

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

October 30, 2012

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Bhakta called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Bhakta.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Bhakta, Lowthorp, Gardner, Huntley, Crom and Malloy

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Hardy

OTHERS PRESENT:

Gary Schley, Public Services Officer
Peter Tracy, City Attorney
Michele Thomas, Secretary
David Grah, Director of Public Works

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Bhakta 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 Crom moved to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2012 meeting as written.

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

NEW BUSINESS

(2) Review of Proposed Caltrans Maintenance Yard Extension, Spruce Street

David Grah, Director of Public Works, explained that the project is to double the size of the Caltrans highway maintenance station on Spruce Street. This is a state project and the city doesn't have discretionary land use authority in this case but would appreciate any comments from the commission. Caltrans would like to work with the city to come up with the best plan. Grah said that he feels the main issue is that the area behind the existing maintenance station is zoned M-1, General Industrial, and the property is designed to be accessed off of Spruce Street. Caltrans provided a map showing five possible alternatives for the project. The first proposal from Caltrans, Alt B on the attached map, is to double the size along Spruce Street which would cut off access to land area in the back for development in the future. Although there are no proposals for development on the back land, Grah feels the city should be looking ahead for the future. At a previous meeting with Caltrans, City staff suggested widening the property straight back behind the existing station, Alt A. Caltrans pointed out that there are environmental and grading issues expanding in that direction. Caltrans then came up with a compromised proposal to reduce the amount of expansion along Spruce Street.

Brian McElwain, Caltrans Project Manager, stated that Caltrans is looking to expand their maintenance facility. The plans include storage for equipment and material base, parking for 17 employees, a new office, and wash racks with 5 bays. The project will be phased in as money becomes available. The first phase would be to acquire the land which then would include grading, paving, and new fencing.

Studies were done to determine potential wetland areas. Fish and Game stated that the area in the back of the existing station contains riparian habitat. This information has been submitted to the Army Corp of Engineers and Caltrans is waiting to hear back whether the area will be considered wetland.

Another location considered by Caltrans Alt D, the property to the north of the station along Wye Road, was determined to need extensive grading and the development of an access along Wye Road. The last location considered Alt E, behind the south portion of the station, would also require a lot of grading. In addition, the area east of the existing facility is depressed and would require extensive fill material. The location suggested by Caltrans as a preferred alternative Alt C, takes up half of the frontage along Spruce Street than the original proposed plan.

Caltrans' next step would be to finish the environmental document and start working with LADWP to acquire the land.

Crom asked why Caltrans is not able to expand their property on South Main Street for this project. McElwain stated that there is no empty space to build a maintenance yard at this location. Grah also added that the lot east of the property on South Main Street is wetlands, and, what part is not affected is too small to house a maintenance facility.

Huntley asked why the wetlands area behind the existing maintenance yard is not able to be developed on. McElwain explained that the area is a potential wetland; Army Corp hasn't taken jurisdiction yet. According to Fish and Game it is historical drainage and prior to development it would need to be litigated for the lost of the habitat. Under rules pertaining to wetlands, avoidance is to be considered first. Huntley commented that with the criteria, the area near the wetland appears to be undevelopable.

Bhakta stated that he thinks that Alt E with the access easement on Spruce Street would be the ideal location with a minimal amount of Spruce Street frontage used. McElwain went over notes from a previous meeting regarding Alt E. Concerns from Caltrans included a significant extra cost for the access street, a large fill at the back of the existing maintenance yard would make a connection and transition difficult and expensive, and the approximately of wetlands. Schley added that the ramp from the existing facility to access Alt E or A would consume a large portion of the requested land due to a 3 foot ramp or they would need to do a 3-4 foot fill.

Malloy asked McElwain about the memo presented to the commission from Schley regarding the possibility of Caltrans' needs of land for future development beyond the proposed maintenance yard alternatives. McElwain stated that he is not aware of any future land needs.

Bhakta also brought up the issue that using Alt C would block off the portion of Alt E behind the existing yard from any future use. Huntley added the possibility to use this area Bhakta mentioned along with half of Alt C's Spruce Street access to minimize the street frontage and make use of land that could not be developed otherwise. Huntley stated he understands the problems with cost of elevation and does not think building a maintenance yard should take away street frontage.

McElwain told the commission that Alt C seemed to be the best alternative because it is flat and wouldn't require any grading and would minimize any encroachments towards the potential wetlands. Schley added that he recalls from a prior meeting with Caltrans that another concern was the maneuvering of the equipment vehicles in tighter areas and that is why the 300 feet width is preferred. Huntley then added that his final comment is to try to minimize the use of Spruce Street frontage. McElwain said that he will take the commissioners ideas and concerns back to the Caltrans developing team for consideration but the department would like proceed with Alt C, work towards acquiring the land with LADWP, and finish up the environmental document.

No action was taken regarding the project.

STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS:

Schley stated there are no staff reports at this time.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Bhakta adjourned the meeting at 7:42 P.M. The next scheduled meeting will be November 27, 2012 at 7:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers.

Chairman Bhakta

Michele Thomas, Secretary