

MINUTES
SPECIAL
JOINT CITY COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
NOVEMBER 17, 2003

A joint special meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 6:10 p.m., in the City Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by MAYOR RAUCH.

ROLL CALL

City Council Members Present: Addleman, Mitchell, Rauch, Seamans, Zuckerman*

*COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN arrived at 6:15 p.m.

Planning Commissioners Present: Bayer, Conway, Killen, Rein, Somers, Vullo, Zerunyan

City Staff Present: City Manager Doug Prichard

Planning Director David Wahba

AUDIENCE ITEMS

NONE

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

A. DISCUSSION WITH RESPECT TO MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE LITTLE SILVER SPUR ROAD COMMERCIAL AREA

Planning Director Wahba provided a staff report (as per agenda material).

Vinayak Bharne, Moule & Polyzoides Architect and Urbanists, provided an overall presentation of existing conditions in the commercial area.

COUNCILMAN ADDLEMAN inquired if Silver Spur roadway would remain as is. Mr. Bharne noted that landscaping would be utilized with no street improvements proposed.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN inquired if trees other than palms had been considered. Mr. Bharne noted that palm trees have an advantage with easier visibility. Further discussion ensued regarding the need for a parking structure when density begins to increase. Commissioner Rein inquired if there would be a unifying architectural theme throughout the commercial district. Mr. Bharne then noted that the village concept would differ in style.

Commissioner Rein then inquired if Mr. Bharne knew of other cities that have transformed their properties. He noted that Claremont Village is an example of what would be proposed. Additionally, he stated that cities have demolished and/or refurbished their properties and that these properties are not intended to be demolished. Commissioner Conway noted his concern that this might be a less feasible approach.

Planning Director Wahba noted reduction of parking requirements, setbacks, possibly allowing an increase of up to four stories, increasing density up to 40 per acre for residential are all being reviewed.

With the present information available, he noted this would provide a clearer picture as to what can be built on a particular site. The specific plan would then assist in moving through the entitlement process which may not require an environmental impact report. He noted that density would be higher along Silver Spur Road rather than Deep Valley Drive.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that urban villages have less restrictive parking standards as they are close to transit stops.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted there are many ways to incentivize developers with density bonuses, but to be cautious when this item is discussed with them.

Mr. Bharne noted that a more detailed study could be provided with Commissioner O'Day commenting that a very different dynamic might surface where existing residents may not approve of this project as they may have moved to the City for its present unique environment.

Commissioner Killen noted that this is a contained location and is its own "island" surrounded by other development separated by major streets. Commissioner O'Day then expressed his concern with additional traffic going up Crenshaw Boulevard and Palos Verdes Drive North and believed that there would be less business from the residents due to increased travel time.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL noted that destination travel depends on the friendliness and attractiveness of the area which provides for a more inviting atmosphere.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted that if there were additional housing units, they would more than likely accommodate one to two person households.

In addition, Commissioner O'Day noted that renters may want to move to the City due its excellent school district and that most single individuals would gravitate towards the beach cities.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN concurred with Commissioner O'Day's assessment stating that the City might want to consider undertaking an environmental impact report to find out if the traffic system can handle the perceived transformation as there are only two entry points and other physical constraints.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted the business district is unique and that the City is looking to make it more attractive to residents. She stated that this presentation is a proposed template which is striving for a village-type look pulling together the commercial district.

Commissioner O'Day noted that, while some professionals may live and work in the City, the business district would not actually provide this option for the smaller retailers.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS referred to a newspaper article in December, 1999 (the year The Avenue opened) which stated that townhouses would enhance the feel of the area and added that is not the City's intention to drive out any business.

Chairman Somers noted that a decision must be made to determine whether or not the streets can handle this additional traffic.

MAYOR PRO MITCHELL noted that the new urbanism concept is designed to encourage shoppers to park their cars and walk creating less of a parking demand. COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted this may not be the case as a parking space would still be taken.

Commissioner Bayer noted that living and working in the commercial district would not impact parking.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN had additional concerns regarding how many individuals would live and work in the area, capacity for parking, and budget constraints.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted that this project would entice people to utilize public transit to and from the commercial district allowing shoppers to walk to the various business establishments.

Commissioner Killen noted that the City is struggling in an attempt to see what will work and believed that mixed use would make a difference in creating its own village. He then concurred with the need for an environmental impact report as part of due diligence.

Commissioner Conway noted his concern with little Silver Spur Road and if any consideration was given to zero setbacks.

Mr. Bharne noted that, while there could be angled parking on one side, it is a frontage street.

Commissioner Conway then suggested reducing the setback. He suggested conducting a traffic demand study prior to moving ahead with an environmental impact report. Planning Director Wahba noted this could be folded into the EIR and then presented with a cost estimate to the COUNCIL.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS reiterated the need to have a number of developers and property owners meet to begin a dialogue. Planning Director Wahba noted that if this meeting were to take place, a larger venue would be necessary. It was suggested the Mixed Use Subcommittee speak with potential consultants regarding traffic, circulation and parking.

Commissioner Zerunyan recommended delaying retention of a consultant until the uses and costs of these projects are discussed with an eye towards recouping some costs from the developers.

Commissioner Zerunyan concurred with the suggestion to address the parking issues prior to traffic impact. Planning Director Wahba stated that Willdan would review the commercial district.

City Manager Prichard noted that the difference in styles of housing should be considered (i.e. apartments versus ownership). He noted that the public should be involved in consideration of this project.

Commissioner Zerunyan suggested inviting the homeowners' association presidents to this meeting so that they can take this information back to their associations for feedback. It was also noted this would be a public meeting.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS commented that the more this matter is discussed, the better it is for the community.

Mr. Bharne noted he will look at angled parking on Silver Spur along with zero setbacks.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:20 p.m., MAYOR SEAMANS formally adjourned the City COUNCIL meeting to May 14, 2002 at 7:30 p.m. in the City Hall COUNCIL Chambers.

Submitted by, Approved by,

Hope J. Nolan Douglas R. Prichard

Deputy City Clerk City Clerk