

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A regular meeting held at the La Quinta City Hall
78-495 Calle Tampico, La Quinta, CA

November 23, 2010

7:02 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. A regular meeting of the La Quinta Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Alderson.

PRESENT: Commissioners Barrows, Quill, Weber, Wilkinson, and Chairman Alderson.

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Les Johnson, Planning Manager David Sawyer, Assistant City Attorney Michael Houston, and Executive Secretary Carolyn Walker.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

III. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA: Confirmed

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR:

There being no further comments, or suggestions, it was moved by Commissioners Weber/Barrows to approve the minutes of November 9, 2010 as submitted. Unanimously approved.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

VI. BUSINESS ITEMS:

A. General Plan Update: for consideration of a proposed land use map, land use designation consolidation, and general plan goals for the City of La Quinta.

Planning Director Les Johnson gave some background on the item and introduced Ms. Nicole Criste, (Terra Nova Planning & Research, Inc.), Consultant for the City of La Quinta, who presented the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department.

Planning Director Johnson advised the Planning Commission that staff was looking for general feedback and comments to be forwarded to the Council for their consideration at the December 7, 2010, meeting. He then gave a general commentary on the economic development portion of the General Plan update; including the Sphere of Influence, tourist and commercial areas, and the importance of making sure we remain a fiscally sound community now and for the next 25 years.

General discussion followed on the Vista Santa Rosa area and the County's General Plan.

Commissioner Quill stated he liked the simplification of the land use designations as it added flexibility to the general plan without having to prepare general plan amendments. He asked if it would be possible to allow localized, small commercial in residential zones such as what they have in San Diego, and possibly include this in the narrative portion of the Residential Designations.

Ms. Criste said the details of that could go in the Zoning, but could be established as a direction by General Plan Policy.

General discussion followed regarding commercial areas, smaller scale commercial in residential areas, what areas are zoned commercial in the southern end of the City and how the zoning could be done.

Commissioner Quill asked for the language to be written in the designation to allow small commercial uses in residential neighborhoods without the need for a general plan amendment.

Staff responded they would look at policy language to represent that.

Commissioner Barrows asked if the mixed use designation was possible in the general and commercial zones. She referred to the Tourist Commercial areas already on the map such as PGA West and the La Quinta Resort, which are surrounded by residential. She asked why the mixed use was not applicable in all commercial areas versus just the regular commercial.

Ms. Criste explained that Tourist Commercial has traditionally been an economic driver in terms of the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), which can be better than sales tax revenue thus preserving the value of that land use. She commented that the Silverrock specific plan

included a component that is resort commercial retail and it doesn't preclude the mix of resort and retail but includes residential with a resort component.

Commissioner Barrows said she was looking for flexibility and was concerned as why that was excluded from mixed use.

Planning Director Johnson gave a brief definition of the Tourist Commercial District and that there could be retail combined with a Tourist Commercial focus. He then gave some examples.

General discussion then followed regarding Tourist Commercial, and TOT, as well as where and how TOT was derived.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked about definitions of the zoning and land designations and how they related to the County's designations; which staff clarified.

Commissioner Wilkinson commented on the combining of open spaces. He suggested golf courses and parks, be separate from natural open spaces.

Ms. Criste verified that he wanted natural open space and water course possibly listed as native environment, with golf courses, parks, recreational facilities as a different designation.

Discussion followed on certain zoning designations occurring at the master plan level.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if the Open Space designation gave the City any benefit from a Federal perspective.

Commissioner Barrows mentioned a natural community conservation plan (sustainable community) could result in a credit through SB 375, because of the land set aside for Open Space.

General discussion followed regarding the possibilities of the Open Space designations and an SB 375 credit.

Ms. Criste noted both the hillside and water course areas, as currently designated, were both conservation and they are no-build zones. She

said the policy implementation on the SB 375 credit had not come out as yet. She then stated that the areas that were currently hillside, and water course, could be put under Open Space Conservation.

Staff explained that even in the hillside and open space areas the zoning code still allowed building. He added it was difficult to do, but there was an allowance for development to occur and the Commission needed to understand that the City could not just say that nothing could occur. A brief discussion followed regarding a current hillside area that was conditioned to be dedicated.

Commissioner Barrows asked about current percentage of buildout in the City. Ms. Criste responded that it was about 80% within City limits.

Discussion followed on available land and designations within the City limits.

Discussion then followed on mixed use in the Village Commercial zone. Ms. Criste then stated the mixed use policy will be included in the general plan.

Commissioner Quill commented on a live/work plan, possibly in the Cove. There was a short discussion and then staff responded that home occupation was currently allowed; especially in the Cove. Staff then explained what was allowed in home occupancy businesses.

Chairman Alderson said in conclusion the Commission concurred with the direction that staff was going. He added the Commission would like staff to include their suggestions in the Council report.

Commissioner Weber asked about the industrial component and expressed a need for more light industrial land uses since there are none currently within the City limits.

General discussion followed regarding the need for light industrial land uses because of job creation potential and the possibility of light manufacturing and store front sales, in the same location. Also that the City should consider, where appropriate, locations for land uses such as research and development and value added production.

Ms. Criste commented there were two aspects of this discussion: 1) the potential for redevelopment that should not be precluded, and 2) there is nothing that says existing office development that is currently occupied might not change to something more R & D (research and development) during the life of the general plan. Providing text that describes a broad range of uses is definitely something that can be put into the body of the document.

Commissioner Quill asked that the zoning designation be expanded to allow it and then have a definition that allows it. He added there was a lot of available space which could become something else and the City needs to be able to be flexible.

Planning Director Johnson said staff would forward the Commissioners' comments to the Council. He then thanked the Commissioners and said they were not precluded from making additional comments. If they had suggestions, they should call or e-mail staff with them.

There being no further questions or discussion, the Commission voted to pass their comments on to the City Council. Unanimously approved.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITTEN MATERIAL:

VIII. COMMISSIONER ITEMS:

- A. Report of the City Council Meeting of November 16, 2010 presented by Chairman Alderson. Questions and comments followed on the subject of the roundabout or signal at the intersection of Sinaloa and Eisenhower.
- B. Chairman Alderson noted Commissioner Barrows was scheduled to report back on the December 7, 2010, Council meeting.
- C. Commissioner Barrows stated the Green Building Code was going into effect in January and asked if the Commission would be discussing the Code at a later meeting.

Staff responded all of the appropriate Code Amendments were taken to Council, and adopted. They were not presented to the Commission as they were "mandates" and not "optional" items.

IX: DIRECTOR ITEMS:

- A. Comments on the upcoming American Planning Association Conference possibly coming to the Valley in 2012; possibly to Rancho Mirage. General discussion followed.

X. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioners Wilkinson/Quill to adjourn this regular meeting of the Planning Commission to the next regular meeting to be held on December 14, 2010. This regular meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m. on November 23, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Walker, Executive Secretary
City of La Quinta, California