

**CITY OF TAFT
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2013**

The September 4, 2013, regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Taft, held in the City of Taft Council Chamber, 209 E. Kern Street, Taft, CA 93268, was opened by Chairman Ron Orrin on at 6:00:35 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bob Leikam, and invocation was given by Vice Chairman Robert Thompson.

PRESENT: Chairman Ron Orrin, Vice Chairman Robert Thompson;
Commissioners Renée Hill, Bob Leikam, Shawn Sutherland.
Interim Planning and Development Director, Mark Staples.
Recording Secretary Alina Megerdom.
City Attorney Tom Ebersole.

I. CITIZEN REQUESTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS 6:06:47 PM

Michael Long, Business owner at 508 Center Street voiced his concerns on downtown Center Street commercial units including vacancies, maintenance and upkeep.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES 6:09:55 PM

Consider approval of minutes for the August 7, 2013, Regular Planning Commission Meeting.

Recommendation: Approve as submitted.

Motion: Moved by Thompson, seconded by Sutherland, to approve the minutes of August 7, 2013.

AYES: Hill, Leikam, Orrin, Sutherland, Thompson
Yes: 5/0

III. PUBLIC HEARING 6:10:39 PM

1. Conditional Use Permit 2013-14 – Proposal for a 65-foot tall monopine wireless communication facility with a 900 square foot lease area, on a 1.49 acre lot, within the General Commercial (GC) Zone District located on the west side of 10th Street, south of Center Street.

Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2013-03 approving Conditional Use Permit 2013-14 for a 65-foot tall monopine wireless communication facility with a 900 square foot lease area, on a 1.49 acre lot, within the General Commercial (GC) Zone District located on the west side of 10th Street, south of Center Street.

Staples presented the Staff Report on Conditional Use Permit 2013-14.

Orrin asked if the proposed wireless communication facility is exclusively for AT&T customers.

Vance Pomeroy, representing AT&T spoke on behalf of AT&T and stated that it is not exclusively for AT&T. If another carrier was interested, they could come forward. They would have to approach the tower owner which would be AT&T to see if they could place their antennas on the facility, as long as it meets the requirements under the Conditions.

Orrin opened the duly noticed Public Hearing to receive testimony from proponents and opponents. There being none, the Public Hearing was closed.

Motion: Moved by Thompson, seconded by Hill to Adopt Resolution 2013-03 approving Conditional Use Permit 2013-14 for a 65-foot tall monopine wireless communication facility with a 900 square foot lease area, on a 1.49 acre lot, within the General Commercial (GC) Zone District located on the west side of 10th Street, south of Center Street.

AYES: Hill, Leikam, Sutherland, Thompson, Orrin
APPROVED: 5/0

2. Conditional Use Permit 2013-18 – Proposal to reuse an existing office building to re-establish a used car dealership, on a 0.66 acre lot, within the Downtown Commercial (DC) Zone District located at 200 Center Street. 6:19:30 PM

Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2013-04 approving Conditional Use Permit 2013-18 to reuse an existing office to re-establish a used car dealership, on a 0.66 acre lot, within the Downtown Commercial (DC) Zone District located at 200 Center Street.

Staples presented the Staff Report on Conditional Use Permit 2013-18.

Thompson stated that one of the issues he had was with landscape. He understands that it's an existing use, what are some of the options on landscape. Staples stated that with a car lot, there are specific standards in the City Code that asks for five feet of landscaping but because of the existing development in place of prior use of car lot, the City did not condition the project to grind out the concrete to add landscaping.

Orrin opened the duly noticed Public Hearing to receive testimony from proponents and opponents.

Emmanuel Campos, current owner of Monarch Fleet Services and Automotive spoke for the project. He stated that he has the business across the street and has been interested to open a used car lot and the location was perfect for his interest. He is excited to bring it forward; he feels there is a need whether it be entry level vehicles, cars for work, etc.

Orrin stated that he had concerns with the property line. The ingress and egress portion of the westerly portion of the lot, under current ownership he is dealing with reasonable people. If there was something to change and there was a new owner. Can you assure us that you are going to get that addressed, so there is a legal ingress and egress in writing and attached to the property? Campos stated he has been speaking to the property owner and having the option to purchase the property, there are lot line adjustment documents that he has helped the property owner to locate. At the time that the property should change ownership, they have kept the easement which is 15 feet from the building. It's the understanding that their property would allow for that.

Vanesh Nand, owner of Sears Retail Store stated he has no objection for the proposed business. The only concern he has is the driveway to the receiving dock. Their trucks are too big to fit the driveway. Last couple of weeks the delivery trucks had to deliver the items in the street, which is not the Sears policy.

Orrin stated that it appears the issue with delivery truck and use of the property is not something City of Taft needs to resolve. The issue needs to be addressed by the property owner and the two tenants.

Staples concurred with Orrin stating that the key thing to remember is what the Commissioners are reviewing before them is the Conditional Use Permit for the auto sales lot. There is an issue with access for another

business that has historically used the driveway approach for loading and unloading. Staples offered to facilitate a meeting between the parties and assist them in inquiring an encroachment permit to widen the driveway approach and an easement to make sure Sears can have access. It is not something that can be addressed by the Commission or even condition on this project.

Orin asked if there was anyone else wishing to speak for or in opposition of the proposed Conditional Use Permit. No one came forward, and Chairman Orrin closed the Public Hearing.

Motion: Moved by Thompson, seconded by Hill, to Adopt Resolution 2013-04 approving Conditional Use Permit 2013-18 to reuse an existing office to re-establish a used car dealership, on a 0.66 acre lot, within the Downtown Commercial (DC) Zone District located at 200 Center Street.

AYES: Hill, Leikam, Sutherland, Thompson, Orrin
APPROVED: 5/0

3. Site Plan Review 2013-16 – Proposal to set a 1,440 square foot office trailer for use as a safety training office for an existing on-site industrial use, on a 4.04 acre lot, within the Industrial (I) Zone District located at 1377 Kern Street. 6:38:26 PM

Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2013-05 approving Site Plan Review 2013-16 to set a 1,440 square foot office trailer for use as a safety training office for an existing on-site industrial use, on a 4.04 acre lot, within the Industrial (I) Zone District located at 1377 Kern Street.

Staples presented the Staff Report on Site Plan Review 2013-16.

Thompson asked what the color of the building is going to be. Staples stated that he believes that it's going to be light tan color with a green trim. Megerdom entered into record color copies of the building and gave the Commissioners the same.

Orrin opened the duly noticed Public Hearing to receive testimony from proponents and opponents. There being none, the Public Hearing was closed.

Motion: Moved by Sutherland, seconded by Hill, to Adopt Resolution 2013-05 approving Site Plan Review 2013-16 to set a 1,440 square foot office trailer for use as a safety training office for an existing on-site industrial use, on a 4.04 acre lot, within the Industrial (I) Zone District located at 1377 Kern Street.

AYES: Hill, Leikam, Sutherland, Thompson, Orrin
APPROVED: 5/0

IV. PLANNING DIRECTOR REPORT 6:43:25 PM

1. Discussion of Downtown Commercial (DC) zoning and development standards

Staples stated that as the Commissioners heard earlier from Mr. Long at the prior meeting, discussion among the Commissioners at the August 7th Planning Commission meeting, there is concern and a need to review the Downtown Commercial area with regards to maintenance, zoning and development standards. He provided prior approved Downtown Specific Plans, Downtown Commercial section of the Zoning Ordinance and other Kern County Cities downtown plans for the Commissioner to review.

In the Commercial section of the code, it is a framework, it provides all the uses permitted within the Downtown Commercial Zoning District but there are no specific standards to make Downtown more distinctive from other zones. He also provided two copies of the Downtown Specific Plan which was originally approved in 1994 with a revision in 1999. The current Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2010. It may have eliminated some of these approvals by adopting a Downtown Commercial Zone District. Staples stated that he will review the ordinance to see if any of it is current and or valid.

Staples would like to encourage discussion among Commissioners and receive input from the public to guide future revisions to the zoning ordinance. It is anticipated that staff, Commissioners, and the public will have multiple meetings and study sessions that will lead to the development of comprehensive standards through ordinance amendments and design guidelines to guide the future development of Downtown Taft.

Hill stated that she was not aware the documents existed. She read the documents and does not think they should reinvent the wheel. They just need to start enforcing and implementing what already exists. Driving down Center Street, she was able to identify 18 buildings that could use some clean-up. They were minor things from painting to preserve the building to replacing windows and fixing structural damage. One of the concerns she brought forward was not knowing the legalities to holding a property owner responsible on cleaning out their property? Can the City legally make the owner maintain their building?

Attorney Ebersole stated that Cities do that all the time. The question is what do we want to call maintenance and what tools do we have in place right now.

Staples stated that for a while the City has only had one Code Enforcement Officer. She does an excellent job but, she is stretched pretty thin between addressing very valid downtown issues and also dealing with structural issues and such around town with residential properties. She is one person for 10,000 people but, as of the end of July the City hired a new Building Official. One task he is going to have is to supplement her and have two sets of eyes out there. He will have the building and structural knowledge that is already in place with the number of projects that are going on in town and some properties that the Code Enforcement Office has had issues with. The new Building Official is very aware of the structural issues in downtown buildings. Also, the Code Enforcement Officer is entertaining an ordinance for dealing with vacated commercial buildings.

Orrin stated that this is a multi-faceted problem. It is code enforcement, it is building and zoning, it is occupancy. At what point does public and safety come in? None-the-less, we have to address this, because it is either going to be remedied or it's going to be our demise. He believes it's this body's responsibility to move forward with progressive thinking to insure that our businesses that are here are supported by our actions with the other business surrounding them.

Staples entered into record documents from other Cities. They are Tehachapi's, Porterville's and Wasco's Downtown Design Guidelines just to give the Commissioners more variety of scope what other cities have done. Some of the items that have been addressed in their guidelines can definitely be applied to Taft.

Orrin stated it will take a collective effort, the public needs to be engaged, because they have a vested interest also.

Long stated that everyone has to realize the potential and historic value of the old downtown. The value of downtown is important and as they develop the 46 acres, the community needs to think, what are they going to do to keep downtown up and preserve it?

Bob Jordan, property owner in the City of Taft suggested the Fire Department to assist the Building Department. They can walk through the buildings and let the Building Official know that the buildings are condemned.

Staples stated that there is a Downtown Committee, which is a very useful tool. A lot of good things come from groups like that. That is another angle to get people to comply or maybe join. That is another group that can help achieve some of the goals that were presented. Hill stated that the next meeting is on Wednesday, September 11th at 5:00 PM at Chamber of Commerce.

V. CITY ATTORNEY STATEMENTS 7:15:56 PM

Ebersole stated that Code Enforcement has three things that are the hallmark of Code Enforcement. It's time intensive, its labor intensive and complaint driven. The preliminary draft of the Vacant Building Ordinance that they are looking at, discussing a fee for, the City cannot charge arbitrarily. It has to be tied to an actual service, the service would be to have someone actually go through and perform the inspections. When you have a fee and someone performing the inspections, it happens on a regular basis because it has to. With the regular inspections, there will be a lot better service. The design of the whole thing is to make sure that the inspector comes out, the inspector identifies the problems. The problems get dealt with quicker and it moves it from the back burner from where it has been to the front burner. So in theory the Vacant Building Ordinance that is anticipated to be brought forward in some point in the future should address a lot of the code enforcement issues, the health and safety issues, etc.

VI. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS 7:25:05 PM

Orrin suggested the following items be added as future Agenda items:

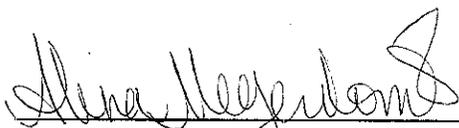
1. Would like to address property line fencing.
2. Use of banner signs. Possibility investigating in using the students at the College who would be interested in restoring the signage that are on some of the old buildings in downtown. ROP might be able to participate. He is sure the Downtown Committee might be able to collect some money to help purchase some of the supplies.
3. Addition of trashcans on Center Street.
4. Professor at Taft College did a presentation to the Greater Taft Economic Agency. He presented a student's project on revitalization of Downtown. He would like to have him do the presentation at the Planning Commission.
5. Need training on how to conduct Planning Commission meetings.

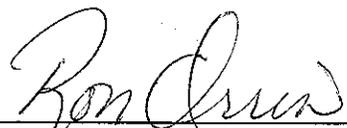
Identification of Representative to the City Council.

Commissioner Hill stated she would attend the Council Meeting and report on Planning Commission meeting updates on Tuesday, September 17, 2013.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Moved by Thompson seconded by Leikam and approved unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 7:30:58 PM.


Alina Megerdom, Recording Secretary


Ron Orrin, Chair

