

**CITY OF SONOMA  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
August 11, 2016**

**Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West, Sonoma, CA**

**Minutes**

Chair Felder called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Chair Felder, Comms. Wellander, Willers, Sek, McDonald, Cribb

Absent: Comms. Roberson, Coleman

Others

Present: Planning Director Goodison, Administrative Assistant Morris

Chair Felder stated that no new items would be heard after 10:30 p.m. unless the Planning Commission so decides. Any decisions made by the Planning Commission can be appealed within 15 days to the City Council. He reminded everyone to turn off cell phones and pagers. Comm. Willers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Comm. Cribb made a motion to approve the minutes of July 14, 2016, Comm. Willers seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER:** None

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Planning Director Goodison reviewed the late correspondence received after the distribution of the packet.

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**Item #1 – Study Session – Study Session on a proposal to construct a Safeway gas station and expand the Safeway, in conjunction with associated circulation and parking lot upgrades at 477 West Napa Street.**

**Applicant/Property Owner: Safeway, Inc.**

Chair Felder stated that Study Sessions are an opportunity for early feedback from the commissioners and the public prior to a formal application submittal and are intended for overall site planning review rather than commentary on the specific merits of the project details.

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

**Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.**

Paul O'Sullivan, Energy Consultants, discussed Safeway's intentions for the site and awareness of the challenges and constraints. He met with the City Engineer and Police Chief in regards to traffic safety issues as well as neighboring property owners and residents. Safeway is committed to hiring W-Trans to conduct a traffic impact study. The Army Corp of Engineers has jurisdiction over the wetlands and an updated report as to their status will be presented.

Comm. McDonald questioned if there is an access agreement between Safeway and the adjoining Scooteria parcel.

Natalie Matey, Safeway real estate, will report back if there is an access agreement with adjoining property owners after review of the title reports.

Comm. Cribb, inquired about the rationale for the retail expansion.

Safeway responded that the back room delivery area is outdated, volume of goods purchased increased and the corporate office determined the redevelopment of the site is a sound investment. She offered to take any interested person on a store tour and welcomed input from consumers to help design the store.

**Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.**

Nancy Lloyd, resident/landlord (9 rental units), appreciated Paul O'Sullivan meeting with her and her husband. She adamantly opposed a gas station and felt it was incompatible with the neighborhood.

Isabelle Wyatt, resident, (Gregory Circle), is of the opinion that the 55 plus demographic that dominates the neighborhood was not considered in the analysis. She opposes a gas station.

Gundi Gelatos, resident, agreed with her neighbors' comments and opposed the gas station since the intersection caused problems for pedestrians and cars. In her view, the expansion is inconsistent with the neighborhood and compromised the Sonoma character.

David Eichar, Sonoma Valley resident, is disappointed with the plan since it will generate more traffic at the intersection. He requested that Safeway consider building housing units above the store as was done at Safeway's Richmond store.

Marilyn Burning, 26-year resident, (401 West Napa Street) viewed ingress and egress into the parking lot as problematic. She confirmed with staff that no plan is in place to redirect delivery trucks.

Fred Allebach, sonoma valley resident/CSEC member, requested that in lieu fees be considered to pay for affordable housing before any new developments are approved. He felt housing should be a priority over fueling stations although he believed lower gas prices would result.

Lynn Clary, 40 year resident, said the intersection is already problematic and that a new gas station will only make it worse. He opposed the magnitude of a store expansion and granting a housing waiver.

Tom Conlan, business owner, Fourth Street West/West Napa Street, requested no action or recommendations be made until a traffic study is thoroughly reviewed. He suggested a housing element that would be consistent with the 2020 Climate Action Plan that recommended work

force housing in Sonoma to reduce the necessity for cars and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Nick Grimm, Scooteria business owner, opposed corporate expansion in on the site since it negatively impacts historic character.

Jerry Marino, resident, said a traffic study is critical. He agreed with a new gas station since it would offer more competitive fuel prices for residents and result in additional City revenue.

Jean Marsh, resident, is primarily concerned with the negative impacts on limited residential parking in the area. She recommended shuttles to bring employees into the neighboring shopping centers to reduce traffic congestion.

**Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.**

Comm. McDonald confirmed with staff that no standards for commercial loading docks are in the Development Code.

Comm. Cribb thanked Safeway and the public for attending the meeting. He expressed serious reservations about the traffic circulation patterns with the intensification of use. He questioned whether a gas station was needed. He supported a store expansion as a component of a mixed use development. He understood the Army Corp. of Engineer's Federal guidelines required that identified wetlands must be protected by a 404 permit before any development occurs.

Comm. Willers viewed the preliminary discussions for the site as a precursor for a significant redevelopment rather than an expansion of the existing uses. He opposed a gas station and waiver of a housing component. He suggested a reconfiguration of the site design to improve street presence and pedestrian amenities and safety.

Comm. Sek agreed with her fellow commissioners that a comprehensive traffic study must be analyzed before moving forward with any site changes. She preferred an option for directing cars away from downtown to help mitigate traffic congestion and was disappointed that a housing component was dismissed so quickly.

Comm. McDonald is of the opinion that the plan attempts at maximizing the site potential. He preferred a pedestrian-friendly concept, including a housing component, that might reduce gas consumption.

Comm. Wellander appreciated Safeway's presentation and concurred with his fellow commissioner's comments.

Comm. Willers agreed with Comm. Cribb that this is a great redevelopment opportunity. He is a strong proponent of infill projects instead of extending the urban growth boundary to expand services. He envisioned a traffic study and a housing plan.

Chair Felder emphasized the importance of a detailed traffic study, to help mitigate the inherent problems, before a site plan could be evaluated. He recognized the challenges facing the property owner and emphasized the prominent location required careful attention.

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**Item 2 – Discussion Housing issues – Second units and junior second units, including presentation by Lilypad Homes.**

Postponed to the September 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

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**Item 3 – Public Hearing – Continued review of the Circulation Element Update, including consideration of adopting a Negative Declaration.**

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report and addressed the points raised in the Caltrans comment letter on the proposed negative declaration.

**Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.**

Fred Allebach, resident/CSEC member, agreed with a "road diet" proposed for Broadway and how it encourages residents to use alternative transportation methods such as bicycling. However, in his view, more affordable shopping opportunities are needed in Sonoma, although he recognizes that this issue is more related to zoning.

**Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.**

Comm. Wellander discussed the letter received from Caltrans on the proposed negative declaration. In his view, no changes to the Circulation Element are necessary.

Comm. McDonald, thanked staff for proposing significant changes to the Circulation Element. He felt that it is a solid document that greatly improves City policy, especially in terms of promoting alternatives to automobile use. He asked about the description of potential changes to the segment of West Napa Street between Fifth Street West and Second Street West, as it does not include any discussion of bike lanes. He suggested that language be added in the implementation section to encourage the removal of un-needed driveways as part of the review of development applications, as a means of improving pedestrian safety.

Planning Director Goodison stated that the discussion of the road segment would be expanded to include a discussion on bike lanes and he suggested a revision to Implementation Measure 19 to include a reference to the removal or consolidation of redundant curb-cuts.

Comm. Willers is pleased with the Circulation Element update as it improves support for maintaining the historic character of Sonoma while promoting alternatives to automobile use. While he recognizes that there is language in the Circulation Element to the effect that road widenings would not be implemented until proven necessary, he would like to make sure that options to reduce traffic in Sonoma are fully explored. He suggested changing policy language to make explicit reference to exploring the relinquishment of Highway 12 through Sonoma.

Planning Director Goodison suggested some revisions to the discussion of road widenings and would address the potential re-routing of Highway 12. He reviewed the final amendments recommended by the Planning Commission.

Comm. Willers made a motion to approve the adoption of the Negative Declaration and to recommend to the adoption of the Circulation Element by the City Council, subject to the final amendments as discussed. Comm. Cribb seconded. The motion was unanimously approved (Comms. Roberson and Coleman absent).

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**Item 4 – Discussion – Noticing procedure for public hearings**

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

**Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.**

No public comment.

**Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.**

After discussing the matter, the Planning Commission expressed the consensus that the City's public noticing for hearings is appropriate.

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**Issues Update:**

Planning Director Goodison reviewed the issues update report distributed to the Planning Commission.

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**Comments from Commissioners:** None

**Comments from the Audience:** None

**Adjournment:** Chair Felder adjourned the meeting at 9 p.m. to the next regular meeting. Comm. Cribb seconded. The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 8, 2016.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Sonoma Planning Commission on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2016.

Approved:

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Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant