

CITY OF COTATI
MINUTES for the Regular Meeting of the DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: October 20, 2011
TIME OF MEETING: 4:30 pm
PLACE OF MEETING: Conference Room
201 W. Sierra Avenue

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Chair Morgan at 4:35 pm

II. ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Robbins, Langberg, Vice Chair Glendening, Chair Morgan. (Onines arrived at 5:21 pm)
Committee Members Absent: Davis
Staff Present: O'Bid, Parker, Harris, Thompson and Pajon

III. CHANGES TO AGENDA

None

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. For the Regular Meeting of August 18, 2011

Motion:	Vice Chair Glendening made a motion and Committee Member Langberg seconded the motion to approve the minutes of August 18, 2011 Design Review Committee meeting.
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Yes: 3 Noes: Abstain: 1 Absent: 2

V. MATTERS AT HAND

A. Old Redwood Highway Street Improvement Project

City Manager Dianne Thompson opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She turned the time over to the Community Development Director Parker, who presented the project.

In response to Vice Chair Glendening, Community Development Director Parker explained why 25 mph on Old Redwood Highway was chosen as the posted speed limit. She referred to the Downtown Specific Plan and the interaction of pedestrians with streets. She also explained that studies show that a lower speed limit is an economic development tool and can influence shopping.

Public Works Director/City Engineer O'Bid also responded, explaining that along with aesthetics, there is a vehicle safety element to help smooth the flow of traffic.

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PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 5:00 pm

Tom Scott, Oliver's Market, spoke about his project and the difficulty with the proposed plans. He requested that the Committee look at a third plan, Option C, that Oliver's design team created.

Nancy Boyd, W. Sierra Avenue, stated that she does not want to see a median or parking on the street, and that she would like to see it carried down to E. Cotati Avenue.

Harold Griffith, owner of Rancho Realtors at 8040 Old Redwood Highway and President of Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District Board of Directors, opposes Option A. He explained that it would be hazardous for emergency vehicles to get through. He stated that Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District would be submitting a formal letter to the Council. He said that if off street parking is removed he will have to close his real estate business. He said that he would like to see an alternate proposal.

Rond Roudenbush, 8967 Cypress, stated that he is opposed to the two lane option. He said that he is not opposed to roundabouts, but believes they should be used in rural areas only. He said that doing anything that would make Oliver's leave Cotati is a mistake.

John Osborn, whose family owns several properties on Old Redwood Highway, said that the road needs improvement but not at the expense of property owners, business owners and public safety for emergency responders. He said that to make the road more functional, safe and appealing, it should be left at its present width without taking property and that sidewalks and crosswalks should be added with pedestrian islands and traffic signals.

Randy Figueiredo, Oliver's architect, spoke about an alternate plan that Oliver's would be presenting to the Committee as an additional option to the two plans staff presented.

Lisa Newman, Oliver's planning consultant, distributed the alternate plan. She spoke about problems with roundabouts. She stated that Oliver's would like this Committee to direct staff to work with the community to review the merits of an alternate plan.

Steve Maass, owner of Oliver's, presented a video showing a truck using a roundabout.

Neville Hormuz, lives and owns a business in Cotati. He strongly opposes the two options the City is presenting and feels that they will be detrimental to businesses in Cotati. He recommended looking at the alternate plan that Oliver's presented as a starting point. He explained that they would be starting a campaign to inform the public of the project so that decision makers can develop a better idea of what citizens want.

Blair Hardman lives and has done business in Cotati for 25 years. He is excited about improvements to the street and slowing traffic. He hopes that the Committee would be open to a compromise.

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Kent Fossoreen, owner of Back Street Service at 7878 Old Redwood Highway, does not think Option A is realistic and believes that Old Redwood Highway became a four-lane road for a reason.

Pru Draper, President of the Historical Society, stated that she hopes that City staff and Oliver's can come to a compromise and prevent the issue from tearing the City apart. She said that she has been on the roundabout in Petaluma and she likes roundabouts. She said she believes that if traffic volumes are too high then roundabouts are not a good idea.

Claire Fetrow, owner of Hub Cyclery, said that she would like there to be a "downtown" for Cotati. She said that this street is very loud and dangerous and that the new downtown plan is a change and a vision where people can be connected. She does not like the idea of a thoroughfare.

Greg Karraker, Cotati, stated that Option A will choke traffic and kill businesses and Option B depends on stealing land from property owners and parking from merchants. He stated that the City Manager was presented with Option C by Oliver's two days ago and dismissed it, stating that it would not work. He requests that this Committee look at Option C.

Kathryn Wickstrom stated that she likes roundabouts, but the presentation boards showing crosswalks with pedestrians in them would require a vehicle to stop, which defeats the purpose of a roundabout. She commented on the article in the Press Democrat by Oliver's and City Manager Thompson's comment. She said that the City cannot afford to allow Oliver's to walk away, stating that another business may have the same issues. She said that dismissing Oliver's proposal seems heavy-handed and the citizens should be heard.

Patty Minnis, owner of Cotati Jewelers, said that the businesses and stakeholders are against the roundabouts because they would cause traffic to be diverted through residential streets. She stated that Option A is a bad plan for Cotati and would hope the Committee would consider reviewing Option C.

Kelly Hicks, Arch's Glass on La Plaza, requests that the Committee look at Option C. She stated that Option A would not work and it would put them out of business. She said that the businesses of Cotati have been fighting roundabouts for a long time and she requests that the Committee recognize that businesses want a different option.

Richard Merriss, Cotati, said that there is no reason for staff not to work with local businesses and every reason to work with them. He stated that one alternative is to leave the street as is and lose the funding, which does not improve the street. He stated that Option A and slowing down traffic is a good idea, although roundabouts are not the only method to accomplish that. He urged the Committee to proceed carefully and with prudence.

David Ergo, 101 Ross Street, is in support of Option A, but expressed concern that Oliver's is opposed to the plan. He is for less government spending and not in favor of stop signs or stoplights. He hopes that a compromise can happen.

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Richard Senghes, Ross Street, stated that the video of the truck going through the roundabout seems to be the extreme. He would recommend removing one set of lights in the proposed plan. He agrees with Mr. Ergo's comments and thinks there should be more conversation on the plan. He would love to keep Oliver's in town. He recommends more communication.

Anne-Wallace Rock, 35 Page Street, expressed concern with both Option A and B. She recommends compromise, working together and stated that traffic calming is needed.

Ella Warnock, owner of Cotati Physical Therapy, passed out a letter to the Committee. She stated that neither Option A or B will work for Cotati and that the City is pushing businesses out of town. She said that Option C needs to be looked at.

George Barich spoke about funding and grants received towards this project. He said that as a councilmember he voted against the Downtown Specific Plan due to the lack of funding. He expressed concern with the age of the underground utilities and the need for this to be addressed at the same time.

Linell Hardy, 8171 Arthur Street, said that there is fear when something new is proposed, specifically a roundabout. She said that there is a lot of mis-information and there should be more conversation. She stated that she thinks Option A is workable with changes, but there needs to be more discussion. The City needs to hear the concerns of the business owners. She agrees with Pru Draper that there is a need for more conversation and more listening and that compromise is necessary.

Reileen Miller, Miller Driving School, feels that the town needs a face-lift and not necessarily the drastic changes that are being proposed. She recommends looking at Option C.

PUBLIC COMMENT closed at 6:13 pm

Community Development Director Parker explained that Option C has not been dismissed. She said that staff encouraged Oliver's to bring it to the meeting in order to admit it into the record. Staff has not yet had time to review it.

Chair Morgan noted for the record that letters have been received from Marlene Eckel and Suzanne Whipple in support of Option A.

In response to Committee Member Onines, Steve Maass stated that he would have to wait and see how the road is constructed and rereview along with his financing before he could say whether Oliver's would stay or leave Cotati.

In response to Committee Member Onines, George Barich explained the funding he originally spoke about during public comment.

In response to Committee Member Onines, Community Development Director Parker explained that there is not just a timing issue for the funding, there are requirements for "complete" streets attached to the funding since state law now requires a complete streets approach. She added that it would take a day or so to review Option C.

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Committee Member Robbins asked City Manager Thompson to summarize the advantages of the roundabouts and calming.

City Manager Thompson responded, explaining that the City is looking for feedback on both proposed plans.

Committee Member Robbins asked Public Works Director/City Engineer O'Bid about comments received from the Fire District.

Public Works Director/City Engineer O'Bid said that when he met with the Fire District, their concerns were that sufficient space be provided to pass vehicles when there is a single lane and that there be sufficient turn around space in the intersections. He said that either of the proposed plans would allow that, which made this a non-issue.

Committee Member Robbins asked staff if they considered a feathering approach coming into town. She stated that it seemed that there is some support for roundabouts, but there appears to be some technical issues with the calming traffic pattern and with the loss of on street parking.

Public Works Director/City Engineer O'Bid said there were discussions with Oliver's and talks about extending the free right, which would be a second access point. He explained that that part of the roadway, especially with the added lane, is the same with either option once that second right lane is added.

Committee Member Robbins said the idea of the roundabouts is a fine idea, but there are technical issues that were raised today with regard to the access to Oliver's and on street parking. She suggested a feathered approach (transition from 4 lanes to 2 lanes), which is a hybrid of the two options. She said that the idea of reducing green house gases is good for Cotati and the roundabouts would help with that, although two roundabouts might not be necessary.

Committee Member Robbins said that making the City aesthetically appealing with very wide walkways and seating could be included with the roundabout option. She said the transitional approach is what we should look at based on what has been heard.

Committee Member Langberg appreciated the comments about compromise and is in support of working together. He expressed concern with the different capacity numbers received from the traffic engineers.

In response to Committee Member Langberg, Public Works Director/City Engineer O'Bid explained that the roadway would allow access for emergency vehicles.

Vice Chair Glendening said that she is disappointed in Option B and this option would duplicate Santa Rosa Avenue. She said that Option A is a better option and that she likes roundabouts. She said that she doesn't understand why businesses oppose Option A, but with the amount of opinions against this option, she recommends additional time to review the issues and make compromises.

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Chair Morgan asked the representative from Arch's Glass for clarification on the objection to roundabouts. The representative was no longer in the audience and another audience member stated that her issue was that their glass delivery trucks would not be able to navigate the roundabouts and get to their facility.

Chair Morgan asked Oliver's representatives how Option C would handle u-turns.

Mr. Figuerido, Oliver's Architect, responded to Chair Morgan saying that there is no need for u-turns for Oliver's delivery trucks and that Oliver's concern with capacity.

Community Development Director Parker advised the Committee that although there are discrepancies in the numbers, the Oliver's project isn't agendized and specifics will not be addressed at this time. She explained that the two intersections on the ends are the constraining items and that what is done in the middle comes down to the issue of character.

Chair Morgan asked about pedestrian traffic through the roundabouts.

Public Works Director/City Engineer O'Bid responded to Chair Morgan, explaining that there would be ground flashers and pedestrians would be able to be clear the intersection in about 5 seconds.

Committee Member Onines said that he is stunned by the amount of opposition and recommends looking at Option C.

Vice Chair Glendening would like to see additional information to support the argument that the capacity is acceptable in plan A and that emergency vehicles are able to have access. She would like to see more effort to compromise. She thinks Option A looks great and she will not support a 4-lane road.

Committee Member Langberg expressed concerned with parking and said that he would like to make it a more walkable small-scale downtown and suggested a parking garage. He said that a new view needs to be looked at for that section of downtown. He stated that since there is a lot of objection, we need to work with it to make it work for as many as people as possible. He said that Option A addressed character of the town and that parking could be addressed more. He said that there needs to be more of an agreement on the capacity numbers and the purpose of a roundabout.

Committee Member Robbins would like to know more about the interregional connections for our area and what the County's plan is for Old Redwood Highway. She is concerned about access for emergency vehicles. She would like to know if there is room for nose-in parking because it would appear to accommodate more vehicles. She likes the idea of one roundabout as a compromise, south of the project where the shopping center would be located.

Chair Morgan thanked staff, members of the public and business owners. He agrees that Option C should be presented and he would encourage staff to work with Oliver's. He said that this appears to be confusion about traffic numbers and further study should be done.

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VI. REPORTS BY STAFF

None

VII. REPORTS BY COMMITTEE

None

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted by:

*Keri Pajon
Administrative Secretary*