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2
3 **MINUTES OF THE**
4 **REGULAR MEETING**
5 **PINOLE PLANNING COMMISSION**

6
7 **February 23, 2015**
8

9
10 **A. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 P.M.**
11

12 **B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL:**
13

14 Commissioners Present: Bender, Kurrent, Martinez-Rubin, McGoldrick, Toms,
15 and Chair Brooks
16

17 Commissioners Absent: None
18

19 Staff Present: Winston Rhodes, Planning Manager
20 Dean Allison, Development Services Director / City Engineer
21 Kit Faubion, City Attorney Staff
22

23 **C. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:**
24

25 There were no citizens to be heard.
26

27 **D. CONSENT CALENDAR: None**
28

29 **E. PUBLIC HEARINGS: None**
30

31 **F. OLD BUSINESS:**
32

- 33 **1. Continued Gateway Shopping Center Workshop to discuss project**
34 **components of a proposed commercial development with three retail**
35 **buildings totaling approximately 40,352 square feet; one approximately**
36 **9,886 square foot medical service building with an associated**
37 **approximately 10,418 square foot underground parking area, and an**
38 **approximately 75-foot pylon sign on an approximately 5.7-acre site,**
39 **consisting of three existing parcels totaling 5.5 acres and an**
40 **approximately 0.16-acre portion of the Pinole Creek property.**

41
42 **Applicant: Thomas Gateway LLC**
43 **3100 Oak Road, Suite 140**
44 **Walnut Creek, CA 94597**
45

46 **Location: East and west sides of Pinole Valley Road north of**

1 **Interstate Highway 80 and south of Henry Avenue, APNs**
2 **401-211-032 and -034, and 401-410-017**
3

4 **Project Planner: Winston Rhodes**
5

6 Project Planner Winston Rhodes explained that the workshop had been continued
7 from the February 9, 2015 Planning Commission meeting to allow staff the
8 opportunity to return with additional information as directed by the Planning
9 Commission. He detailed the Commission's comments on the site plan, building
10 architecture, and project signage at the February 9 meeting, and identified the
11 major issues raised at that time. An overview of the project, the major project
12 components, and the details of the landscape plan were also presented. When
13 considering the landscape plan, he asked the Commission to focus on the
14 proposed outdoor spaces, stormwater treatment/control, plant choices, Pinole
15 Creek Trail enhancements, the Kinder Morgan easement area treatment,
16 hardscape, fencing, lighting, and public art.
17

18 Mr. Rhodes also detailed the Development Agreement (DA) and noted that the
19 Commission would have review authority of the DA for General Plan consistency
20 purposes. He provided a parking comparison chart and parking analysis for the
21 proposed Gateway West Shopping Center as compared to the Pinole Valley
22 Shopping Center, and noted that more parking spaces would be provided for the
23 subject project than the City required. He also noted traffic engineering
24 recommendations for this project, to address concerns with traffic circulation and
25 large truck deliveries on Henry Avenue including the addition of red striping on
26 portions of both sides of Henry Avenue.
27

28 Planning Commissioners raised concerns with the height of the proposed sign, with
29 some of the details related to the proposed green screen material along the south
30 side of the proposed medical service building and whether heat would be an issue
31 for the proposed plant material, and with the loss of existing Kaiser parking spaces.
32

33 STEVE ABRAMS, Abrams & Associates, had prepared the Traffic Impact Study for
34 the project; reported that the traffic volumes analyzed for the parking lot had
35 identified no significant problems; the primary concern was the main entrance
36 where the signal was located; and 'Keep Clear' pavement markings had been
37 proposed to ensure that queuing did not occur in the entry and to keep the area
38 open for access to the Kaiser facility.
39

40 **PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED**
41

42 STEVE THOMAS, Thomas Properties for Thomas Gateway LLC, advised that the
43 development team had been working to address the comments from the prior
44 workshop, were preparing additional diagrams, and were present to respond to
45 questions.
46

1 JIM SWANSON, Landscape Architect, explained that the green screen material
2 would be durable, consist of a powder coated metal material with a plastic overlay
3 over the top, in a green color, and placed six to eight inches away from the south
4 wall of the medical service building. Any heat reflected from the building would be
5 cooled behind the screen. The fence material details would be black, although
6 other options such as a muted green color could be considered.
7

8 NICHOLAS WUGOFSKI, Pinole, expressed concern that emergency vehicles were
9 currently unable to access that area of the City; asked that emergency response
10 times for police and fire be clarified to ensure compliance with required response
11 times; and asked that the City consider reopening the fire station in the valley.
12

13 ELLIOTT THOMPSON, Pinole, was pleased to see the improvements to the site
14 but given that parking spaces abutted the creek suggested it would be better if the
15 fence height was reduced or there was a different type of fencing. He also asked
16 that more study and research be done to solve the existing traffic problems.
17

18 JULIAN-SPENCER LEE KRAYNIK, Pinole, suggested it was not the right area for a
19 Starbucks with a drive-through since the traffic would impact the area. He also
20 suggested the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the project had not
21 considered a drive-through and more study would be required.
22

23 CARLOS AGUILERA, Pinole, agreed that traffic along Pinole Valley Road was a
24 concern; with Pinole Valley High School not at capacity, and once the new campus
25 currently under construction, is completed the traffic situation would worsen. He
26 questioned the time periods used for the traffic study.
27

28 DAVID RUPORT, Jr., Pinole, asked whether the wildlife habitat in Pinole Valley
29 Creek had been considered given the foot and vehicle traffic that would be
30 generated by the project. He expressed concern with the existing traffic conditions
31 along Pinole Valley Road and Henry Avenue and with freeway traffic cutting
32 through residential areas which could be exacerbated by traffic from the shopping
33 center.
34

35 IRMA RUPORT, Pinole, expressed concern with the proposed circulation of
36 delivery trucks into the shopping center from Henry Avenue given the current width
37 of the street; encouraged greater noticing requirements; and questioned whether
38 the project had been reviewed by the City's Traffic and Pedestrian Safety
39 Committee (TAPS).
40

41 ANTHONY GUTIERREZ, Pinole, questioned whether the design plan would
42 accommodate bicycle or alternative forms of transportation such as Smart vehicle
43 parking spaces; whether recycling and trash vehicle access would occur during
44 school hours; whether a space had been allocated for medical waste; and whether
45 noise abatement studies would be prepared, with mitigation, during construction
46 given the proximity to Collins Elementary School. He also referenced Assembly Bill

1 (AB) 26 and suggested the project could place the City in potential legal jeopardy if
2 the State determined there was a better use of the property.
3

4 ALISON CROOKS, Pinole, suggested a Starbucks near the freeway that would
5 increase traffic could jeopardize Pinole's Old Town historical theme; suggested the
6 retail shops were not large enough to accommodate the tenants envisioned; the
7 right turn lane into the Starbucks and the medical office building was too narrow;
8 questioned the parking ratio; and asked for a reconsideration of the amount of
9 handicap and sport utility vehicle parking. She suggested the project could be
10 simplified by eliminating Starbucks; questioned whether the School District had
11 been contacted; suggested a height of the pylon sign at no more than 30 feet; and
12 agreed with the concerns related to emergency vehicle response and access.
13

14 BERT MULCHAEY, Pinole, a local biologist, commented that the Steelhead
15 population in Pinole Creek was a threatened species which had not been
16 addressed in the Initial Study. He suggested the parking spaces might be too close
17 to the edge of the creek channel which could impact the ability to obtain federal
18 funds to make improvements to the creek area in the future.
19

20 DAVE OLSEN, Pinole, expressed concern with the parking layout, and asked
21 whether the developer had secured any tenants for the additional shop areas;
22 whether there were any height restrictions for building facades given that the area
23 was a gateway to Pinole; whether the project would proceed absent input from
24 Kaiser; and whether staff could provide insight from conversations with Caltrans.
25

26 CAROL THOMPSON, Pinole, referenced the Three Corridors Specific Plan, which
27 included a buffer for pedestrians, plazas similar to Broadway Plaza and Santana
28 Row, creation of a buffer between residential and mixed uses, and a 50 to 100-foot
29 setback from the bank of the creek. The Specific Plan also included a bus shelter,
30 and she asked for a schematic in scale to the buildings to be provided on the City's
31 website. She noted the EIR for Pinole Gateway East had not studied a drive-
32 through; the landscaping proposal needed irrigation; mosquito abatement needed
33 to be addressed; the noise analysis study had based on classrooms and not the
34 playground; the Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs) study had not taken into
35 account vehicles idling in the drive-through or the potential diesel truck traffic; the
36 development would invite freeway traffic into the community; the fence around the
37 creek was contrary to the community efforts not to fence creeks; and she urged
38 consideration of lighting along the path and the planting of shrubs three feet or
39 lower.
40

41 SAL SPATARO, Pinole, was pleased the property would be developed, although
42 he too was concerned with the potential traffic impacts to Pinole Valley Road and
43 the freeway. He suggested all of the left turn lanes along Pinole Valley Road were
44 inadequate; expressed concern with the impacts to emergency response times for
45 police and fire; noted the elimination of parking spaces along Henry Avenue would
46 be an issue with the Little League; and suggested the area behind Sprouts would

1 likely be used by those looking for parking for other purposes. He found that
2 Starbucks, the smallest building in the project, was raising the largest traffic
3 concerns.
4

5 MARGARET YOUNG, Pinole, asked when the project had first been proposed;
6 whether the final decision for the project would rest with the Planning Commission
7 or the City Council; whether there were any plans to preserve open space; and
8 whether more meetings would be held to consider the project.
9

10 ERNIE VISCONTI, Pinole, expressed concern that Appian Way was infringing on
11 Old Town and suggested that property values would decline in the area as a result.
12 He opposed the 75-foot high pylon sign whose only purpose was to attract people
13 from I-80.
14

15 TERESA STOTT, Pinole, expressed concern with the traffic flow and potential
16 bottlenecks from San Pablo Avenue to Pinole Valley Road; questioned the potential
17 impacts to fire and police response times; recommended that the tax revenue from
18 the project be earmarked for a fire station in the valley; and noted that she had e-
19 mailed Councilmembers to raise concerns with the project and read into the record
20 one of the responses she had received.
21

22 In response to questions, Mr. Abrams suggested that the existing freeway
23 congestion would regulate traffic that might come off the freeway to patronize
24 Starbucks; the road could not be widened to avoid a bottleneck; and the project had
25 forecast less than a 10 percent increase in traffic. He clarified the traffic analysis
26 had studied the entire peak period, with the highest peak hour of traffic used to
27 base the Level of Service (LOS) calculations, and while the project met the
28 standards, a right turn lane had been recommended. He added that the stacking
29 for Starbucks was adequate.
30

31 Public Works Director/City Engineer Dean Allison clarified that the Pinole Creek
32 Demonstration Project fit within the existing right of way (ROW), with no additional
33 ROW needed for this project; the right turn lane onto the freeway near the bowling
34 alley would be addressed at such time as the bowling alley property was
35 redeveloped; he had spoken with the Fire Chief who had provided reassurance
36 that the fire devices used by the Fire District would be able to control traffic
37 adequately to access the other side of the medians if needed; and parking at Kaiser
38 had always been adequate. The project would provide bicycle parking, there would
39 be recycling and trash receptacles, and the project would comply with the
40 requirements of AB 26. Further, the DA would be subject to State approval of the
41 City's Long Range Property Management Plan.
42

43 Mr. Rhodes reported that there would be more meetings on the project; an EIR had
44 been prepared for the Kaiser project in 2005; another environmental document had
45 been prepared in 2014 which had analyzed the proposed project including
46 Starbucks and the drive-through, along with noise impacts to sensitive receptors,

1 and biological impacts. Additional information would be required but would not
2 change the conclusions of the impact analysis related to biological resources and
3 mitigation measures related to the creek, nor preclude options in the future for the
4 restoration of the creek. He stated the environmental review information for the
5 project was available on the City's website.
6

7 Mr. Rhodes added that the Planning Commission's Development Review
8 Subcommittee had met five times to review the topics discussed during the
9 workshops, and all property owners within 1,000 square feet had been notified of
10 the workshops including the School District, which had provided no feedback to
11 date. With proper buffering from the creek, the property was permitted to be
12 urbanized and developed with services to the community allowing retail services,
13 professional offices, and medical services.
14

15 Mr. Thomas thanked the public for its comments and staff for the responses to
16 comments. He noted the 75-foot high pylon sign would be located in an
17 embankment, and although the project engineers could conduct a further review,
18 the height was needed to allow the sign to be visible. The sign would not require
19 24-hour illumination and the timing of the illumination could be controlled. Parking
20 would be provided 20 percent in excess of City requirements.
21

22 LES MEU, George Meu & Associates Architects, clarified the parking requirements
23 and the parking that had been proposed, the location of the bus shelter, the bicycle
24 parking, and the proposed lighting and security lighting. He identified the employee
25 parking for the medical building under the building, and noted that Starbucks
26 employees would likely be part of the reciprocal parking agreement with Kaiser.
27

28 Mr. Thomas was confident the City would reach a positive conclusion with Kaiser
29 through a cooperative process; envisioned that all projects would be approved
30 subject to conditions, which would allow the west side to proceed pending a
31 resolution of the details with Kaiser; and clarified that there would be more standard
32 size and fewer compact size parking spaces in the project.
33

34 Mr. Meu explained that the project design had been discussed with staff, leading to
35 the west side to be more of an Old Town aesthetic. He identified the potential
36 location for public art, plazas in the center, and alternative places for pedestrians to
37 sit within the project site; the Sprouts architecture would be in a more rural
38 architectural style; and the medical office building would be split level; the design for
39 Starbucks had been proposed by Starbucks and the developer was comfortable
40 with the design.
41

42 Mr. Thomas affirmed that an alternate location for the pylon sign had been
43 recommended, by the Development Review Subcommittee, to be eliminated from
44 the Development Agreement, which he would accept as long as a pylon sign was
45 approved on the east side. A Caltrans consultant had been retained to ensure that
46 the pylon sign would be appropriate at the proposed location and appeared not to

1 be an issue for Caltrans.
2

3 By consensus, the Planning Commission would focus on resolving the issues
4 surrounding the pylon sign, including concerns with the width of the sign, with more
5 details sought on the base elevation. Clarification was needed on the Kaiser
6 agreement/buy-in; employee parking; and responses to concerns with aesthetic
7 reservations with respect to the retail buildings; along with clarification as to why the
8 stone tile veneer stopped on the southwest corner of the medical service building.
9 Staff clarified that the purview of the Planning Commission was to evaluate a
10 project's consistency with the General Plan and Specific Plan, with tax revenue
11 generation under the purview of the City Council.
12

13 Mr. Rhodes asked the Planning Commission to adjourn the workshop to the regular
14 Commission meeting scheduled for March 23, 2015, with the issue of the pylon
15 sign, design, and roof plan details to return including information the Commission
16 would require to take action on the item. In the meantime, he stated that a
17 separate Development Review Subcommittee might be required.
18

19 **G. NEW BUSINESS:** - None
20

21 **H. CITY PLANNER'S / COMMISSIONERS' REPORT:**
22

23 Mr. Rhodes reminded Commissioners to submit their Form 700 to the City Clerk;
24 and advised that the Housing Element Update had also been scheduled for the
25 next meeting of the Planning Commission.
26

27 **I. COMMUNICATIONS:** None
28

29 **J. NEXT MEETING:**
30

31 The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be held on Monday, March 23,
32 2015 at 7:00 P.M.
33

34 **K. ADJOURNMENT:** 10:06 P.M.
35

36 Transcribed by:
37

38 Anita L. Tucci-Smith
39 Transcriber
40