



MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF
CITY COUNCIL/SAN DIMAS
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2009, 5:00 P. M.
CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM
245 E. BONITA AVE.

PRESENT:

Mayor Curtis W. Morris
Mayor Pro Tem Denis Bertone
Councilmember Emmett Badar
Councilmember John Ebner
Councilmember Jeff Templeman

City Manager Blaine Michaelis
City Attorney J. Kenneth Brown
City Clerk Ina Rios
Assistant City Manager of Community Development Larry Stevens
Assistant City Manager Ken Duran
Director of Development Services Dan Coleman
Director of Public Works Krishna Patel
Director of Parks and Recreation Theresa Bruns
San Dimas Sheriff's Captain Joe Hartshorne

Architect John Sorcinelli

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Morris called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

(For anyone wishing to address the City Council on an item on this agenda. Under the provisions of the Brown Act, the legislative body is prohibited from taking or engaging in discussion on any item not appearing on the posted agenda. Speakers are limited to three minutes or as may be determined by the Chair.)

- a. Members of the Audience

Mayor Morris invited interactive participation. There were no comments at this time.

3. STUDY SESSION

- a. Various matters related to Downtown Specific Plan and other Downtown matters:
 - 1) Preliminary consideration of alternate façade designs and program to address façade issues at Bonita Avenue.

Assistant City Manager of Community Development Stevens said staff was authorized to contract for architectural services to analyze concerns with failing of the aging facades at 151 and 155 W. Bonita Avenue. He is requesting preliminary feedback, then he will meet with property owners to decide a plan for participation and report to Council for action.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Bertone, Mr. Stevens replied that the City does not have financial responsibility for the façades, however, the city is responsible for sidewalks and public safety. He mentioned that 35 years ago the City had a façade program that has since been discontinued.

In response to Mayor Morris, Mr. Stevens replied that for safety, portions of the overhang were removed along the public site and currently there are no unsafe conditions.

Architect John Sorcinelli provided a Powerpoint presentation detailing the problems that were identified on the historic buildings at 151, 155, 157 and 161 E. Bonita Avenue.

In response to Councilmember Ebner, Mr. Sorcinelli said all the buildings are unreinforced masonry and he does not believe seismic retrofitting occurred under recent code requirements. He added that the storefronts have, in part, been structural.

Mr. Sorcinelli described in detail the intended work and preliminary costs for each alternative and approaches to address the short term and mid term renovation.

Mr. Sorcinelli responded to Council regarding signage, existing masonry conditions and repair work in some locations. He said the brick had deteriorated and he does not recommend short or mid term renovation at 151 W. Bonita Avenue.

Mr. Sorcinelli discussed in detail Long term renovation and Long term-new one story building.

Councilmember Templeman suggested finding a way to vacate the alley to get additional sidewalk space in front of the buildings.

Mr. Sorcinelli discussed the Long term-new retail/residential/live-work in detail.

Mayor Morris suggested acquiring the property from willing sellers, demolishing the site, and returning the land to buildable condition. He mentioned that it is a challenge to identify potential users who can afford to pay the rent to justify the cost for a long term Downtown renovation.

Assistant City Manager Stevens said live/work units appear to be more popular than retail.

Councilmember Ebner thought that the historic looking parapets/façade is more attractive.

Mayor Pro Tem Bertone said he likes the long term, one-story buildings.

Mr. Stevens stated he would meet with the affected property owners to get their feedback and staff will return to the City Council with recommendations for action. He mentioned that there are other buildings with older facades that may need consideration and he will discuss the various options with those property owners and what their resources are to implement programs.

In response to Council, Mr. Stevens described the options that include grants, partial grants, low interest loan, deferred loan, and economic assistance strategies. He added that San Dimas Redevelopment Agency funds are available for the first four alternatives, non-residential portions, and if the City Council selected the long term options, set-aside funds would be utilized.

Councilmember Templeman suggested that architectural details of 1910 in the downtown would be attractive to the public. He indicated that wood does not have historic value and asked if it was needed on some of the store fronts.

Mayor Morris expressed concern that the market might not be there for a long term renovation. He suggested considering mid-term renovations as a solution to the existing problems, since the price was not that different from the short-term remodel.

Mr. Stevens stated that there is not much difference between the short-term and mid-term and said brick is preferred if they do not want wood.

Councilmember Ebner expressed concern that mid-term solutions do not consider seismic upgrades.

Mr. Sorcinelli stated that the Long Term One Story Building makes sense, adding 50% to the area, seismically retrofitted façade, and would have the ability to increase rents. He said offering a larger space attracts a different kind of business.

Mr. Stevens suggested creating a seismic assistance program. Mayor Morris indicated the cost would be between \$150,000 to \$200,000 to retrofit a building.

It was the consensus of the City Council to offer assistance programs to business owners willing to upgrade their buildings. Mr. Stevens will craft a general façade program and talk to property owners.

2) Prioritization of future projects and/or property acquisitions in the Downtown.

Assistant City Manager of Community Development Stevens reported that for the past couple of years, staff has been working with the Downtown planning consultant to develop a new specific plan for the downtown area. He provided a brief description and rationale for sixteen potential projects that were identified and requested Council to prioritize and rank each project. Staff is also updating the Redevelopment Agency Five-Year plan.

It was moved by Mayor Pro Tem Bertone, seconded by Mayor Morris to consider as first priority the acquisition of the Chevron Station property at the northwest corner of Bonita Avenue and San Dimas Avenue. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Stevens requested reconvening after the regular City Council meeting to discuss the remaining three items.

RECESS

Mayor Morris recessed the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 9:25 p.m.

3) Discussion of preliminary design of Arrow/Bonita "Wagon" and entryway signs.

Assistant City Manager of Community Development Stevens said as part of the Downtown planning process, staff hired a firm that specializes in signing, branding and wayfinding programs to identify preliminary conceptual approaches to update the current entry monument (wagon) and consider new entry monument concepts which may include public art. The consultant also provided some thoughts on additional gateway signage and a wayfinding comparison.

Mr. Stevens described three approaches for the Wagon Entry monument: First option includes updating the existing wagon entry monument; the second option is to replace the wagon with a different type of monument; the third allows some kind of "Welcome to San Dimas" design. He spoke with Dave Harbin who indicated no one wants to get rid of the wagon. Staff felt the simple project needs refreshing and updating. He asked for Council's feedback on the three approaches.

The majority of the City Council was reluctant to eliminate the wagon and would like a link to San Dimas. Mayor Morris stated he did not oppose keeping the wagon, however, he expressed concern with the appearance of the signs.

Mr. Stevens stated he would look at costing options, follow a freshening strategy, and bring back to the City Council for additional discussion and decision.

Mr. Stevens said for the secondary signage, the consultants came up with two examples and staff could start with two or three of these added over the course of time if the City Council finds this appropriate. He said he would get pricing on preliminary concept designs.

Mr. Stevens said he would like a more historical monument than western for the gateway entrance off Bonita Avenue. He thought a logo could be imbedded at the base or top of the monument. He will bring back several choices of more refined designs.

In response to Councilmember Ebner, Mr. Stevens said he is moving away from the wagon wheel which was never adopted as an official logo.

Mr. Stevens said the current wayfinding is cluttered and unattractive. He would like to explore a couple of concepts of standardized signs, rather than using a metal street sign, and come back to Council for discussion and decision.

4) Discussion of preliminary street redesigns for Bonita/Cataract/railroad intersection.

Assistant City Manager of Community Development Stevens said as part of the Downtown Specific Plan, KOA Corporation, a traffic consultant, was hired to evaluate possible revisions to the Bonita & Cataract intersection, which may become difficult with extension use once the Gold Line reaches San Dimas. Staff has persuaded the Gold Line to consider a grade separation at that intersection, however, that option seems unlikely and the next best choice is to examine ways to adjust the intersection to facilitate an opportunity for signalization in the future. He presented two alternatives that were discussed and said from an engineering perspective KOA and RKA prefer Alternative One.

Alternative One: narrows the streets to a more conventional width by eliminating the large landscape areas and probably allows a signalized intersection without too many complicated gates and diagonal railroad crossing.

Alternative Two: bends the street in a southerly direction to minimize the length of track within the street.

Mr. Stevens said staff was successful in securing \$1.4 million in the Metro Call for Projects in 2014 for improvements to this intersection as well as other pedestrian enhancements in the Downtown. Staff requested feedback on the design alternatives to facilitate discussion during the remaining Downtown Specific Plan process.

In response to Mayor Morris, Mr. Stevens pointed out that staff has a \$1.4 million grant available until 2014 and will explore design options including a bridge if he can get an appropriate design.

In response to Council, Mr. Stevens said the Gold Line will make minimum safety improvements; however, staff wants a design that works within the context of what they want to do. He said this was presented on a conceptual basis, and staff will work with the Gold Line and timeframe, and come back in 2011 with a design.

5) Discussion of parking district.

Assistant City Manager of Community Development Stevens said a study was conducted on parking supply and demand in the Downtown. The study concluded the supply of parking spaces is adequate to meet the demand at virtually all times of the day, however, there are some equity issues as it relates to the parking district and the financial viability of the district. Staff would like feedback on the adequacy and distribution of parking supply; equity relative to the block east of Monte Vista, opportunities for additional parking if needed, and the need for parking when residential uses are introduced into the area.

In response to Mayor Morris, Mr. Stevens replied that a parking space requires 400 square feet and staff must consider the value of the land and cost of improvements. He will conduct a survey to determine how this issue is handled in surrounding cities.

Mr. Stevens responded to Mayor Morris that the owner of the Church property has a conditional approval requiring him to come up with the required number of parking spaces. Pursuant to the Code he can acquire property within 500 feet for offsite parking; however, that has not been done.

Mayor Morris commented that it would make sense for any development for two properties to be developed together.

Mr. Stevens stated that there was some discussion about the stage of design and solutions at the Train Stop, but nothing materialized. He said there are some design issues that need to be addressed with some type of strategy.

Mr. Stevens said other opportunities are available that he would like to further discuss.

The City Council suggested, if the price is right, considering the parcel north of First Street, parking spaces across the alley to the hardware store, and the lot north of the Walker House.

Mr. Stevens said if residential is introduced, the parking demand is different than for commercial and staff will look at that when the Downtown Specific Plan is brought back. He said based on tonight's comments, he will have the consultants complete the draft plan by mid December; schedule the last community workshop for mid-January; and present the Draft Plan and solicit comments at a study session, and prepare for the hearing in March so the project can be completed.

Mayor Morris said in this economy, the best solution is to upgrade the appearance of the Downtown and when the opportunity arises, other projects can be considered. Mr. Stevens replied that most cities do not like a straight form based code.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Morris adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m. The next City Council meeting is Tuesday, November 10, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ina Rios, CMC, City Clerk