

MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

MAY 23, 2005

The meeting of the El Cajon City Planning Commission is called to order at 7:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: WELLS, WOODS, AMBROSE, BLACK, TURNER-EMERSON

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: NONE

OTHERS PRESENT: RAMIREZ, Principal Planner
FOSTER, Assistant City Attorney
GRIFFITHS, Principal Civil Engineer
ALVEY, Associate Planner
MOSSAY, Minutes Clerk

MINUTES of April 25, 2005: Motion by AMBROSE, second by WELLS to approve the Minutes of April 25, 2005 pro forma. Motion carries 5-0.

MINUTES of May 9, 2005: Motion by WOODS, second by AMBROSE to approve the Minutes of May 9, 2005 pro forma. Motion carries 5-0.

Commissioner WOODS states, for the record, that his intention was to vote "No" on the three Home Depot items (Zone Reclassification 2261, Conditional Use Permit 2004 and Addendum to EIR #74) from the meeting of April 25, 2005. The minutes and resolutions reflect his "Abstention" of these items.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT 257 – Roberts

(continued public hearing) Resolution No. 10139

(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)

PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the north side of Naranca Avenue between Grape and Third Streets, and addressed as 1454, 1456 and 1458 Naranca Avenue; APN 507-283-26; existing LUC 1120, proposed LUC 1110B; General Plan Designation: Low Density Residential.

Request to convert three existing homes to a common interest development in the R-2-R (Two Family Residential Restricted) zone. *Continued from the meetings of January 10, 2005 and March 14, 2005.*

AND

TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP 619 – Roberts

(continued public hearing) Resolution No. 10140
(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)
PC meeting 5/23/05

Request a four-lot parcel map in the R-2-R (Two Family Residential Restricted) zone. *Continued from the meetings of January 10, 2005 and March 14, 2005.*

RAMIREZ states the staff reports for these items recommend denial. The applicant recently submitted a letter, however, requesting the applications be withdrawn. RAMIREZ explains the reasoning for the withdrawal request.

The public hearings are still open. No one comes forward to speak.

Motion by WELLS, second by AMBROSE to close the public hearings and grant withdrawal of Planned Unit Development 257 and Tentative Parcel Map 619, as requested by the applicant; carries 5-0.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 1998 – Velocitel for Verizon Wireless

(continued public hearing) Resolution No. 10141
PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the northeast corner of Fletcher Parkway and Hacienda Drive, and addressed as 2160 Fletcher Parkway; APN: 481-140-71, -72 & -73; LUC 4712 B; General Plan Designation: Office/Non-Retail.

Request a stand-alone wireless communication facility in the O-P (Office Professional) zone. *Continued from the meetings of March 14, 2005 and March 28, 2005.*

ALVEY provides a summary of the staff report and continuances. The surrounding homeowners have voiced their preference for the faux pine tree facility, also known as a monopine. Staff is concerned with the proposed location of the monopine and believes it should be located further to the east to reduce its visual impact. This has been incorporated as a condition of approval. Staff recommends the Planning Commission grant Conditional Use Permit 1998, subject to conditions.

The public hearing is still open.

Laura BISHOP, 18071 Fitch Avenue, Suite 200, Irvine CA 92614, represents Verizon Wireless and is an employee of Velocitel. She explains working with the neighborhood, including sending out three different versions of the wireless facility. The neighbors also requested more improvements on the property and asked for a trash enclosure around the existing trash dumpster, which Verizon plans to do as a block wall enclosure with plantings. One neighbor wants trees replaced that were removed along the property on Hacienda Drive and Verizon would like to put up 48-inch box trees to help screen the building and eventually the site. BISHOP explains why they can't move the facility beyond the corner of the building.

Rodney GETTMAN, 718 Hacienda Drive, El Cajon, commends Laura Bishop and Verizon for all the work they did with the homeowners. He feels the trash enclosure should be taken care of and the trees that were cut down in the public right of way should be replaced. He thinks the property owners should be responsible and not Verizon Wireless.

ALVEY discusses the trash enclosure, the location of the proposed monopine, and the additional landscaping requested, explaining the requirements for replacing the trees that were cut down.

No further comments are offered.

Motion by WOODS, second by AMBROSE to close the public hearing; carries 5-0.

The Commission feels this is a great conclusion to what appeared to be a difficult project.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by BLACK to grant Conditional Use Permit 1998, for a stand-alone faux pine wireless communications facility, in accordance with the staff report, and adding a Condition No. 9 to read: "Coordinate with Planning staff on the installation of four 48-inch box trees offered by the applicant. An encroachment permit may be required from the Public Works Department." Motion carries 5-0.

ZONE RECLASSIFICATION 2259 – Gilmore

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10142

(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)

PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the north side of Valley View Blvd between Fernbrook Court and Sunnyside Avenue, and addressed as 1984 Valley View Blvd; APN: 512-051-55-00; LUC 1111; General Plan Designation: Low Low Density Residential

Request to prezone property from the County R-R-1 to the City R-E-20 zone and subsequent annexation to the City of El Cajon.

RAMIREZ provides a summary of the staff report, including the requirements for annexation.

TURNER-EMERSON opens the public hearing.

Michael GILMORE, 1984 Valley View Blvd, El Cajon, is the property owner and applicant. He agrees with all terms and conditions set forth in the staff report.

Motion by WELLS, second by BLACK to close the public hearing; carries 5-0.

Motion by WOODS, second by BLACK to approve the Negative Declaration; carries 5-0.

Motion by WOODS, second by BLACK to recommend approval of Zone Reclassification 2259 to prezone property from the County RR-1 zone to the City R-E-20 zone, in accordance with the staff report; carries 5-0.

AMENDMENT OF SPECIFIC PLAN 440 – Marrujo for Marrujo

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10143

(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)

PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the south side of Fletcher Parkway between Brockton Street and Westwind Drive, and addressed as 2275 Fletcher Parkway; APN 481-431-06; Existing LUC 5811B, proposed LUC 9000; General Plan Designation: General Retail Commercial.

Request to delete patio dining area, parking and property from the existing restaurant in the C-2 (General Commercial) zone.

RAMIREZ provides a summary of the staff report.

TURNER-EMERSON opens the public hearing.

No one comes forward to speak on this item.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by BLACK to close the public hearing; carries 5-0.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by BLACK to recommend approval of the deletion of Specific Plan 440, in accordance with the staff report; carries 5-0.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT 274 - CondoConversions.com for EGC Family Partnership LP

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10144
(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)
PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the east side of Peach Court between Peach Avenue and the cul de sac terminus, and addressed as 811 Peach Court; APN: 484-310-31-00; LUC 1142A existing, 1142B proposed; General Plan Designation: Medium Density Residential

Request to convert an existing 26-unit apartment complex into a common interest development in the R-3 (Multiple Family) zone.

AND

TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP 587 - CondoConversions.com for EGC Family Partnership LP

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10145
(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)
PC meeting 5/23/05

Request a one-lot subdivision map in the R-3 (Multiple Family) zone.

RAMIREZ provides a summary of the staff report, noting a narrow 16-foot wide strip that extends south from the southwest corner of the site that is not reflected on the site plan for this project. Staff is recommending this strip be included in the landscaping plan and be maintained.

A discussion ensues between the Commission and staff regarding the inadequacies of the elevations and that City Council will be looking for more detailed information.

TURNER-EMERSON opens the public hearings.

Chris CHRISTENSEN, 4817 Palm Avenue, Suite I, La Mesa, CA 91941, the applicant's representative, is here to respond to any questions. In response to AMBROSE, he says the elevations were submitted earlier this year when less information was required.

AMBROSE thinks the applicant saying they will repair the balconies and patios "as needed" and repair/replace wood fencing "as needed" is not adequate. Again, the City Council is looking for more—either replacement or something better. He also mentions inspectors not inspecting roofs because of no access is not a legitimate reason.

TURNER states the materials board is inadequate as well.

CHRISTENSEN responds that the application process has evolved over time, with more and more information required. He is also unhappy with the roof inspections. In this particular case, they plan to replace the entire roofing system. He mentions some of the features of the project, including washer/dryers installed in each unit and asks the Planning Commission to recommend approval today with a requirement to enhance the elevations that may be required for City Council.

A discussion ensues regarding several conditions that CHRISTENSEN and the Commission are concerned with including dryer ducts, the materials board and elevations, replacing the roofs and railings, and changing the exterior colors of the buildings without discussing with staff. RAMIREZ addresses each of these concerns.

No one else comes forward to speak.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by WOODS to close the public hearings; carries 5-0.

AMBROSE wonders if the applicant bringing better elevations to the City Council should be a condition of approval. WELLS would like to see exactly what kind of flooring and countertops the applicant is proposing, with a list of all the materials they plan to use.

TURNER thinks a materials board would help.

RAMIREZ comments on the City Council's philosophy regarding enhanced elevations and the aesthetic appeal of these projects as viewed from a public street. Council wants to see all four sides of each building that is different. If what the Planning Commission has seen doesn't meet that newly established minimum requirement of the Council, the Council will tell the applicant to come back with something better. As far as the details on the inside, staff has been satisfied to know that all the floor coverings will be replaced. Staff believes that the choice of interior materials is market driven.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by BLACK to recommend approval of Planned Unit Development 274 in accordance with the staff report, and adding to Condition 2b) to include a color/materials board and additional enhanced elevations; carries 5-0.

Motion by BLACK, second by AMBROSE to recommend approval of Tentative Subdivision Map 587 in accordance with the staff report; carries 5-0.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT 275 – Sturtevant for Keith

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10146

(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)

PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the west side of Graves Avenue between E. Madison Avenue and Beech Street, and addressed as 550 Graves Avenue; APN 483-330-45; Existing LUC 1142A, proposed 1142B; General Plan Designation: High Density Residential.

Request to convert an existing 28-unit apartment complex into a common interest development in the R-4 (High Density/Multiple Family) zone.

AND

TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP 588 – Sturtevant for Keith

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10147

(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)

PC meeting 5/23/05

Request a one-lot subdivision map in the R-4 (High Density/Multiple Family) zone.

ALVEY provides a summary of the staff report and recommends approval of PUD 275 and TSM 588, subject to conditions.

TURNER-EMERSON opens the public hearings.

Don STURTEVANT, 4542 Ruffner Street, Suite 140, San Diego CA 92111, is the applicant and is here to answer any questions. He agrees with the conditions of approval set forth in the staff report.

A discussion ensues between the Commission and applicant regarding replacing the playground equipment, the need to submit to City Council all four elevations for each side of the building, and that market conditions influence the developer's decision on interior upgrades.

STURTEVANT adds this project was submitted back in November. He thought there was some latitude for projects submitted before more detailed information was required earlier this year.

Nancy EAKIN, 550 Graves, Apt. #4, El Cajon, is a tenant of the subject apartment complex. She doesn't have a problem with progress, but is concerned about displacement when these apartments become condos. She is having a hard time finding a place to live with Section 8 and handicap accessibility at the same time. She did not receive one of the notices.

Ted THORNE, 550 Graves Avenue, Apt. #9, El Cajon, is a tenant of the subject apartment complex. He is concerned about the financial difficulties with lower income people finding new places to rent.

Staff verifies that both speakers were given the proper 60-day notice in conjunction with the requests and adds that, as a rule, projects have been taking at least 18 months from the time they get approval from the City Council to when they actually have units on the market for sale. RAMIREZ gives the speaker information on several agencies that can help tenants.

TURNER adds the percentage of apartments that have been converted to condominiums is small compared to the amount of apartments still available in El Cajon.

No further comments are offered.

Motion by WOODS, second by WELLS to close the public hearings; carries 5-0.

Motion by WELLS, second by WOODS to recommend approval of Planned Unit Development 275 in accordance with the staff report, and adding Condition 6a)10 to read: "Install new children's playground equipment". Motion carries 5-0.

Motion by WELLS, second by WOODS to recommend approval of Tentative Subdivision Map 588 in accordance with the staff report; carries 5-0.

AMENDMENT OF CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 1923 – BITA Investments for Sagart & Dedman

(public hearing) Continued to June 6, 2005
(joint noticed CC mtg 6-28-05)
PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the east side of El Cajon Blvd. between S. Johnson Avenue and W. Lexington Avenue, and addressed as 329 - 385 El Cajon Blvd; APN: 487-323-02; -03; -04; and -17; LUC 5512A/6410; General Plan Designation: General Retail Commercial/Special Development Area #10

Request to expand an existing used car and truck sales facility with minor repair in the C-2 (General Commercial) zone.

RAMIREZ provides a background and summary of the staff report and reasons for continuance.

TURNER-EMERSON opens the public hearing.

Alan DEUBER, the applicant's architect, 9131 Fletcher Parkway, Suite 119, La Mesa 91942, agrees with the continuance to June 6, 2005.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by BLACK to continue the public hearing on Amendment of Conditional Use Permit 1923 to the meeting of June 6, 2005, with re-noticing to include the correct location map; carries 5-0.

VARIANCE 946 – United Methodist Chapel of the Valley

(public hearing) Resolution No. 10148

PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the south side of E. Madison Avenue between E. Main and N. Third Streets, and addressed as 1465 E. Madison Avenue; APN: 511-171-07; LUC 6911A/6815; General Plan Designation: Low Density Residential

Request to exceed the maximum building height in the R-1-6 (Residential One-Family) zone.

RAMIREZ provides a summary of the staff report and the State law requirements for granting a variance. She reviews the four points the applicant presented, and staff's position on each point. Staff believes the basis for granting a variance is not justified by the applicant's letter. There are no special circumstances that exist on the subject property that warrant the granting of the variance for increased height over the 35-foot limit. Staff recommends Variance 946 be denied for reasons given in the staff report.

TURNER-EMERSON opens the public hearing.

Stuart HARVEY, 1602 Sunburst Drive, El Cajon, CA 92021, is a church representative and speaks against denial of the variance. He goes through staff's analysis and points out areas where the church has looked at the same evidence and has come to a different and logical conclusion. He presents the following counterpoints to staff's analyses of the four points:

#1 – Little visual target value. The church wishes to add that signature common to many churches worldwide – a steeple. The monument sign is not a feature unique to churches. The cross is recognizable as a stylized cross when viewed from across Madison Avenue. A steeple would identify the property as a church from as far away as it could be seen.

#2 – The church identified several other properties that have structures higher than the 35 ft in R-1-6 zones. Most were grandfathered in by annexation. The property owned by the El Cajon Church of the Nazarene is a good example. It has a cross that exceeds 35 feet. When two properties are identical in use and located in the same R-1-6 zone, equity demands the same consideration with regard to approval of tall architectural features such as steeples and crosses.

#3 – Adds visual clutter. He requests the Commission recall any churches with steeples that they have seen that gave impressions of visual clutter related to the steeples. They do not agree that a plain, white steeple would be detrimental to the public welfare.

#4 – The comprehensive General Plan is protected by a rigorous process for examining requests for variances and in this case, a credible argument is made that the requested variance meets all the requirements for legitimate exemption.

In response to TURNER-EMERSON's invitation for staff comments on the speaker's presentation, RAMIREZ will wait to respond until all speakers have had their opportunity to speak and after the public hearing has been closed.

Reverend Peter MOORE-KOCHLACS, 1465 E. Madison Ave., El Cajon, serves at the Chapel of the Valley Methodist Church. He objects to RAMIREZ reserving comments until after the hearing is closed, leaving no opportunity for further discussion. This variance issue was raised earlier at a City Council meeting during an open time, in which the Mayor and Director of Redevelopment and City Manager said there was no problem coming to the Planning Commission. These people encouraged the church to come before the Planning Commission as this seemed to be a minor addition.

MOORE-KOCHLACS suggests that Madison Avenue is just as much a business area as the 200-foot flagpole area. Furthermore, the City has been entertaining building a fire station across the street from the church. To have a steeple that would actually attract and raise people's visual view, above the ugliness of Madison Avenue, is a gift of enhancement that the church steeple would be bringing to the area.

RAMIREZ states she has no problem responding to any comments while the public hearing is still open. She points out that the evaluation presented in the staff report is consistent with the staff's approach to a variance request.

WELLS asks about public response to the steeple. Staff responds there was one person who asked for more information.

Motion by WELLS, second by BLACK to close the public hearing; carries 5-0.

AMBROSE thinks variances are the most difficult item the Planning Commission has to deal with, because they are an allowance to break the law. He is having the most difficulty with point #1. Regarding point #3, he doesn't think granting a variance would be detrimental to the public welfare. But he is not sure about preserving a right enjoyed

by any other property in the same zone. He is struggling with making findings that the additional 6-½ feet should be allowed.

WOODS feels the building is a very low key, modest building that you could drive past and not even realize it is there. A steeple would enhance the building.

TURNER agrees, but the main issue is the height of the steeple. The steeple can be 35 feet high without a variance.

BLACK is concerned about the precedent-setting nature of granting this variance.

WELLS also likes the steeple, but feels it should be a City Council decision.

Motion by BLACK, second by WELLS to deny Variance 946 to exceed the maximum building height in the R-1-6 zone, in accordance with the staff report; carries 4-1 (WOODS votes “No”).

This action is final unless appealed to the City Clerk’s Office by June 6, 2005 at 5PM.

AMENDMENT OF CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 1377 – Perfect Performance for Cunningham Family Trust

(continued discussion) Letter to applicant
PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the northeast corner of El Cajon Boulevard and Chamberlain Avenue, and addressed as 595 El Cajon Boulevard; APN 487-532-29; LUC 6411; General Plan designation: General Retail Commercial.

Ninety-day review of an existing auto repair facility in the C-2 (General Commercial) zone. *Continued from the meeting of February 28, 2005.*

ALVEY explains the purpose of this discussion item and provides a summary of the staff report. Staff recommends the Planning Commission accept and file this report.

Mark HANNAWA, 595 El Cajon Blvd, El Cajon, CA, is the applicant. He requests a longer term for the conditional use permit and doesn’t agree with the fees to renew the application again in three years. He has worked hard to maintain the property and keeping the conditions of approval up to date.

ALVEY explains why the conditional use permit term was for five years and the reasons for the 90-day review. When the conditional use permit expires, the applicant may come back and request a longer period of time.

AMBROSE explains that the conditional use permit runs with the property and not the applicant or operator. He explains why the City usually has a five-year term for auto repair businesses. The Commission can grant more time if it is requested when the permit comes up for renewal.

Motion by AMBROSE, second by WOODS to accept and file the report on Conditional Use Permit 1377 with no further reviews, and in accordance with the staff report; carries 5-0.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 1986 – Coastline Food Services Corp. for JaJou

(discussion) Resolution No. 10149

PC meeting 5/23/05

The subject property is located on the northwest corner of East Main Street and Greenfield Drive.

Request an extension of time for a fast-food restaurant with drive-thru and outdoor dining in the C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) zone.

RAMIREZ provides a summary of the staff report.

Motion by BLACK, second by AMBROSE to grant a one-year extension of time to May 17, 2006, for Conditional Use Permit 1986, subject to all the conditions of Planning Commission Resolution No. 9963 and in accordance with the staff report; carries 5-0.

PREDRAFTED RESOLUTIONS

To reflect the actions of the Planning Commission on tonight's agenda items.

Motion by WOODS, second by WELLS to adopt Resolution Nos. 10139 through 10149 pro forma; carries 5-0.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by AMBROSE, second by WOODS to adjourn the meeting of the EL Cajon City Planning Commission at 9:00 PM this 23rd day of May 2005.

Debra TURNER-EMERSON, Chair

ATTEST:

James S. GRIFFIN, Secretary