

**CITY OF SONOMA
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
April 10, 2014**

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

MINUTES

Chair Roberson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West, Sonoma, CA

Roll Call:

Present: Chair Roberson, Comms. Felder, Howarth, Tippell, Willers, Cribb (Alternate)

Absent: Comms. Edwards, Heneveld

Others

Present: Planning Director Goodison, Administrative Assistant Morris

Chair Roberson 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. Howarth led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: No Public Comments

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Comm. Howarth made a motion to approve the minutes of March 13, 2014. Comm. Cribb seconded. The motion carried 5-0-1(Comm. Willers abstained).

CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER: None

CORRESPONDENCE: Late mail was received regarding Item 1.

Item #1 – Public Hearing – Consideration of an Exception to the fence height standards for an entry trellis and gate at 663 Second Street East.

Applicant/Property Owner: Sidney and Ellen Hoover

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Comm. Felder confirmed with staff that all fence contractors were recently sent a letter with the City's fence regulations.

Chair Roberson opened the item to public comment.

Sidney Hoover, Owner/Architect, expressed his view that the trellis is appropriate for the size and scale of the historic home and that the trellis structure is designed appropriately. He reviewed the design and described how it related to the property and the residence.

Chair Roberson closed the item to public comment.

Chair Roberson confirmed with the applicant that a decorative element was not removed as indicated in the late mail received from the Hollifields.

Comms. Tippell and Howarth expressed support for the trellis.

Comm. Willers liked the application but suggested that there be a future discussion about having the Design Review and Historic Preservation Commission review the fence applications rather than the Planning Commission, since these primarily involve issues of aesthetics. With regard to the subject application, he appreciates the relationship of the fence to the house and the street.

Comms. Felder and Cribb expressed disappointment that the applicant did not follow the codes considering his knowledge and professional career in Sonoma, although they both supported the proposal.

Comm. Tippell made a motion to approve an exception to the fence height standards for an entry trellis and gate. Comm. Howarth seconded. The motion passed 5-1. Comm. Willers opposed.

Item #2 – Public Hearing – Consideration of amendments to Title 19 of the Sonoma Municipal Code that would establish definitions and regulations pertaining to wine tasting facilities and wine bars/taprooms.

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Comm. Cribb confirmed with Planning Director Goodison that, per the recent direction of the City Council, there is no Use permit requirement for wine tasting facilities and therefore no size threshold.

Chair Roberson opened the item to public comment.

Fred Allebach, resident, recalled that at the Council meeting following the joint study session with the City Council there was not enough support for adding the Use Permit requirement. In his view, this is unfortunate as he feels that a proliferation of wine tasting facilities would not be consistent with the General Plan vision for a diverse downtown.

Danny Faye, business owner/resident, noted that the direction of the City Council has changed. He is concerned with imposing more restrictions on outdoor seating. He thinks that the Planning Commission may be overstepping their boundaries if a Use Permit is required for outdoor seating, as in his opinion it is beyond the scope of the City Council's given direction.

John Parker, commercial landlord (minority owner of Highway 12 Winery) and Vintners Growers Board member stated that outdoor courtyard use enhances the value of the buildings and increases the rents collected. He is unclear why invitation-only events would be treated differently from the regular business operations of a tasting room.

Planning Director Goodison suggested an option in which a use permit requirement would only apply to properties adjoining a residential zone.

Comm. Willers agreed with Mr. Goodison since in his view it would be a situation for the most potential conflicts between neighboring uses. Outside of that situation, however, he felt that outdoor seating should be permitted without applying parking requirements.

Comm. Howarth confirmed with staff that the draft proposal is to apply the restaurant standard to outdoor seating associated with a wine tasting facility.

Chair Roberson closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Cribb stated that tasting room/winery owners are in the hospitality business and would not want their patrons to be uncomfortable. Therefore, he did not think it likely that business owners would overcrowd their facilities with seating just for the sake of maximizing occupancy.

Comm. Felder considered the core issue of the tasting room discussion is the definition. He is concerned with hours of operation and would prefer that businesses operating into the evening hours be regulated through the use permit process.

Comm. Willers supported a Use Permit based on scale and hours as in his view, the process is not onerous and is mainly geared at identifying and minimizing potential conflicts.

Comm. Tippell felt that while there was a general consensus of the Commissioners is that their opinions have not changed, in that a two-tiered system with a use permit requirement for certain facilities was preferred, sending the same message to the City Council would be unproductive.

On the issue of parking, Comm. Willers suggested that parking requirements should not be applied to outdoor seating. Even apart from wine tasting facilities, he would like to see clearer regulations in place for businesses around the Plaza. His main concern is with compatibility issues associated with outdoor seating adjacent to residential areas.

Chair Roberson stated that the Use Permit process is not intended to be a prohibitive process but a good way to support reasonable uses.

Comm. Felder agreed with Chair Roberson's perspective about scale and giving citizens a chance to have a public forum.

After discussing the matter, the Commission, by consensus, agreed to limit their recommendations to the issues of outdoor seating.

Comm. Willers made a motion to recommend amending the draft regulations by requiring a Use Permit when a proposed tasting room has outdoor seating adjacent to a residential zoning district, with consideration limited to compatibility issues and not parking. Comm. Tippell seconded. The motion was approved 5-1, Comm. Felder opposed.

Item #3 –Study Session- Update of the Housing Element and the Circulation Element of the General Plan.

Applicant/Property Owner:

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Heather Hines, consultant (M-Group), provided an overview of the Housing Element update process.

Comm. Tippell thanked the consultant and recommended maintaining the same overall goals and objectives as set forth in the current Housing Element.

Comm. Felder confirmed it is too early in process to know if any rezonings would be required.

Comm. Howarth inquired about then reduction in the City's fair-share objective and the consultants explained that larger urban areas were assigned a larger proportion of housing.

Comm. Cribb asked that the cottage housing concept be reviewed in the updated analysis.

Chair Roberson opened the item to public comment.

David Brigode, resident, noted the need for more affordable housing in Sonoma. He criticized the City Council for allowing affordable housing assets to be given to the County following the termination of redevelopment.

Fred Allebach, resident, stated that more needs to be done to develop affordable housing as Sonoma has become too "high end" for the average resident. He emphasized the environmental and social aspects of planning and the value of economic diversity within the community.

Comm. Tippell agreed with exploring more ways to provide affordable housing in Sonoma. He noted that new developments require a percentage of the units be affordable.

Comm. Howarth and Chair Roberson suggested finding ways to get density bonus incentives.

Chair Roberson confirmed with Planning Director Goodison that the City has reduced the sphere of influence for Urban Growth Boundary services and the 2020 Urban Growth boundary can be amended.

Chair Roberson closed the item to public comment.

Planning Director Goodison provided an overview of the Circulation Element update process and the issues to be addressed.

Chair Roberson opened the item to public comment.

Madolyn Agrimonti, resident, confirmed with staff that traffic counts are done at peak hours and that there would be opportunities for community input on policies and priorities.

Fred Allebach, resident, discussed the importance of addressing circulation needs in a comprehensive manner.

Patricia Cullinan, resident, suggested an "in lieu parking fee" for new developments that are unable to provide the required amount of off-street parking.

Chair Roberson closed the item to public comment.

Planning Director Goodison discussed parking in lieu fees, noting there must be a target for the money. This issue will be investigated as part of a downtown traffic study that will be conducted in conjunction with the Circulation Element update.

Chair Roberson expressed disappointment with the decision to not pursue Class II bike lanes on West Spain Street as in his view that would be a much safer option than West Napa Street. That said, he appreciates the many improvements that have been made to the bike system in recent years.

Comm. Tippell noted that he served on the interview committee in selecting the consultant team and recommended the M-Group/W-Trans team because of their emphasis on parking issues.

Comm. Willers is of the opinion that Sonoma has retained its character since it does not rely solely on the automobile. In his view it would be a mistake to define circulation improvements as making things more convenient for automobiles.

Chair Roberson advocated for cycling and recognized that there are some tough areas to get around on a bicycle, especially east/west routes. He would also like to see more emphasis on the intersections that are difficult to navigate.

Item #4 – Public Hearing – Consideration of amendments to Title 19 of the Sonoma Municipal Code to: 1) clarify provisions related to density bonuses and inclusionary housing; 2) modify provisions pertaining to use permit requirements for emergency shelters in the “P” zoning district; 3) establish a definition for “Agricultural Employee Housing”, and, 4) allow for residential care facilities in the Mixed Use zone.

Planning Director Goodison presented staff’s report.

Comm. Willers clarified that the amendments would bring the Development Code into compliance with State Law.

Chair Roberson opened the item to public comment.

No public comments.

Chair Roberson closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Cribb made a motion to forward the proposed amendments to the City Council for adoption. Comm. Willers seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Item #5 –Study Session – Consideration of standards and procedures related to fence heights, including potential amendments to the Development Code.

Planning Director Goodison presented staff’s report.

Planning Director Goodison responded to the Planning Commissioner’s concerns from the last meeting by directing staff to send a letter to local fencing contractors reminding them of the regulations. He will expand that mailing to the local architects as well.

Comm. Felder confirmed with staff that the punitive cost associated with non-compliance is limited to a doubling of the application/permit fee.

Chair Roberson opened the item to public comment.

Patricia Cullinan, resident and contractor, suggested that the City website have a tear sheet for better communicating the fence regulations and proposed more outreach to non-licensed contractors. She agreed with Comm. Willers about having the DRHPC review fence applications.

Chair Roberson closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Howarth expressed his desire to have the City Council made aware of the Planning Commissioners frustration with the fencing proposals.

Comm. Willers recommended establishing an over-the-counter fence permit, with minima fee, for all fence applications as a simple means of verifying compliance. He suggested creating a diagram depicting the fence dimensions. In his view, fence height exception should go to the DRHPC rather than a Use Permit with Planning Commission. With regard to outreach, Comm. Willers appreciated receiving code change updates from Wayne Wirick, City Building Official and suggested that this could be another avenue for getting the word out.

Comm. Howarth suggested that the local papers could highlight the code changes when they are brought forward.

In discussing the matter, the Planning Commission expressed support for the suggestions of Comm. Willers and for the changes proposed in the staff report.

Planning Director Goodison stated that a draft ordinance will be developed and brought back to the Planning Commission for review.

Issues Update:

1. In the review of the 639 Third Street West appeal, the City Council upheld the Planning Commission's decision.
2. In the near future, the Planning Commission may see development proposals for 800 Spain Street and 405 Fifth Street West.
3. There is no news on any specific proposal for the 870 Broadway site.
4. Proposals for the purchase of the 32 Patten Street site (the former Fire Station) are due at the end of the month.
5. Comm. Tippell appreciated the City coordinating with the International Film Festival for a successful event.

Elections of Officers: Comm. Howarth nominated Comm. Tippell as Chairman. The nomination was unanimously approved. Comm. Tippell nominated Comm. Willers as Vice-Chairman. The nomination was unanimously approved.

Chair Roberson congratulated the new appointees and expressed his enjoyment in serving the public and Commission as Chair during the preceding year.

Comments from the Audience: On the fence height issue, Patricia Cullinan suggested providing flyers at Friedmans and Parsons for outreach to Contractors.

Comm. Howarth made a motion to adjourn. Comm. Willers seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 8, 2014.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on the 8th day of May 2014.

Approved:

Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant