

**CITY OF TAFT
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014**

The January 22, 2014, 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 at [6:11:20 PM](#). The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Shannon Jones, and invocation was given by Bob Jordan.

PRESENT: Chairman Ron Orrin;
Commissioners Renée Hill, Shannon Jones, Bob Leikam;
Planning and Community Development Director, Mark Staples;
Recording Secretary Alina Megerdom;
City Attorney Tom Ebersole.

ABSENT: Vice Chairman Robert Thompson

I. CITIZEN REQUESTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Consider approval of minutes for the December 4, 2013, Regular Planning Commission Meeting and December 18, 2013, Special Planning Commission Meeting.

Recommendation: Approve as submitted.

Motion: Moved by Jones, seconded by Hill, to approve the minutes of December 4, 2013, Regular Planning Commission Meeting and December 18, 2013, Special Planning Commission Meeting.

AYES: Hill, Jones, Leikam, Orrin

APPROVED: 4/0

III. PUBLIC HEARING

Continued Items

1. City of Taft Municipal Service Review Update – Consideration of an update to the City of Taft and West Side Recreation and Park District Municipal Service Reviews for the Kern County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). [6:15:01 PM](#)

Staff Recommendation: Continue Item to the February 19, 2014, Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission.

Staples asked if the item can be continued to February 19, 2014, Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission.

Motion: Moved by Hill, seconded by Leikam, to continue City of Taft Municipal Service Review Update at the later date.

AYES: Hill, Jones, Leikam, Orrin, Thompson
APPROVED: 4/0

New Items

2. Conditional Use Permit Amendment 2014-01 - Proposal to amend Conditional Use Permit 35 for the Taft Modified Community Correctional Facility (MCCF) regarding occupancy and operation of the facility. [6:16:21 PM](#)

Staples presented the Staff Report on Conditional Use Permit Amendment 2014-01.

Staples stated that pursuant to the agreement with the State of California, the CCF will operate as a Modified Community Correctional Facility (MCCF). It will now house 618 inmates, and will only house convicted and sentenced male inmates that meet the MCCF Eligibility Criteria.

Orrin opened the floor for public comments. No one spoke for or against the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing was closed.

Motion: Moved by Hill, seconded by Leikam, to adopt Resolution 2014-02 approving Conditional Use Permit Amendment 2014-01 amending Conditional Use Permit 35 for the Taft Modified Community Correctional Facility (MCCF) regarding occupancy and operation of the facility.

AYES: Hill, Jones, Leikam, Orrin
APPROVED: 4/0

IV. PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW [6:24:20 PM](#)

1. Center Street Improvements – City proposal to change the 400 and 500 blocks of Center Street to a One-Way Street in the eastbound direction. (Information and Discussion)

Staples presented the review item, Center Street Improvements. He also provided copies of the archway that was designed for Center Street. A copy of the archway was entered into record. He stated that there will be no decisions made on the item; it will be a round table discussion.

Orrin stated that he would like more input on the item. He is looking for some type of historical impact that other communities have experienced from having a two-way street changed into a one-way street. Does it affect business negatively; if it does he would be in opposition. There is a struggling business climate in the State of California and also in Taft. He would not want to do anything to jeopardize the growth that they see. The other concern had was the delivery vehicles, when they stop it will make the street impassable.

Jones stated that she had heard a few concerns from the citizens of Taft in regards to the entirety of Center Street and possibly the entirety of Main Street or North Street the opposite way. She wanted to know if they are sectioning off the 2 blocks turning into one way. Are they isolating it in a negative light or is it going to enhance it. Would it isolate the outlying areas between 4th and

2nd and on the opposite side between 6th and 10th? Those businesses have been there for a long time. Is it going to be beneficial for those two blocks or do they need to expand it to all of the surrounding areas to make it downtown?

Hill asked how this would affect cruise night. Concerned that it might affect it, but it could also work.

Orrin asked in doing this, will they expand the width of the sidewalk? Which that would necessitate the removal of curbs and gutters. It would also necessitate the removal of the trees on Center Street. Staples stated as far as he knows some trees would be removed. There are some species that the Public Works and individuals have indicated that are not favored. They will be removed and appropriate trees will be replaced.

Hill stated that current flower beds that have all the monuments in them don't work. If they do plant flower beds, they are going to be people who will just walk through them. There has been talk about raising the flower beds so people do not walk on them. Would there be new lights and access to electricity to the trees so they can light the trees. Her concerns were also in regards to parking spaces. How many parking spaces will they lose? Currently there are complaints on the 400 block for parking. With 5th Street Plaza there, there isn't any parking space around that corner.

Hill also asked if there is going to be any improvements made to 5th Street Plaza. Staples stated that this was purely for Center Street. There will be no improvements made to 5th Street Plaza with this project.

Orrin asked if there is any element that changes the lighting there to something that has a better feel to it? Staples stated that it could be an element that they can wrinkle in if it fits the budget.

Orrin stated that one of his concerns was with the monument across the street, what they are going to do to direct people from Kern Street to the monument. Is there going to be a sign stating "Old Town Taft"? Staples stated that in the plans they have always called out for some sort of monument in that triangle area that leads you off to Main and Center, off of Highway 33. It's always been in the plans. It just has not been implemented.

Hill stated her other concern would be safety issues. Drivers could get confused and drive the wrong way. For safety reasons, they should place appropriate signs to direct the traffic the right way.

Orrin stated that he wonders what traffic says extending the one way street all the way through to Highway 33. He had concerns in regards having residential units at the east end. He did not think it made sense to extend it that far.

Staples stated that the Council and City Manager have directed him to come back with a resolution that includes all the comments, thoughts and ideas whether we support it and whatever our stance is. He has directed the Planning Secretary to create a mailing list for all the property owners that would be effected from 300 block to 600 block.

Orrin asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on this matter.

Michael Long, business owner at Blackgold Brewing Co. introduced himself and asked if he could present a few thoughts about the one way street on Center Street. He stated that they really

need to look at the whole thing. Because one little thing will effect everything else.

- He did speak to the City Manager and he was told that this project is from CDBG money, about 1.5 million dollars that they may apply for a master planning for Center Street. We have to be careful in what to do because it may affect what we are trying to achieve which is to try to bring people to downtown and have them shop there. First thing we need to do is go for the grant and do planning so we can either have an overlay or a master plan of what we want downtown to be. That's the first thing we should be doing. He is not sure from 6th to 4th is good or the whole thing because it is historically not Taft. Many of the business owners urged the City Manager to get 5th Street Plaza designated as a plaza.
- There was an anticipated grant for the Plaza that did not happen. He suggests the City with the Economic Development Association approaches the Bank of America building owner to make that a public building. Do something with that which compliments the 5th Street Plaza. There are grants for things like of that nature.
- The Archway, perhaps make it an Oilderado Project so at 2015 there is an archway somewhere on Center Street or 6th Street that is unveiled by the Oilderado Committee. It's their project; they should help fund it.
- There need to be a plan that says your building needs to fit with the whole downtown plan. There should be a color theme and guidelines.

Vicky Gregory, business owner for Special Effects stated that she has worked hard to develop cruise night to get people downtown. It helps bring people to downtown and it's good for the business.

Greg Hill, owner of Old's Cool stated that it seems to him, they can still do one way from 10th street to DMV. As more money comes in, they can work on the rest of the blocks on Center Street.

Jones asked if it was specified in the grant that it's just between 4th and 6th or is it a cost issue. Staples stated it's the cost of constructions that determines the length they can go. Jones asked if there was a way they can just restripe from 10th Street all the way to the end of Center Street. Staples stated that the dollar amount that has been calculated can only cover two blocks of Center Street. The two blocks that have the most activity are between 4th and 6th Street.

Hill asked if the funds have to be used for sidewalk only. Can that money be used to improve the watering, the flower beds and the electricity to the trees? Staples stated that he believes everything would be addressed in the Street Improvement Program.

Leikam asked Mr. Long if he uses the sidewalk outside his shop for tables and chairs as sitting area. Expanding it more, does he see it as a benefit? Long stated that he had read in pedestrian friendly social studies that wider sidewalks are the key to downtown. Park benches, displays, bike racks and flower beds are all great things to have in downtown. At this time the sidewalks are not wide enough for most of that. It will definitely be a benefit to have pedestrian friendly sidewalks, it is definitely more inviting.

Leikam suggested closing the street from 4th to 6th Street, not allowing cars to go through. Long stated that Taft is an automobile city. Widening the sidewalk is a great idea but closing down the street would not work, in his opinion.

Jones stated that to do a wider sidewalk, you would have to do away with two way traffic. You can't have it both ways. Because of the size of the vehicles, if you do expand the sidewalks you have to decrease your traffic, which would suggest turning Center Street into a one way with a one lane right in the middle. So we have to look into which is more important, wider sidewalks for a more walkable area or keep it as is and have two way traffic.

Mr. Jordan, a citizen of Taft stated as a merchant one concern he would have is how long would this project take. It might cause zero traffic to the business.

Hill stated there was a lot of street repairs in Grover City, by Pismo area; there were quite a few merchants down there complaining, because it took quite bit of time and they had no access for people to park and lost a lot of business.

Jones stated that they are going to be repaving the street anyways. It's just a matter of changing it to one way or keeping it the way it currently is now.

Orrin trusts that the City and staff will expedite it as much as possible. He hears what everyone is saying, the beautification, the enhancement that they are looking at on Center Street can't damage the business in the process. Maybe they can do them in small sections and quickly. Many of the buildings are not being occupied. But, they have to be extremely sensitive to the buildings that are occupied.

Staples stated that due to the more recent concerns that have been brought up warrants the City to do proper noticing a head of time. Letting the business owners know when the work is to be done. He does not foresee major shutdowns. Good paving contractors would know how to do the surface grind. It is annoying on the tires and pedestrians walking on it. It might be a little difficult for anyone who is senior citizen or has other difficulties walking on an uneven surface like that. But, it's still a surface that most others can drive on or walk on. Sidewalk widening would have some affects and would take a little longer to complete.

Orrin also stated that if this is phase I, what impact that would have on the residence, Police Department and Fire Department. What we have to keep in mind is that this is phase I and there will be other phases. It might be perceived by some as catering or a detriment for the two blocks.

Orrin stated that the 5th Street Plaza is a problem. It's really unusable space because it gets so hot in the summer. Where do we get some money to put some shades there?

Leikam suggested getting a hold of the property owner next to 5th Street Plaza and turn that building into a promenade. Hill stated the owner wants \$260,000 for the property.

Gregory stated that another concern she has is with the Doctor Carey's Office. They have a fire truck and the ambulance that stops on Center Street at times to pick up patients. On a one way street, it might cause a shot down and street blockage from 5th to 4th completely. That will completely alienate 5th to 4th at times and the doctor at times uses the transportation of the emergency services.

Gregory stated that there are pros and cons for the one way street. She definitely has a parking problem with her business because they are so busy. It seems like 80%, if not more of the traffic is going towards downtown, the direction of the one way. Her concern is there will not be any parking space available for her customers. Most of the business owners do park on Center Street

as well. Most of her clients are senior citizens and walking a long distance would be an issue. She does not want to lose business due to lack of parking. She also feels that cruise night has been positive for her business. She has worked very hard to bring cruise night to Center Street and would not want it gone.

Long stated that he really appreciated when the Farmers Market was at 5th Street Plaza. He believes anything that brings people to downtown is good for business, even if they don't shop that day, they will come back. Long also indicated that in old Taft, years ago all doctors' offices were on 2nd floor. He believes the downtown should be made attractive so people come in and buy properties. There are doctors and optometrist offices in prime restaurant and other higher best use areas on Center Street that are taking a large amount of spaces and causing traffic impacts that don't necessarily compete with what downtown should be like.

Orrin stated that a lot of feedback was given at this meeting and there has been no conclusion at this time. He suggests that this item be tables for the next Planning Commission meeting. All Commissioners agreed to continue this item to the next meeting.

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR REPORT 7:16:18 PM

1. Project Updates – La Villa Restaurant, Schlumberger Lift Solutions, Caltrol, The Bank Lounge

- **La Villa Restaurant:** They received their Certificate of Occupancy two weeks ago. City staff met with the property owner few weeks ago. They have fixed up the place and it looks good. They did call the City to get the okay for the color scheme of the building.
- **La Villa Market** (next door to La Villa Restaurant) did paint their building a bright color, but they are changing it back to white.
- **Schlumberger Life Solutions:** has moved into a new building at 800 block of Blackgold Court. This is a new company that has moved to Taft.
- **Caltrol:** This Company is from Los Vegas and is moving into 801 Blackgold Court.
- **The Bank:** Started working on their building. He did visit the location and there is still a lot of work to be done.

2. Center Street Mural Grant – National Endowment for the Arts

National Endowment for the Arts has a grant called Our Town. It's an art base grant which provides the grant to towns that have existing programs and/or new programs. They have found 2 prime locations which are 206 and 306 Center Street. The plan is to have the artist be children from Taft. They will have a mural contest for all grade levels through high school for the children in Taft. There will be an artist who will translate some of the art into murals. They have applied for a \$50,000 grant.

Another grant the City is applying for is for the Strategic Growth Council. It's one of the groups that focus on Sustainability and Green Building Principles. The grant they are offering, which will need to get in by the end of February could possibly assist the City in drafting the Climate Action Plan that California is wanting to mandate statewide.

Staples also wanted to share some interesting information in regards to another city in Riverside County. In 2011 the State and some of the vehicle license fees were part of the General Fund that the cities were collecting. The state realigned those fees as part of the statewide prison overhaul.

At the same time down in Riverside County four cities incorporated within about 2 years from each other. Just recently one of the cities started to move towards disincorporation and moving back to County land. The city is called Jurupa Valley; it's in the Jurupa, Hadley and Rubidoux area. When they formed the city it created a city of 97,000 people. Due to the vehicle license fee taken away from them they lost about \$18,000,000 in funding. They are starting the process of the disincorporation and within 18 months they will disincorporate. He does not feel any of the other 3 cities will disincorporate at this time. The three cities are Eastvale, Menifee and Wildomar are still surviving. He found the information interesting and wanted to share with the Commissioner.

VI. CITY ATTORNEY STATEMENTS

There are none.

VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jones stated that the Chamber is having their Annual Installation Dinner on February 6th; it's going to be a cocktail style party at the Taft Fox Theater. Hollywood Director Corbin Bernsen will be the guest speaker. They will be presenting their community award winners and install their new board of directors. If anyone is interested to attend they can stop by Taft Chamber and purchase a ticket.

Hill stated that she has given a list of all the addresses with vacant properties and properties that need repairs in Downtown Taft to Planning Department at City Hall. She asked if it can be brought as an Agenda item for the next meeting. Staples asked what in specific did she want to discuss. Hill stated that she wants to discuss what they are going to do to get owners of the building to repair and paint their buildings. Hopefully they can come up with a plan to beautify Downtown Taft.

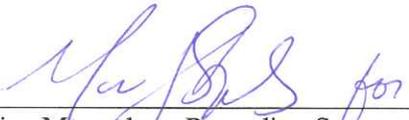
Orrin suggested looking into themes that other cities have developed into their downtown. Most importantly he feels that they need a color palette. Second item to look at is sign maintenance. There are signs around town that are not being maintained by business owners.

Identification of Representative to the City Council.

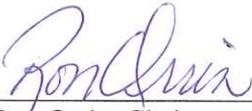
Commissioner Orrin stated he would attend the Council Meeting and report on Planning Commission meeting updates on Tuesday, February 4, 2014.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Moved by Hill seconded by Leikam and approved unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 7:34:05 PM.



Alina Megerdom, Recording Secretary



Ron Orrin, Chair

