He noted that therefore, even if the City had the funds, he was not quite sure that the City would have the ideal location to put it right in the middle of the Downtown.

Chair Olson stated that the additional Transportation Corridor will help for additional surface parking. He noted, however, that the City needs to be mindful that people come here to Pleasanton's Downtown from out of town and that it is impossible to walk to the Downtown from out of town. He added that if the City wants a vibrant Downtown, it will have to accept the automobile and that vibrancy will hopefully involve people coming from out of town to experience the City's Downtown.

Mr. Dolan stated that there are some things the City can do with signage to make sure that everybody knows exactly where the parking lots are. He noted that it is not that far to walk from Peters Avenue, where there is generally parking available. He indicated that another thing that the City has not explored is something that Walnut Creek did at one point: it had a big program that made a big push to convince some of the private lot owners who currently chained their lots to make them available in the evening. He noted that that some lots which were very well located were signed such that they were not available for parking, but they were left open so people could use them. He noted that there were different levels of seriousness about prohibiting parking there but that some sort of formal arrangement is a possibility in the Downtown.

Chair Olson stated that he is not prepared to vote "no" on this item but that he just wants to raise those points to get it in the record. He noted that not everybody is going to walk or bicycle to Pleasanton Downtown and that the automobile has to be accepted. He indicated that its days are still here and that they may all become electric someday, but they will be there.

Ms. Ott stated that she does not disagree about making space for people to bring their cars to visit the Downtown but offered a sort of balance. She indicated that the City wants folks to come in and enjoy the Downtown, but if the City does not take steps from the economic development standpoint to keep Downtown interesting, dynamic, and vibrant, to bring in new and different kinds of businesses, and to create more traffic to the Downtown with the draws it has to pull people in, finding the parking space for folks who want to drive may not be a sufficient draw without the energy and dynamism in the Downtown to attract them there.

Commissioner Allen stated that as she thinks about vibrancy in the Downtown, she also thinks about two things it needs that work together: (1) The plaza is fabulous in that proposed location, and the City should do whatever it takes to get it. (2) On the other hand, that plaza will generate more than 20 potential car needs. She expressed concern that if the City does more and more of this, as more vibrancy is created, more parking will be needed. She indicated that vibrancy includes both parking and amenities, and parking is an amenity. She further indicated that what she hates to do is give one amenity – the plaza – and take away another amenity – future parking.

Commissioner Allen stated that she is struggling with this and causes her to begin to ask the question of where the PDA and Mr. MacDonald are going: Should the City be committed to potentially look at a plaza as a Park and Recreation capital funding? She noted that it is a plaza for leisure and recreation, and in that sense, the City should begin to prioritize a certain amount of money that would potentially be flagged in the Parks and Recreation budget that could help offset this plaza and put it back in that parking in-lieu fee fund. She stated that what the City is essentially doing is weighing that plaza as a mini-park, essentially like what San Francisco is doing with its little “parklets” that it has all over the city now. She indicated that she does not know how they are funded but that she is imagining that it would be from its Park and Recreation funds. She questioned if there is a way for the Commission and the City Council to think about build that park it that way.

Mr. Dolan indicated that if the majority of the Planning Commissioners have the same concern, the Commission can certainly pass on that concern as a body. He noted that there are two things that need money, and more money is needed for both than what the City has, so a choice has to be made. He stated that the City has current park projects that it is trying to fund that also affect the vibrancy of the Downtown: Bernal Park is nearby but it is a major community asset; and there is also Lions Wayside Park, which is a real project integral to the Downtown that is going to happen and is in need of funding. He indicated that staff is more comfortable with what it is proposing, but that it would be appropriate for the Commission to pass along that recommendation to the City Council to consider if it so desires.

Commissioner Posson noted that with respect to this issue of fees, even if the proposed changes do not require the City to fund the offset of in-lieu fees, nothing precludes the City from putting in additional funding.

Mr. Dolan stated that was correct.

Commissioner Posson stated that he views this as providing staff and the City Council more latitude in weighing those priorities. He indicated that he does not see this as being conflicting priorities because the City is not saying that it does not want parking and does not want to fund parking, but, rather, it provides greater latitude to where the City can balance those different priorities.

Commissioner Ritter stated that, in response to Commissioner Allen's question and as a former Parks and Recreation Commissioner, what the City would like is to have more businesses because business-generated funds go to the parks. He noted that taxes from housing do not necessarily go for the parks; therefore, creating a vibrant Downtown would generate more business, and the money these businesses generate actually helps fund parks. He added that keeping business rolling also funds parks.

Commissioner Allen stated that she would like to bring up a concern that she has talked to staff about and that she would appreciate some discussion on. She indicated that she believes the amendments, as written, need a little tidying with some additional criteria as there might be some unintended consequences. She stated that she can see developers submitting a lot of ideas to the City, and it could be on side streets, or it could be a 150-square-foot area that might come close to meeting the criteria with a table or two and a little landscaping, and she is not sure the City wants those. She added that she thinks what the City wants strategically are a handful of plaza areas on Main Street.

Commissioner Allen stated that she thinks the City may end up creating expectations because the criteria are not quite tight enough: people will submit proposals that will create work for staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council to review them; it may create hard feelings because the criteria are vague and people will ask why one proposal was approved and the other was not. She proposed that staff think about and add tighter criteria before this goes to the City Council, for example, (1) the plaza should be on Main Street; and (2) the plaza should be a certain size minimum, maybe about 350 square feet or 30 percent or 40 percent of the size of the Tully's plaza, rather than an area where there would be a couple of tables and a bench, maybe have a tree or two and a fountain where people can really sit, have coffee, chat, and then leave. She stated that the City should not want to fund tiny areas with a tree and a bench which are already built by developer.

Commissioner Allen stated that another point she would also add, for internal and City Council discussion, is how much money worth of funding might be expected or budgeted for this amenity in a year: if it is half a million dollars for one, is the City looking at half a million dollars of fee waivers? She noted that judging from some of the letters, it appears that developers and business people are getting pretty excited about this, and she wants to make sure that the City does not get them overly excited and create more work and missed expectations.

Chair Olson noted that there is a pretty tightly-defined area that this amendment applies to. He added that a developer who comes forward with a proposal would first sit with staff for review, staff has to be warm about it, and it ultimately has to go to and be approved by the

City Council. He indicated that it appears to him that the checkpoint along the way, plus the tightly-defined areas that this is applied to, would be sufficient, rather than nailing it down any further.

Mr. Dolan stated that he would like to address the frequency and the dollar amount. He indicated that he has been in the City of Pleasanton almost six years now, and this is the first expansion of a building Downtown that he has seen. He pointed out that the City had one expansion proposed and approved at a public hearing that he attended while he was applying for this job. He added that it was quite controversial and very entertaining, but that particular building has yet to be constructed. He noted that the economy had a lot to do with it, but he stated that he is not sure in the years in advance of that, that the City had a lot of expansions. He indicated that the City hopes to have some, but he does not see this as an explosion of opportunities.

Mr. Dolan stated that in terms of minimum size, the City is purposely flexible. He indicated that it is correct that a traditional plaza has to have a certain size before it really means anything that accomplishes that, but staff wants to leave open the possibility of other amenities. He noted that he does not even have an example of that but that he thinks there is probably something there. He added that if it is a smaller area, the opportunity cost is going to be smaller, and that works out.

Commissioner Ritter agreed.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS OPENED.

There were no speakers.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED.

Commissioner Ritter moved find that the proposed Code amendment would not have a significant effect on the environment and to recommend approval of the Negative Declaration prepared for the project, and to recommend approval to the City Council of Case P13-2458, the proposed amendments to Chapter 18.88 (Off-Street Parking Facilities) of the Pleasanton Municipal Code, as shown in Exhibit A of the staff report.

Commissioner Posson seconded the motion.

Chair Olson requested that all the letters and emails the Commission received for this item be included in the packet to the City Council.

Commissioner Allen inquired if the Commission would like to include a recommendation about funding that was brought up earlier.

Commissioner Pearce indicated that she would not want that in the motion. She stated that she is really uncomfortable about dictating how funding is allocated. She noted that this is supposed to come with flexibility, and she does not want to tie one's hands with regard to funding.

Chair Olson and Commissioners Posson and Ritter agreed.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Allen, Olson, Pearce, Posson, and Ritter
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSED: None
ABSENT: Commissioner O'Connor

Resolutions Nos. PC-2014-02 recommending approval of the Negative Declaration and PC-2014-03 recommending approval of the proposed amendments to the Pleasanton Municipal Code were entered and adopted as motioned.

7. MATTERS INITIATED BY COMMISSION MEMBERS

No discussion was held or action taken.

8. MATTERS FOR COMMISSION'S REVIEW/ACTION/INFORMATION

a. Future Planning Calendar

No discussion was held or action taken.

b. Actions of the City Council

No discussion was held or action taken.

c. Actions of the Zoning Administrator

No discussion was held or action taken.

d. Matters for Commission's Information

Heritage Tree Board of Appeals

Julie Harryman noted that the Planning Commission designated Commissioner Allen and Commissioner O'Connor to serve on the Heritage Tree Board of Appeals. She indicated that there is a Board meeting coming up on January 22, 2014, but Commissioner Allen is unavailable to attend. She noted that then the Commissioner designated the two Commissioners, no Alternates were selected, and added that it

would be good to do that at the next Planning Commission meeting. She pointed out that Chair Olson and Commissioner Pearce will be termed out and leaving the Commission soon, and informed both Commissioner Ritter and Commissioner Posson that she will be contacting them to determine their availability to attend the meeting on January 22nd, and selecting the Alternate(s) will be on the Planning Commission Agenda later on that evening.

Commissioner Ritter stated that he would be willing to serve on the Board as an Alternate; however, he already has a commitment on January 22nd and will not be able to attend that meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Olson adjourned the Planning Commission meeting 7:40 pm

Respectfully,

JANICE STERN
Secretary