

City of Bishop
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
City Council Chambers – 301 West Line Street
Bishop, California 93514

November 29, 2011

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Huntley called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Huntley.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Huntley, Lowthorp, Hardy, Bhakta, Gardner and Malloy

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

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OTHERS PRESENT:

Keith Caldwell, Interim City Administrator
Peter Tracy, City Attorney
Gary Schley, Public Services Officer
Michele Thomas, Secretary
David Grah, Public Works Director
Jim Ellis, Council Member

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Huntley asked if anyone wished to speak on a subject not calendared on the agenda. There was no public comment.

(1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION

Commissioner Malloy moved to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2011 meeting as written.

Ayes: Malloy, Lowthorp, Bhakta, Gardner and Huntley
Abstain: Hardy

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

CORRESPONDENCE

None

NEW BUSINESS

(2) Inyo County's Cost, Energy, and Service Efficiencies Action Plan (CESEAP)

Catherine Richards, Inyo County Associate Planner, shared with the commission that Inyo County Planning was awarded a grant from Southern California Edison (SCE) to promote a plan to identify and promote activities that lead to long-term sustainable changes that support energy efficiency. The planning effort has five major components: utility manager software program, bench marking, providing a program code standard, an energy action plan, and developing a policy to updating the county's general plan. During Program implementation, the Implementer will work closely with other local, regional, State, and Federal agencies, including the Inyo Local Transportation Commission (LTC), the City of Bishop, the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD), and others.

The primary goal is to get others thinking about how their buildings use energy. Policies and implementation measures will be developed to encourage energy efficiency and upgrades, which, in turn, will provide cost savings to the County, its residents and businesses, as well as other entities operation in Inyo County. The information, policies, and technical applications developed in this planning effort will be shared with other jurisdictions, entities, and community members who operate and/or live in Inyo County.

PUBLIC HEARING

(3) Final Draft Mobility Element

David Grah, Director of Public Works, was present to discuss the final draft to the Mobility Element and answer any questions. The purpose of the Mobility Element is to define how the City will serve the transportation needs of residents, businesses, and visitors while enhancing its environmental, economic, and natural resources.

The Mobility Element update effort began about a year ago and included an Open House May 2011 with draft documents released to the public in July. The draft included a truck route to reduce truck traffic on Main Street. By the middle of August, little comment was received regarding the draft Mobility Element and a mass mailing was sent out to all addresses in the city limits in an attempt to generate more interest and comments. As a result, 120 pages of comments were received with almost all related to the truck route. An overwhelming number of comments about the truck route were against it. The strongest comments came from residents living on the east side of town that felt the route would be too close to their properties.

After another public open house in September, an updated draft that eliminated a planned truck route was released to the public October 19. Following the Public Hearing, the City plans to release the environmental document for the current final version of Mobility Element and the associated Transportation Report on December 1. The Environment Hearing is scheduled for January 9 2012 with public comment due on the documents January 10. The Planning Commission will again review the Mobility Element and Transportation Report and consider recommending both to the City Council for approval at their 31 January meeting. The first reading is scheduled for February 13 and the final second reading and Council adoption of the Element will be February 27.

Grah then responded to comments received from the Planning Commissioners regarding the updated draft Mobility Element. A couple of the comments were related to the truck route both for and against. One of the reasons the truck route was included in the document was because it has several potential benefits. There are arguments it could enhance livability and the economic vitality of downtown Bishop. On the other hand, Grah feels that the community of Bishop does not currently have the will to deal with the controversy of this sort of route. The idea is still in the Transportation Report to capture it there in the event the community was to change their sentiment about the idea. Grah also brought up that he recently spoke at a Chamber of Commerce meeting regarding the truck route and most in attendance seemed to be in favor of a truck route.

Another comment from the commission was related to the alignment of Grove Street. The idea is to either line up Grove Street with East Pine, or East Pine with West Pine to have a cross intersection rather than two offset t-intersections. This idea is presented as an "opportunity area" with the idea that the city would not pursue it unless some development proposal in the area made it a reality. There was also support for additional east west streets. One of the opportunities includes a street corridor going west from Park Street in the area of J Diamond. There was concern about the configuration of East Line Street at Main Street that the City should look into reducing the number of lanes on East Line Street. The City will work with Caltrans to review the configuration and make improvements. There was a suggestion that trucks be allowed or restricted to the inside lanes going through town to help get trucks away from pedestrians. Grah explained that Caltrans has looked at this possibility and concluded that it was not advisable to restrict trucks. There were some comments having to do with the planters in residential areas. The updated Mobility Element calls for in residential areas a sidewalk separated from the roadway with a planter strip. They are used only in residential zones and do follow zoning codes. A lot of the resistance for that idea comes from residents stating that the city is taking yard away by building the sidewalk close to their house. Grah stated that the property belongs to the city and if not used can lead to misunderstandings of property lines and expose the city to liability. The importance of involving adjacent land owners in decisions about the configuration of a street was brought up. Grah feels this is addressed in Action 6.3 on page 19. Grah has developed a draft policy for property owners who wanted to do something other the construction plan adjacent to their property. They may submit a written request to the City Engineer, David Grah, and it would then be reviewed by the engineer along with Keith Caldwell, Planning Director, City Council, and the Planning Commission for approval.

Grah continued with the comments giving definitions to terms used in the Mobility Element. Streetscape refers to benches or planters, and neck-down refers to a bulb out or curb extension and this term has been removed from the document. Another comment was regarding new streets and how they would be built. Grah explained that the Mobility Element describes that they would be built when they become justified and would be funded mostly through developers. Staff appreciated a comment related to street maintenance suggesting funding to be allocated for this purpose. Action 2.3 on page 14 talks about pursuing financing including the financing to maintain the system.

Grah asked the commission if they had any further questions or comments regarding the draft Mobility Element. Gardner brought up concerns regarding A Street, Pioneer Lane, and having a street go through this area next to the hospital. Bhakta asked about bike routes, lanes and paths and how much area is needed to make a bike lane rather than a bike route. Grah clarified that the state standard is 5 feet for a bike lane. Most streets in city limits are 40 feet wide and would need to be 50 feet wide in order to have a bike lane and this is why they are considered bike routes. No further comments were made.

NEW BUSINESS

(4) Final Draft Mobility Element comments and discussion

Huntley asked to have his comment regarding trucks using the left lanes on Main Street entered into the Mobility Element.

STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS:

Caldwell asked the commission if they would like to cancel the December Planning Commission meeting due to no business calendared for that month.

On a motion by Commissioner Hardy, the Commission voted 7-0 to cancel the December Planning Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Huntley adjourned the meeting at 7:58 P.M. The next scheduled meeting will be January 31, 2012 at 7:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers.

Chairman Huntley

Michele Thomas, Secretary