



# CITY OF RIDGECREST

100 West California Avenue  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

## MINUTES

### MEETING OF THE CITY OF RIDGECREST PLANNING COMMISSION

City Council Chambers

Tuesday, October 28, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

**Commissioners:** Chairman Jerry Taylor, Commissioners; Lois Beres, Howard Laire, Nellavan Jeglum and Eric Kauffman

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3. ROLL CALL**

Present: Chairman Taylor, Commissioners Beres, Kauffman, Jeglum and Laire.

Staff Present: City Planner Matthew Alexander, Administrative Secretary Danielle Valentine

**4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion was moved by Commissioner Jeglum and seconded by Commissioner Beres to approve the Agenda. The Agenda was approved as submitted.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was moved by Commissioner Laire and seconded by Commissioner Kauffman to approve the minutes of September 23, 2008. The minutes of September 23, 2008 were approved as submitted.

A motion was moved by Commissioner Laire and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to approve the minutes of July 22, 2008. The minutes of July 22, 2008 were approved as submitted.

**6. PUBLIC COMMENTS OF ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**7. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- a. **Site Plan Review SPR-08-10** A 5,000 sq. ft. new restaurant, China Express, with future 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of 5,000 sq. ft. on a vacant lot in Downtown Balsam Business District, General Service Commercial (CG) zoning at 241 Balsam St APN 067-196-05. Applicant – Narin Saraburin

Planner Alexander briefed the Commission explaining the application was for a new China Express restaurant. He said the existing restaurant was a popular spot located at the corner of Ridgecrest and Balsam – saying its limitation was the restaurant only had 50 seats. Mr. Alexander provided an aerial photograph showing parking currently in existence at Crossroads Church – photo being taken on a Sunday. He went on to say that Olde Town had gained prosperity in the past year – with Rite Aid replacing a dilapidated building, the updating of the USO building and re-use of the Burger King facility. He indicated the elevation was for a two story building at the recommendation of the staff – encouraging mixed use. Mr. Alexander noted that the site plan provided 5,000 sq. ft of building area on a 7,000

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sq. foot lot allowing five parking spaces in the rear – gaining access from the alley. He said the question before the Commission was “what should be done about parking?” saying that most downtowns did not require businesses to provide their own parking.

Planner Alexander said that 53 parking spaces existed close by – and had been found to be 93% vacant in a recent survey and that the angled parking on Balsam Street provided an advantage in terms of numbers of spaces. He said that in all 231 public spaces existed on Balsam and surveys completed were conducted at different times of the day. The results showed that of the total parking spaces on average only 30% of the available parking spaces were used. Planner Alexander said that staff recommended that either (a) the applicant apply for a parking variance or (b) the Planning Commission make a recommendation to the City Council that businesses on Balsam Street be exempt from providing parking spaces.

Chairman Taylor asked Planner Alexander to provide clarification of Condition number 10. He did so saying that if the trash enclosure was required only 4 parking spaces would be available.

Commissioner Beres questioned why Condition 10 saying it didn't really make sense. It was generally agreed that condition should be amended to read as follows:

*The rear parking area shall provide 4 parking off-street parking spaces and shall be paved.*

Planner Alexander also said that a copy of 32 signatures of people supporting China Express to build a new building at 245 Balsam Street had been distributed just before the meeting commenced.

Commissioner Jeglum asked how wide the parcel was – Chairman Taylor said that although it was faint the site plan did read “56”.

Commissioner Beres said she liked the idea of a patio.

Chairman Taylor opened the floor to the public at 7:22 p.m.

Bob Tharpe, 1047 N. Inyo – said he was a 67 year old resident of Ridgecrest and that he was familiar with what he termed an “this ongoing problem”. He said that both he and Nickolettis had applications denied previously as the rule had always been that you could not classify City parking as private parking. He said he had always furnished the number of spaces provided according to the City's requirements. Mr. Tharpe said that as the owner of Lindsays Furniture he was concerned. He said he too had counted parking spaces noting they were full and he too had spoken to business owners on Balsam and his conversations led him to believe that these business owners were concerned regarding parking. He said he believed that the rules and regulations should be “for all” and that he did not know how the City could deny one person and make exception for another.

Chairman Taylor said his concern when he observed vehicles parked on Balsam that day was that some of them were Balsam Street business owners – this was confirmed by Mr. Tharpe. He acknowledged that parking would be consideration for the Crossroads Church but mentioned operating hours - the church operating on a Sunday when businesses were normally closed. Mr. Tharpe disagreed with this comment saying that the Church also had funerals etc. on different days of the week.

Commissioner Kauffman questioned why business owners would have signed the petition if they had an issue with parking. Mr. Tharpe said that business owners might find it hard to go against something and were thinking that the City would have regulations protecting them.

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Chairman Taylor said he too had spoken with business owners and noted they had concern but at the same time were desperate for influx into the area and made verbal concurrence that they were in favor of bringing forward development into the Balsam Street area. Mr. Tharpe said "of course" they would love a restaurant in that area. Commissioner Kauffman said that there was a spirit in Olde Town – a wish for it to be developed similar to an area like for instance Santa Monica – where people visiting for food and beverage generated new business. Mr. Tharpe said his experience in retail had taught him that was not where his new business would come from.

There was further discussion regarding the validity of the parking survey and how many buildings on Balsam Street were or were not empty. Mr. Tharpe also reiterated that he felt it was unfair that he and Nickoletti's had been turned down for parking.

Chairman Taylor said that circumstances change (for instance the current City Planner was not at the City when previous decisions had been made) and noted the concept of mixed use in the recent DRAFT new General Plan.

Mr. Tharpe went on to say that he currently had to "police" his parking. There was further discussion as to the accessibility of parking spaces to Mr. Tharpe's furniture business. Mr. Tharpe said the City had allowed Crossroads to use some of his parking. Commissioner Kauffman asked him if he received any consideration for this parking and this was confirmed by Mr. Tharpe. Then Mr. Tharpe asked what would happen if the use of the building changed. Chairman Taylor said that the requirements for parking would change accordingly.

Chairman Taylor asked for Mr. Tharpe's final comments and thanked him for his contribution. Mr. Tharpe said he should not have to police his parking spaces and that the City should act in a fair manner. He said if problems were created in a small community it was not pleasant – noting that the owner of the trophy shop said "this would put her out of business". He said a lot of things could be done with the lot in question – with advantage to Balsam Street. He said he could have bought that lot several times very cheaply but did not because of what the City told him he had to do.

Commissioner Laire asked Mr. Tharpe for his business hours – these were provided with a clarification that the business did not operate on Saturdays.

Jim Fallgatter – 207 Cobblestone commented that Mr. Tharpe had some great vision a number of years ago and complimented him saying that now the City did have somebody with a great plan to put a growing restaurant in place. He said this growing business would draw people down Balsam Street and he considered it to be an outstanding venue. He said we have a "new way of going – not the old one" saying that the new General Plan inclusive of mixed use was promoting such usage. He asked that the future be allowed to roll forward and allow the applicant to make a substantial investment to "pull off" a nice new venue.

Public hearing closed at 7:59 p.m.

Commissioner Kauffman said he would like to see the façade and signage set a standard for what the City was looking for in Olde Town and that he felt it was a great example for mixed use – and would help grow Olde Towne and thanked staff for their research on parking which had provided comfort to some of the business with concerns. He asked for attention to detail in terms of what the building provided to the street (i.e. frontage).

Commissioner Beres apologized for past decisions and suggested that parking requirements be waived in some way to allow new business in.

Commissioner Laire said he too was sorry things didn't work out in the past and that the City was now moving on towards a new vision and felt it was exciting. He said he concurred with

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Commissioner Beres' suggestion to make a recommendation to the City Council for a waiver in parking requirements for the Balsam Street area.

Commissioner Jeglum said she lived on Balsam and knew that there would be an impact but that it would not be intolerable. She said she would recommend something go to Council to designate the down town area with a different requirement with shared parking facilities recognizing the uniqueness of the area and its history.

Chairman Taylor asked if public would only enter the restaurant from the front – this was confirmed by the applicant. Chairman Taylor asked that the applicant also consider a rear entrance – providing easier access to the City parking lot. Further, Chairman Taylor said that the second story might involve further discussion. Mr. Saraburin said that staff had made the suggestion of a second floor advising that if that was envisaged to be a future plan it would be best to construct it now. He said that he had only asked managers or owners to sign his survey and it seemed from his inquiries that most business were looking for more businesses. He spoke about the “busy” hours of the restaurant – explaining that the need for parking would go up and down through the “peak” business hours. He said he sympathized with Mr. Tharpe and that he did not want “any trouble” and wanted to serve the people.

Commissioner Kauffman asked if the recommendation for an exemption could be made this evening – this was confirmed by Planner Alexander. Chairman Taylor said this would provide an opportunity for public comment at City Council.

Commissioner Kauffman asked if it would be better to grant a variance first (to prevent delay) send a recommendation to the City Council for the long term. Chairman Taylor said this was a good point – preventing the application from being “bogged down”.

Planner Alexander said the variance was not in front of the Commission this evening.

Commissioner Kauffman made a motion and Commissioner Laire seconded a motion for approval of Resolution 08-21.

Commissioner Jeglum asked for clarification – could the recommendation in the meantime go to Council with a potential to waive the requirement for parking – and hence potentially allow this application to be included in any waiver and thereby eliminating the need to apply for a variance. Planner Alexander confirmed and suggested that wording of Condition number xx be amended to read “or” versus “and”

Commissioner Kauffman made an amendment to his motion regarding Condition number 3. to include the possibility of City Council allowing a parking exemption for the Olde Town area; inclusive of striking “and shall connect.....” from Condition 10. And changing “5” parking spaces to “4” parking spaces n Condition 3 and 10. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Laire.

AYES: Taylor, Beres, Jeglum, Kauffman, Laire  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

- b. Site Plan Review SPR-08-08** A 3,600 sq. ft. metal commercial building with 2 bays on 1 acre located in Service Commercial (CS) zoning at 1110 W. Ridgecrest Blvd, APN 456-070-07. Owner - Chuck Roulund, Evergreen Construction

Planner Alexander briefed the Commission saying that the site was located approximate to North Inyokern Street and west Ridgecrest Boulevard noting there were no buildings on the site but that items were being stored on the lot. He said the proposal was to provide two

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back to back bays with ingress and egress from the rear noting that said the site plan met with City code and recommending approval subject to the 18 conditions listed.

Commissioner Beres questioned why four curb cuts were required onto Ridgecrest Boulevard. Mr. Roulund responded saying that there were four curb cuts as there were bays in front and drive through grates on both sides – allowing trucks to drive through from the front bay to the back bay. Mr. Roulund said he would rather have two big curb cuts. Commissioner Beres asked Planner Alexander if that was possible and this was confirmed.

Chairman Taylor asked if the fence-line shown on the presentation was the setback. Mr. Roulund said the building would be 10 feet back from the fence-line.

Commissioner Jeglum asked what was happening to the area in the back. Mr. Roulund said that it would be used for storage. He said he would be renting the bays out. Commissioner Jeglum asked which portion of the lot would be paved. Mr. Roulund said discussion had only been about paving the bays area. Chairman Taylor clarified the question to the Planner was in regards to the requirements for a commercial business in terms of paving. Planner Alexander said that Public Works would require “no dust” where there was parking.

Commissioner Jeglum said that she would like to see some kind of surfacing to mitigate dust for the travel way areas – i.e. both sides of the building, the back area for turn-arounds and the bay areas. Mr. Roulund said that some sort of dust abatement – not paving – would not be a problem.

Chairman Taylor said he believed that putting a condition for dust mitigation where traffic would be served – transient areas – was what was being suggested – this was confirmed by Commissioner Jeglum and Commissioner Kauffman. It was then agreed that the following should be added to Condition 13.

*Item J. Dust abatement on all transient areas on both the east and west and next to the current proposed parking.*

Mr. Roulund noted that he had not seen the draft resolution. Chairman Taylor then asked for a brief recess to allow the Mr. Roulund time to review the conditions as set out by the draft Resolution. The meeting was recessed briefly at 8:19 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 8:24 p.m.

Chairman Taylor asked the applicant for his comments. Mr. Roulund said he would prefer that Item 9. Be removed as it was not really applicable (bike racks).

Commissioner Jeglum made a motion and Commissioner Laire seconded a motion to approve Resolution 08-22 eliminating Condition 9. and adding Item J. to Condition 13 to read “Dust abatement on all transient areas on both the east and west and next to the current proposed parking”.

AYES: Taylor, Beres, Jeglum, Kauffman, Laire  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

**8. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Planner Alexander advised that Wal Mart had submitted a formal application last Thursday and staff would now need to review application to ensure it was complete and then notice neighboring properties with the expectation that it would come before the Commission in January.

**9. COMMISSIONER ITEMS**

Commissioner Kauffman asked all residents to vote – regardless of their persuasion. This was reiterated by Commissioner Beres and Commissioner Laire.

Commissioner Jeglum said that the Daily Independent had recently seen fit to endorse some candidates running for City Council and that she saw no problem with this but that it would have been more appropriate to leave the “rest of us alone”. She said she did not believe it was the newspapers place to make comment on people’s personalities and she felt dismissed and hoped only to prove them wrong. She encouraged all residents to come out and vote – to learn about the candidates and support the people who would be good for the community.

Commissioner Laire encouraged everyone to come along to the Art Show at the Carriage Inn on the weekend - Friday Saturday and Sunday.

**10. STAFF ITEMS**

None.

**11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Planner Alexander said the next meeting would be 18<sup>th</sup> November and that Dr. Jansen would be back – perhaps with his site plan. He said the major item before the Commission would be the Wild Point Ranch on Ridgecrest and Mahan.

**12. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.