CITY OF RIDGECREST

100 West California Avenue
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE CITY OF RIDGECREST PLANNING COMMISSION

City Council Chambers
Tuesday, August 28, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioners: **Chair, Mike Biddlingmeier, Vice-Chair, Jerry Taylor, Commissioners, Lois Beres; Howard Laire, and Nellavan Jeglum**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Biddlingmeier, Commissioner Beres, Commissioner Jeglum
Commissioner Laire

Absent: Vice-Chair Taylor

Staff Present: City Planner Matthew Alexander, Public Services Director Jim McRea, Administrative Secretary Danielle Valentine

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was moved by Commissioner Laire and seconded by Commission 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 Jeglum to approve the Minutes. The Minutes of 14th August, 2007 were approved as submitted.

AYES: Biddlingmeier, Beres, Jeglum, Laire
NAYES: None

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS OF ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Planner Alexander advised that he had asked Molly Bosley to introduce herself as the lead consultant for the new zoning ordinance.

Molly Bosley of Matrix Design Group introduced herself to the Commission and stated that part of her charge would be to take a look at the zoning ordinance in an upcoming GPAC meeting. She advised that Matrix would be taking a comprehensive look at the ordinance in the hope of making the ordinance an easily digestible and graphic ordinance - something that can be easily understood – not only by Commissioners but interested citizens. Ms Bosley indicated that she had spoken with City staff about some of the things they would like to see in the ordinance and proposed a question to the Commission as follows:

What portion(s) of the zoning ordinance would you ask specific attention be paid to. Is there something in there that you find is difficult to interpret?

Chair Biddlingmeier asked for any comments from Commissioners?

None. However Planner Alexander asked to note that Commissioners who have questions regarding the new Zoning Ordinance contact Ms Bosley via the staff.

Chair Biddlingmeier asked for any comments from the public?

None.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7a. SGN/CUP 07-15

Planner Alexander summarized the application from Jim Charlon Ford who was represented by James Bell. He summarized that the request was for a Conditional Use Permit in order to permit signage over the maximum allowed for the permitted area. He pointed out that the ordinance allows the Commission to grant over-signage and provided graphics to show how the new sign would appear. Planner Alexander reminded the Commission that staff had recently asked for their opinion in regards moveable copy signs and the Commission had indicated they would allow moving copy signage.

Planner Alexander then provided a square footage breakdown of the existing signage and included measurements for the proposed sign indicating it would add an additional 178 sq. ft. Planner Alexander asked to draw attention to the existing Ford sign indicating it was over the maximum allowance for height. He explained that the application for a variance for that sign had been denied by the Commission and appealed to the City Council who had overturned the Commission's decision in 2002.

Planner Alexander summarized stating that signage for the Ford business was already in excess of the permissible square footage but that staff believed that an exception in this case was justified. However he recommended that the new sign have compatible coloring including a stipulation that the sign post be grey and that the existing sign be lowered to within the allowable height as per the ordinance. On behalf of staff Planner Alexander recommended that the CUP be granted with the conditions as per the staff report.

Commissioner Jeglum questioned why the service sign was included in square footage.

Planner Alexander explained that the wording was what caused it to be included. For example, if it read "entrance" it would not be included because this would be a directional sign.

Commissioner Jeglum suggested that if the painted sign read "service entrance" it also might not be included in the calculation as it would then be considered a direction sign.

Commissioner Beres asked if the service sign was excluded would the business still be over the allowable square footage

Commissioner Jeglum responded sighting that the service sign measured 45 square feet so regardless the Ford business would still be over.

There being no further comments from Commissions Chair Biddlingmeier opened the floor for public comments at 7:20 p.m.

James Bell on behalf of Jim Charlon Ford spoke to the Commission stating that the only request from the owners would be for leniency in regards sign color. He explained that preliminary work only had been done on design. He gave his assurance that the sign would be compatible to the signage in existence but for instance may not specifically have a grey pole. Mr. Bell also gave his assurance that the existing sign would be lowered and asked if the Commissioners had any questions.

Commissioner Beres stated that she was not overwhelmed or excited about an additional sign given the business was already over limit. She explained she was reticent to set a precedent at the same time acknowledging the size of the facility was a consideration.

Chair Biddlingmeier suggested that the scrolling sign replace the existing sign.

Mr. Bell explained that the existing sign indicated the dealership was blue oval certified – something considered, significant and prestigious thing within the Ford Family as a dealership had to attain a certain level of achievement and service to “fly that flag”. Mr. Bell acknowledged that it was not likely that the sign would be removed as this would only occur if there was a drop in service level but it needed to be noted that this was a possibility however unlikely. Mr. Bell pointed out that if an additional sign read used cars for instance they would still have two signs but the two separate businesses would not require the CUP – as was the case for competitors a short distance away. Mr. Bell summarized stating that the moveable copy sign would present a whole different avenue of advertising for the owners – for instance advising customers that the Alta One Auto Sales vehicles are at the Fairground.

Commissioner Laire asked for clarification that his understanding that if this proposed sign was allowed the existing sign would be lowered was correct.

Mr. Bell responded indicating that regardless of the outcome, the existing signage would be lowered to comply with the current ordinance.

Chair Biddlingmeier commented that given the size of the property he didn’t think it inappropriate to approve the application – adding “as long as the purple gorilla doesn’t come back”!

Commissioner Laire pointed out that the signs on the wall don’t really stand out and Chair Biddligmeier agreed and stated that highlighted some of the discussion coming up in the general plan update adding he hoped that through the general plan update such issues would be cleared up.

Commissioner Beres asked Mr. Bell why the sign was not being erected at the other end of the block – away from the existing signage and Mr. Bell responded stating it was a power issue.

Commissioner Jeglum indicated she had no issue with the application pointing out that the owner’s lot was neat and tidy. She stated she did not have a problem with the pole being compatible but didn’t agree with inclusions outside of the ordinance – i.e. the pole having to be grey.

Commissioner Laire asked if the Commission had made these requirements for any other applicants and Chair Biddlingmeier responded in the negative.

Chair Biddlingmeier then asked if the Commissioners were agreeable to changing Condition 4. to read “The applicant is permitted to install one new pole sign consisting of 89 sq. ft per side and shall have a compatible color scheme” excluding the phrase “consistent with the existing blue and white lettering on a grey pole”.

No objections were raised.

Chair Biddlingmeier then asked if Mr. Bell would be happy with that proposal and Mr. Bell indicated he would be but stipulated that the lettering on the electronic sign would probably not be blue and white rather whatever color it needed to be as designated by the supplier. He further stated that wherever possible the colors would be consistent with the building and the surrounding area of the building.

Chair Biddlingmeier asked Commissioners if they had any other questions for Mr. Bell and there being none asked for any comments from the public – there were none. Public comment closed at 7:35 p.m.

Chair Biddlingmeier asked for a motion to approve. Commissioner Laire made a motion and Commissioner Jeglum seconded a motion to approve resolution 07-15 inclusive of the change to Condition 4. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

None.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & COMMENTS

Next Meeting September 11th, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.

Planner Alexander stated that the three items listed for the next meeting would be continued at that meeting. He explained that on September 19th he was expecting a presentation to be made jointly to the City Council and the Planning Commission. He stated that John O'Gara would present the new AICUZ on that date. Planner Alexander further explained that the items listed had come about as a result of the new AICUZ.

Commissioner Jeglum asked to notify the public of an Exchange Club event. Commissioner Jeglum advised that the victims of 911, military members who had given their lives and those currently serving in the military would be honored by a flag flying ceremony. A buffet will be served between 11:00 and 12:15 p.m. and tickets can be purchased through the Chamber of Commerce. On behalf of the Exchange Club, Commissioner Jeglum invited everyone to attend commenting on what a wonderful spectacle "something like over 900 freedom flags flying in Freedom Park 3 feet apart" would be. The flags will be erected on 8th September and remain through 11th September. Commissioner Jeglum stated "you can come anytime and appreciate the glory of that pageantry."

Chair Biddlingmeier asked Planner Alexander to clarify that the items would definitely be held over on September 11th and that no other items were due for consideration. Upon confirmation Chair Biddlingmeier suggested the meeting scheduled for September 11th be cancelled and there was general agreement to this suggestion.

10. ADJOURN - The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.