



CITY OF RIDGECREST

100 West California Avenue
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE CITY OF RIDGECREST PLANNING COMMISSION

City Council Chambers

Tuesday, November 18, 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 7:04 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Commissioner Kauffman

Staff Present: Public Services Director Jim McRea, Public Works Director Dennis Speer, 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 written.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was moved by Commissioner Jeglum and seconded by Commissioner Laire to approve the Minutes of October 28, 2008. The Minutes of 28th October, 2008 were approved as written.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS OF ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7a. Pre-Abatement Hearing for Jansen Animal Hospital – 405 E. Ridgecrest Blvd.

Robert Smith – Code Enforcement Officer – came forward to brief the Commission. Chairman Taylor interrupted to advise the Commission an application had been submitted for the property. He advised that based on information that had recently come to hand and could not be researched before the meeting his recommendation was to continue the item.

City Planner advised that if the item was continued to a date certain there would be no requirement for re-notice. Commissioner Beres said she did not know why the Commission could not go ahead and hear the item. Chairman Taylor asked Commissioner Beres if she would agree to the item being continued to December 16th to allow research to be done. Commissioner Beres said she would agree but she felt this item had gone on for a long time.

Commissioner Laire made a motion and Commissioner Jeglum seconded a motion to continue Item 7a. to December 16th, 2008.

AYES: TAYLOR, JEGLUM, LAIRE

NAYES: BERES

ABSENT: KAUFFMAN

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7.b General Plan Amendment and Zone Change GPA/ZC-08-04 & Tentative Tract Map TTM 6691 and Code Amendment for E-1.5 (20,000 sf min.) Wild Point Project 161 Ac at the NW corner of Mahan St and W. Ridgecrest Blvd (PAM Corp)

Mr. Alexander briefed the Commission saying that the applicant was PAM companies and the site was shown as part of the slide presentation. Mr. Alexander said the property was surrounded on three sides by County land and detailed the zoning for that parcel and surrounding parcels. He said the current General Plan identified this property as Estate Density – allowing 7,500 sq foot lots to 1 acre lots and the current zoning was E1 with a rectangular portion being an exception - zoned at E2 allowing 10,000 square foot lots. He said the proposal was for a primarily residential subdivision.

There were some technical difficulties and a short recess at 7:15. Mr. Alexander advised that 14 slides were missing from the presentation.

Mr. Alexander went on to say that staff had identified 10 issues:

1. MIA. Mr. Alexander said the site was within the military influence area, first identified in the 2007 AICUZ. He said it was both the over flight area and area of concern based on incidents.
2. Biological Resources Mr. Alexander noted that a letter was on file from the United States Dept of Interior indicating the area was a habitat for the Desert Tortoise and that if a tentative tract map was approved mitigation measures would be needed.
3. Traffic – Mr. Alexander said the City Engineer had submitted a memorandum indicating that a traffic study would be required.
4. Sewer Study – Mr. Alexander said the Engineer for PAM believed there would be a need to increase capacity of the main trunk line however the Public Works Department did not agree with this assessment.
5. Drainage – Mr. Alexander read directly from the staff report.
6. Neighborhood Compatibility – Mr. Alexander advised that in the opinion of the staff the lot should remain at low density.
7. Not listed or discussed
8. Rural Design Standards – Mr. Alexander said staff recommended rural design standards be adopted to permit streets with less hardscaping, subject to Public Works approval.
9. School District – Mr. Alexander indicated a letter had been received from SSUSD indicating that there was an intention to dedicate land close by for a middle school.
10. Northerly 17.7 acres – Mr. Alexander said staff had investigated and found that the land had been previously zoned E2.

Mr. Alexander then summarized saying there was no proposed resolution as there were so many issues and staff felt it appropriate for the Commission to give direction to the applicant. He then introduced Mr. Darrel Whitten – for the applicant.

Darrel Whitten addressed the Commission saying he was from Cornerstone Engineering. He said there were a number of issues to be worked out with staff but given that public noticing and negative declarations were complete he wanted to present the project. He introduced his slide presentation showing an entrance site noting it was a little “fluffy” and not really appropriate for the desert. He said he hoped to have light standards appropriate for the desert with proper shrouding to allow for dark skies. Mr. Whitten said that the applicant hoped to have a nice entrance to the project. He went on to say that initially the project had 450 lots and that this was scaled back after listening to concerns of the Navy. He said he was unaware that the northern lot was E2 as the zoning maps he had seen showed it as E1. Mr. Whitten said the project would include parks – including a 6 acre park on the northern end with a drainage sump with a dual use (to be worked upon with staff).

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Mr. Whitten noted that in the middle of the project there was a pocket park with a walking trail. He said the project also included an 8 acre commercial site – not large enough for a big box facility but rather a pedestrian friendly multi-use area. He then commentated a slide showing a rendering of the complete interior showing trees planted next to the street, a walking or jogging trail or sidewalk next to the plantings and along the outside of the trail a split rail fence creating a different feel to that of a typical urban development. Mr. Whitten said it was planned that the main street through the project would be standard size with streets in the smaller sections having a 32 foot wide surface with 8 foot landscaping and sidewalk and split rail fence. He provided graphics of the planned commercial center – being pedestrian friendly with custom lighting consistent with residential design.

Mr. Whitten said he had noticed that a goal of the new draft General Plan was to get away from the walls along major collector streets – which served a purpose of mitigating against noise. He said they would like to build a berm up around the edge (with desert landscaping) to reduce street noise – getting away from perimeter block walls. He acknowledged this would not be as effective as a block wall but it would look a lot better – especially with a split rail fence along the top.

He then spoke to density quoting from the letter submitted from the Navy. He provided graphics of departure tracks saying that the tracks went over already developed 7,500 square foot lots and said he was not aware that any of these lots had constrained the Navy's mission. He noted that the proposed re-routed departure tracks were diverted away from the project lot and that the accident potential areas were also over a mile away from the project. He went on to provide graphics of the noise study saying that the 60 DB noise contour was outside the footprint of the project. He said he had been told that the Navy was in the process of updating this information and that he believed the new noise study would have very different parameters.

Mr. Whitten then addressed biological resources saying that the burrowing owl was not difficult to relocate. He said the letter from the Department of Fish and Wildlife was interesting as whilst it spoke about the Desert Tortoise and things that could not be done if one was found it also indicated that there would be low potential for take of the species. He said it would be possible to come up with a condition to mitigate for both species.

Mr. Whitten went on to discuss traffic saying that he had met with Joe Pollock about 6 months ago. He said he had asked Joe where traffic counts should be refreshed (given the study had gone stale) and Joe had indicated Mahan was the main concern. Mr. Whitten said this fresh traffic count had been done along with “bumping up” counts further out – thereby updating to current the areas he felt were of most concern.

Mr. Whitten said his research showed that sewer might be a concern and he understood that a flow meter was going to be used to get some counts and that the applicant was prepared to pay their fair share for any improvements.

He then addressed drainage saying that the depressed area where water ultimately sat was exactly where they planned on putting the sump. He said he believed that the project could be constructed so as to have no effect on people “upstream” or “downstream”.

He then spoke to density saying that he felt that it had been taken into consideration. He also said that they would need to work with City staff in regards to rural design standards. Mr. Whitten said that in regards to SSUSD – he did not believe the 25 acre site indicated was appropriate for a school and noted that a significant amount of funds would be paid to the school district (referring to his application fees) which could be used to update existing schools or as the School District chose.

Mr. Whitten summed up saying he understood there were issues to be resolved with staff and that he would like input from the Commission noting that 1 acre lots would be difficult to develop and would mean a lot of wasted space.

Commissioner Beres said she still felt that 1 acre lots would be workable – saying that not all lots would have to be 1 acre but on average that should be achieved if at all possible. She asked if this would facilitate equestrian lots – Mr. Alexander said the zoning ordinance could be amended to facilitate equestrian on 1 acre lots. Commissioner Beres asked for confirmation from Mr. Whitten regarding the sump taking up any flooding. Mr. Whitten said the sump would be sized so that the incremental run off would not get dumped but there was no way to increment the thousands of acres off site. There was further discussion regarding drainage. Commissioner Beres asked who would be responsible for taking care of the berms. Mr. Whitten said he believed the burden would fall upon the City and that would be why the lighting and landscaping district would kick in to provide funding for such.

Commissioner Jeglum noted that the project was within the military influence area and that was important, she also supported the restriction to 1 acre lots. She asked about annexation of the county portion of the lot to avoid truncated streets and related issues. She said she was concerned about sewer capacity noting that the City was currently 'bucking up' against its sewer capacity. Commissioner Jeglum said that Leroy Jackson Park was a good example of how a park sump might work in our community. Further, she said that 10,000 square foot lots along Mahan were incompatible with the surrounding lots and negatively impacted the rural setting. She said she liked the ideas of the berm, the split rail fence along the sidewalk, the approach to lighting and overall she knew that anything brought to the City by Mr. Whitten would be a positive thing.

Commissioner Laire said his biggest concern was the MIA – he said that until he knew more about the new flight plans he was not in favor of rezoning the area.

Chairman Taylor said his concern was truncated streets and asked what depth the sump might be. Mr. Whitten said most likely 8 to 10 feet. Chairman Taylor asked about landscaping and Mr. Whitten said that design for the project would include that and it would be dependent upon what there was a need for. He said he did like the concept of the plan and felt if the 10,000 square foot lots and some other issues were addressed, the project would be more acceptable. Chairman Taylor then read from an email submitted from member Kauffman as follows:

First on the Jansen item....without seeing the plan, it sounds to me like it is basically eliminating a little, cleaning the lot and hanging awnings on their existing structures which is not a big improvement. I would be inclined to give them a little more time so that they could improve on this idea a little and also maybe provide some examples of how this would actually look better than the existing setup with awnings.

On Wild Pointe Ranch....I have an issue with making a change to ½ acre lots on the whole. Just looking after the MIA it may be better in spirit to allow some leeway in the zoning to allow for some ½ acre lots but not make the entire thing ½ acre. Being the newest commissioner, I am still not knowledgeable enough to know what kind of wiggle room there is there. If the plan also includes a shopping center I do not believe that it is in the spirit of the new (draft) General Plan.

I was very pleased with the diligence paid to this project by the developer however. One thing that was unclear to me, and again this may be my unfamiliarity with the process, was enough attention to drainage for neighboring areas.

I look forward to our process with the Wild Pointe project and do realize this is a great opportunity for Ridgecrest.

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Chairman Taylor asked Dennis Speer Public Works Director to address the Commission in regards to sub-standard streets. Mr. Speer said that he was not opposed to 32 foot or sub-standard streets but that according to gas tax guidelines he could not secure funding to maintain those streets; at least a 40 foot street would be needed.

Chairman Taylor asked Mr. Speer if there were any concerns in regards to the sidewalks being proposed. Mr. Speer responded saying that it would be standard dependent and there would be no issue with ADA.

Public comment was opened at 8:07 p.m.

Mr. Alexander read into the record an email from Helen Jackson – as follows:

Gentlemen:

Please be advised that I am opposed to the "project", proposed by PAM Ridgecrest Venture LLC

I am a property owner on Ridgecrest Blvd, just east of Mahan ,and also west of Brady on the county side.

I have had my business for over 23years and my home since 1969.

I do not want any proposed General Plan or ZONE Changes that will affect both my business, and the tranquility of my home.

The City /County is in no position to take on more problems. It can't take care of the promises or new developments now in progress: Larkspur Apartments on So Downs, and on the corner of Las Flores and Downs.

There are hundreds of homes and apartments in Ridgecrest empty ,and no new residents forth coming anytime soon.

I want to go on record as opposed to any development in this tract Map TTM 6691,

Amendment of Zone Change GPA?ZC-08-04.

I am unable to attend tonight's meeting due to medical problems ,but do want to be notified of your future meetings and plans.

SINCERELY,

Helen Jackson

Stuart Briel (spelling not provided) – 1548 W Las Flores – said he lived adjacent to the proposed development. He said he had mixed feelings to growth but acknowledged that the City had to grow given developments at the Base. He said currently the evenings were most

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enjoyable and quiet and noted that the minimum of 2 ½ acre lots existed surrounding the site in question and that was why neighbors had bought in that area – allowing freedom close to the City. He said he therefore felt that the size being proposed was incompatible.

Bud Klampert – 221 N Gold Canon Drive – said he saw no buffer zone between property owners who had larger lots and what was planned and he believed there needed to be much larger lots around the outside as a buffer.

Dave Hazelwood – Rademaker Way – said larger lots would mean less drainage issues, less traffic and a smaller sump – better for the surrounding community.

Columbia Nelson – 334 Collie – asked if the area would be leveled. Mr. Whitten responded saying that he was trying to make the street situation match the terrain. She then asked if residents would still be able to go straight down Las Flores – this was confirmed. Ms. Nelson said she was curious about who got the public notice as she had only seen one notice in the Daily Independent and asked why she had not been noticed. Mr. Alexander said that notices had been sent to neighbors within 300 feet of the project. Ms. Nelson commented on the term “wasted space” - saying that she did not consider her lot wasted space – it was her home.

Ron Oakrin (spelling not provided) – said that those citizens west of Brady were concerned about how the streetscape was going to tie in – noting he was representing the “West Brady Bunch”

Public comment closed at 8:17 p.m.

Mr. Whitten said that there were a lot of issues that needed work and asked if there was a Committee he could be referred to in order to work towards resolution on density, sewer, street modifications etc. He said he hoped to get input from staff and Council members. Chairman Taylor advised (after consulting with staff) that the Community Development Committee and Infrastructure Committees would be appropriate (dependent upon the issue).

Chairman Taylor suggested that due to the large lots surrounding the project, staff consider 600 feet rather than 300 feet for noticing for future hearings of this project. Commissioner Jeglum suggested that noticing in the newspaper should suffice and that according to law 300 feet was appropriate, she said she was concerned that a precedent might be set.

Mr. Alexander said it would be the applicant and staff’s preference to continue the item until January 13th, 2009.

Commissioner Laire made a motion and Commissioner Jeglum seconded a motion to continue Item 7b. until January 13th, 2009.

AYES: TAYLOR, JEGLUM, BERES, LAIRE

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Kauffman

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Possible Planning Commission meeting time change from 7:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

Commissioner Beres advised that the Infrastructure Committee met on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. and that in the event that meeting ran long the Planning Commission would commence without those Commissioners involved in the Infrastructure Committee. Chairman Taylor said he had concerns with a Committee meeting being scheduled on the same day as the Planning Commission.

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Commissioner Jeglum said she agreed with Commissioner Beres comments.

Commissioner Laire said he had no problem with 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Taylor said given majority Commissioner comments, meetings would remain at a 7:00 p.m. start time.

9. COMMISSIONER ITEMS

10. STAFF ITEMS

Mr. Alexander thanked Chairman Taylor for his contributions saying he had done an excellent job and asked for a round of applause – which was provided!

Chairman Taylor thanked the staff and Commissioners and said he looked forward to continuing working with all.

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Alexander said that staff had requested a special meeting on the 16th December as well as the scheduled meeting on the 9th December. This was agreed to.

12. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.