

CITY OF COTATI
MINUTES for the Meeting of the Planning Commission

DATE OF MEETING: Monday, December 5, 2011
TIME OF MEETING: 7:00 pm
PLACE OF MEETING: Cotati City Hall, City Council Chambers
201 West Sierra Avenue, Cotati, CA 94931

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Brady, Ford, Vice Chair Ritter and Chair Moore
Commissioners Absent: Hancock
Staff Present: Parker, Harris and Pajon
Consultants: Beth Thompson and Ben Ritchie, DeNovo Planning Group

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. For the Regular Meeting of November 14, 2011

Motion:	Vice Chair Ritter made a motion and Commissioner Ford seconded the motion to approve the November 14, 2011 minutes.
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Yes: 4 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 1

IV. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

V. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were no oral or written communications

VI. MATTERS AT HAND

A. General Plan Update meeting #7: Land Use and Community Character

Community Development Director Parker introduced the consultants and turned the presentation over to them.

Consultant Thompson opened the Land Use & Community Character segment of the General Plan Update.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 7:18 pm

Brian Ling, 7911 Redwood Drive, submitted a letter to the Planning Commission. He commented on the following:

- CI and IG districts need improved clarity
- the uses matrix of the Land Use Code needs updating
- the Use Permit process is overwhelming

PUBLIC COMMENT closed at 7:21 pm

Work Exercise

1. *In developing a goal and policy framework to address land use, what top three issues or actions should the City prioritize?*

Chair Moore

- historic preservation guidelines for redevelopment
- annexation - the City has enough land to develop in city limits; explore and emphasize Infill and use existing buildings

Vice Chair Ritter

- Urban growth boundary should remain open space to preserve rural and agricultural atmosphere
- supports more infill development before outerlying areas develop

Commissioner Brady

- prioritize a business-friendly climate, help with communication between staff and business owners
- simplify the permit process
- modify and enforce the sign ordinance
- help diversify the businesses currently in Cotati
- is concerned with compatibility issues inherent in Mixed Use

Commissioner Ford

- we need to create effective neighborhoods and places people can gather
- mixed uses can be compatible, but there is a trade off
- does not want codes to be over-proscriptive
- feels that it is not appropriate to “require” Mixed Use

2. *Should the General Plan Update include additional land use designations? Categories for considerations may include:*

- a. *Mixed Use:*
- b. *Urban Reserve:*

Chair Moore:

- supports mixed use if it is done correctly and stated that adaptive re-use is important

Vice Chair Ritter:

- there are a lot of retail spaces in town and we need to encourage people to start opening businesses

- the General Plan needs to be business friendly

Commissioner Ford:

- we should allow retail in residential areas when consistent with the surrounding area, which will allow community and neighbor interaction
- the General Plan language needs to be consistent with surrounding uses
- if the DSP and the Santero Way SP require Mixed Use, it should be reflected on the General Plan map
- likes simplifying the General Plan designations and building a better relationship between the General Plan and the zoning code
- likes the idea of an Urban Reserve if it is carefully crafted with requirements, he wants clear rules for developers

Chair Moore:

- we need to find a way to utilize and redevelop commercial areas that are vacant or struggling

Commissioner Brady:

- the Use Permit process needs to be cleaned up to encourage revitalization and attract new businesses

3. *In developing a goal and policy framework to address community character, what top three issues or actions should the City prioritize?*

Chair Moore:

- modify the sign ordinance
 - a) need enforcement
 - b) need broad overhaul
 - c) enforcement of A-board signs on public property
 - d) banners left up for prolonged periods of time
 - e) campaign signage needs to be re-worked
- loves the artwork in downtown and would like to see it occur on a broader scale
- loves the idea of a community garden, must establish guidelines and maintenance measures before it goes in
- outdoor dining

Commissioner Brady:

- agrees with Chair Moore on the restructuring of the sign ordinance
 - a) make the fee structure clear to businesses
 - b) outreach and educate business owners
 - c) time line for compliance
 - d) education on how enforcement will occur

Commissioner Ford:

- would like to see more community character displayed in the downtown corridor
- the existing 2-lane road and surrounding development on Old Redwood Highway is the preferred community character

Vice Chair Ritter:

- downtown style should be like the DSP in new development

Commissioner Brady:

- partner with Sonoma State University for community events
- adopt a landscape program
- park signs need repainting (Public Works has paint and no time); suggested volunteer project to complete
- need more art and murals throughout town
- more volunteerism within the community

Commissioner Ford:

- agreed with Commissioner Brady's comments, important to work with citizens to accomplish things
- a little quirkiness is good
- varied architecture is good, random little parks or other spaces with outside seating is good

4. *In reviewing the 1998 General Plan policies related to land use and community character:*

- Which 1998 General Plan goals and policies best address the concerns you identified.*
- Which priorities are not addressed in the 1998 General Plan?*

Chair Moore stated that she doesn't support the signs indicating that you are entering and leaving Cotati.

Consultant Thompson responded to Chair Moore, explaining that the passerby may not know where the boundaries or the downtown area are located.

Commissioner Ford said that that he felt the overall goals were good, but was not sure if the sub goals under Goal 6, for example, adequately address creation of healthy neighborhoods.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 8:54 pm

Brian Ling, 7911 Redwood Drive, supports enforcement of the sign program, but with some caution.

Barbara Stagg, property owner at Old Redwood Highway and Eucalyptus Avenue, stated that not all developers are professional developers and this should be kept in mind for "mom and pop" type developments. She said that it is important to keep things reasonable and have requirements accessible so that non-developer property owners are not discouraged.

Commissioner Ford commented on the time that it takes to process a project and is not sure if the General Plan can address this.

PUBLIC COMMENT closed at 9:00 pm

VII. REPORTS BY STAFF

Community Development Director Parker spoke on the following:

- upcoming 4 Nights of Festive Fun
- Special Planning Commission meeting on December 12th
- December 19, 2011 Planning Commissioner meeting cancelled

VIII. REPORTS BY COMMISSION

Commissioner Brady elaborated on the 4 Nights of Festive Fun

MEETING ADJOURNED by Chair Moore at 9:10 pm

Keri L. Pajon
Planning Commission Secretary