



Minutes

**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
COUNCIL-STAFF RETREAT SESSION
Monday April 18, 2011 5:00-9:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers Conference Room
245 East Bonita Avenue**

PRESENT:

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

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
Senior Engineer Shari Garwick

Captain Don Slawson

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Morris called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

1. COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION

- a. Staff actions and focus regarding the preparation of the 2011-12 city budget.

City Manager Michaelis reported that staff anticipated significant financial impacts when preparing the current and future fiscal year budgets. He said with the relocation of a sales tax generating business and uncertainty of the Redevelopment Agencies, the budget was prepared to absorb the loss of sales tax and redevelopment funds. He added that general fund supports have been suspended until end of the fiscal year audit when surplus funds can be identified and staff can decide how much to transfer to those funds.

Mr. Michaelis responded to Council that if the Redevelopment Agency is eliminated, administrative support will be accommodated through the general fund as necessary, while staff designs a long term plan.

Mr. Michaelis said other cities are making adjustments to their retirement plans and staff plans to look at a two-tiered program for future city employees' retirement plan. He added that there might not be a significant cost savings in the near term.

Mr. Michaelis stated that staff is looking to see how to save costs on all contracts and noted that the major contract is for public safety.

Mr. Michaelis highlighted the chief revenue base and said all entitled funds will be collected and staff is looking to expand the tax base. He added that if the County is successful in imposing a parcel tax, the NPDES fee will help defray costs. He said it may be necessary to consider other ways to bring in sizeable amount of money and added that La Verne brings in \$3-\$4million in utility taxes.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman requested to know how many surrounding communities impose a utility tax.

Mr. Michaelis responded to specific questions by the City Council and said even if redevelopment is eliminated, San Dimas redevelopment funds are encumbered and there is no revenue available for the State's purpose. He said the draft budget will be presented on May 10, 2011.

b. Downtown – issues, discussion, possible direction.

It was suggested by Mayor Morris that the City Council discuss their vision for the downtown before the issues are discussed.

The City Council brainstormed ideas for the downtown such as a night life; more activities; patio seating; acquisition of the gas station adjacent to the Walker House; outdoor dining; relocation and acquisition of Water Company; and acquisition of other properties to create enough synergy to attract people to the downtown.

Assistant City Manager Stevens stated that synergy can be created with existing buildings and said on the north side of Bonita, there are six-or-seven parcels that are partially developed with the building taking up less than 50%. He suggested separating the building and developing the north side while retaining the existing building in front. Another choice is rebuilding or adding a component similar to the second floor residential units above the Hardware Store. He said synergy is created by getting people there whether or not they live there. He stated that the Grove Station would help if it is completed, and perhaps the Gold Line if convinced to stop in San Dimas.

Councilmember Bertone asked what is realistic to do.

The City Council discussed successful restaurants in other cities and asked what can San Dimas do to attract similar activities and younger crowds. Possible road blocks included the City Code limits what people can do in the downtown; there are no vacancies; and affordable housing attracts seniors and requires redevelopment dollars.

In response to Mayor Morris, Mr. Stevens replied that Paul Kirby is willing to invest in renovating his shop. He added that a seismic study was conducted on the Johnstone block, another viable property to generate activity, and offered suggested uses for the building; however, he also pointed out existing technical issues including lack of parking. In response to Councilmember Ebner, Mr. Stevens replied that housing set aside funds bought the air rights above the Hardware Store, which the owner used to expand the lower footprint of the building. Mr. Stevens suggested a similar strategy for the Johnstone Block.

City Manager Michaelis stated that there might be housing set-aside funds available to finance those projects mentioned. He said if there is interest in acquiring the gas station, Mr. Stevens had discussions with the owner.

Assistant City Manager Stevens said the owner does not necessarily want to sell his property, but is willing to exchange his property for another piece of property or a constructed building. He would like to enlist the assistance of Mr. Sorcinelli to work on a sketch and bring back preliminary figures to the City Council in approximately six weeks.

Mayor Morris reiterated that without redevelopment, there are no funds to acquire the gas station. He suggested conducting an analysis of costs for the proposed modifications of various downtown sites.

Mr. Stevens indicated he would contact Downtown Merchants to determine interest, have discussions, and bring back concepts to the City Council for authorization to proceed further.

DOWNTOWN ISSUES:

In response to Mayor Morris, Mr. Stevens replied that buildings in the downtown have such a small footprint and in many cases, the merchant does not generate sufficient rent funds for improvements.

Assistant City Manager of Community Development Stevens reviewed six downtown-related issues that included streetscape; façade program cost and financial feasibility; traffic flow particularly at Bonita/Cataract intersection; parking adequacy, opportunities and location; business improvement district improvements; and land use strategy and downtown boundaries.

Streetscape:

Director of Public Works Patel offered a Powerpoint presentation on downtown boardwalk details and pointed out the different materials used for the sidewalks, root infiltration and wood rot, termite damage, and damaged awning supports.

Mr. Stevens mentioned that different materials of different shapes and colors were also introduced between the wood sidewalks and if there is interest in the proposed program, staff will take a hard look at how to make those transitions.

Director Patel provided an overview of costs to continually maintain the boardwalks. He presented four alternatives for Council consideration:

Alternative 1 – maintain existing boardwalks and replace Liquid Amber trees for a total cost of \$85,000;

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Templeman, Director of Parks and Recreation Bruns replied that Municipal Arborist Day has a species in mind as a replacement for the Liquid Amber trees.

It was the consensus of the City Council to remove and replace the Liquid Amber trees. The City Council offered their criteria for replacement trees and directed staff to come back with a plan.

Director Patel offered the remaining three alternatives and highlighted factors to consider such as material lifespan. He said either of the alternatives can be phased and staff would coordinate with merchants/owners to minimize impacts.

Alternative 2 – replace boardwalks with Douglas Fir and replace Liquid Amber trees for a cost of \$335,000;

Alternative 3 – Replace boardwalks with new hardwood material and replace Liquid Amber trees for a cost of \$705,000;

Alternative 4 – replace boardwalks with 24-foot wide decorative concrete sidewalk and replace Liquid Amber trees for a cost of \$320,000

In response to Council, Assistant City Manager Stevens replied that canopy revisions would be considered as part of the streetscape project and coordinated with the business owner and all the proposed projects are contingent upon having available redevelopment funds.

In response to Mayor Morris, Director Patel said the Traffic Engineer does not support angle parking due to volume of traffic on Bonita Avenue.

It was the consensus of the City Council to eliminate the “frontier” theme and adopt an “historic” theme for the downtown corridor; replace the boardwalk with full-width concrete sidewalk with trees and additional landscaping to be determined when staff brings back plans.

Façades:

Assistant City Manager Stevens said he is working with businesses identified as priorities in the preliminary design and cost estimating phase for implementation of the Façade Program adopted by the City Council. He highlighted issues that affect the program parameters including triggering prevailing wage and loss of redevelopment funds.

Mr. Stevens responded to Council as it relates to loan and rebate programs, alternative choices of materials, canopies and awnings, and prevailing wage.

Traffic:

Assistant City Manager Stevens reported that two design options for the intersection of Bonita Avenue/Cataract prepared by KOA were evaluated by the City Council at their November 2009 Retreat. It is staff’s belief that the City Council preferred Option one – to eliminate landscaping and to narrow the street and lane transitions. He said \$1.4 million is available through the Call for Projects in 2014 for improvements to this intersection and staff will coordinate with the Gold Line Authority on the design.

In response to Council, Mr. Stevens replied that staff corresponded with the Gold Line Construction Authority supporting additional study of a flyover design as part of the environmental document. He added that freight would stay at grade.

Councilmember Bertone was not supportive of a flyover and suggested contacting Congressman Dreier for assistance in installing a bridge rather than a flyover at that intersection.

In response to Mayor Morris, Director Patel replied that a letter opposing the closure of Monte Vista was sent to the Public Utilities Commission.

Parking:

Assistant City Manager Stevens stated that as part of the Downtown Specific Plan work, an on-street and off-street study was conducted in 2008 by KOA to evaluate the existing inventory and parking demand in the downtown. Mr. Stevens said although there were some issues identified, very few places exceed 60% with current uses. It was concluded that there is never a point in time that parking demands exceed 90% and it was determined that there is adequate parking in the downtown.

Business Improvement Districts:

Assistant City Manager Stevens said a lot of requests come to staff for lighting, mural on the Rimpau buildings, landscaping, music and related requests for the downtown area. He said there has been discussion about setting up Business Improvement Districts as a means to off-set some costs to implement the additional improvements.

In response to Council, Mr. Stevens said the City gets approximately \$30 from the Parking District, which requires a vote of its members to approve an increase.

Mr. Stevens said another is the Business Owner Based District which allow assessments to be levied upon the property owners, and require reconfirmation after one year.

In response to Councilmember Bertone, Mr. Stevens said Business Based Districts require a 50% plus 1 majority vote and the City retains control of the public right-of-way.

Mr. Stevens said if there is consensus to work on this idea, he will discuss at the Downtown Bonita Corridor meetings.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman asked if the two Italian Cypress along the Johnstone building can be replanted elsewhere.

Mr. Stevens suggested paying an artist to paint murals on the side of the building.

City Entry Sign at Bonita Avenue/Arrow Highway:

Mr. Stevens said he will bring back the mapping issue for the Charrette, but he would like to reaffirm Council's direction for the city entry sign at Bonita Avenue/Arrow Highway. He said Council's preference was Option C – for a covered wagon. Mr. Stevens said the existing covered wagon is in bad state of repair and suggested substituting the wagon with a stagecoach. He provided cost estimates between \$29,000-\$40,000 for canvas covered wagons and stagecoaches.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman expressed concern with the canvas covered wagon being used for shelter and said the existing wagon was painted plaster.

Mayor Morris suggested using three silhouettes of a stagecoach for a three-dimensional look, which would be more cost effective.

Councilmember Bertone stated that the Council voted to adopt an "historic" theme and he suggested using a produce wagon in lieu of a covered wagon or stagecoach.

It was the consensus of the City Council to direct staff to look at costs for produce wagons with field boxes.

Gateway Monuments:

Assistant City Manager Stevens said the price for gateway monuments is \$14,000 and recently, he was approached by Glendora Sign Company willing to sell an aluminum frame monument available in inventory for less than cost. He said the sign would have to be built on a base.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Templeman, Mr. Stevens said the sign is not as architecturally interesting as the chosen model.

It was the consensus of the City Council to retain the chosen model. Staff will place wayfinding signs on a decorative post.

Mayor Morris suggested planting trees on the city owned parcel on Cataract, on the south side of Bonita Avenue. Director Patel said that site is planned for future parking needs.

Mayor Morris asked if there is a likelihood of opening a restaurant in the downtown.

Councilmember Ebner mentioned that downtown boundaries were not discussed and said he envisions a walkable community for the north side of Bonita Avenue in the long term.

- c. Update on the Golden Hills Road damage – planned city course of action.

Senior Engineer Garwick Public Works Director Patel reported on the maintenance issues with the narrow, winding County Road built prior to the City's incorporation and said due to major subsidence the road has been closed since December 2010. Staff has received several requests from residents and City of La Verne to reopen Golden Hills Road. Staff recommended an alternate vehicular access way to Golden Hills Road by:

- 1) Appropriating emergency funds to repair and remove debris from Golden Hills Road in the amount not to exceed \$50,000.
- 2) Authorizing closure of Golden Hills Road to non-emergency traffic until geotechnical review of the slope is complete and possibly upon implementation of the interim phase.
- 3) Allocating \$15,000 from the Emergency Fund for a geotechnical engineer to review the slope.
- 4) Authorizing staff to begin negotiations with Los Angeles County Supervisor's office to consider the realignment of Golden Hills Road to the south through the County's San Dimas Debris Placement site.

It was moved by Councilmember Bertone, seconded by Councilmember Badar, to authorize staff's recommendations as outlined above. The motion carried unanimously.

2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – Members of the audience. Anyone wishing to address the City Council on an item not on the agenda. No action or discussion shall be undertaken on any item not appearing on the posted agenda. Speakers may be subject to a time limit as may be determined by the chair.

- a) Councilmember Bertone suggested the following:
 - 1) Possibly have a community garden.
 - 2) Possibly have a lost and found animal registry.
 - 3) Train quiet zone for Metro.

- b) It was the consensus of the City Council to continue discussions of the agenda items after the next City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 26, 2011.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Morris adjourned the meeting at 9:14 p.m. to April 26, 2011 after the regular City Council meeting. The next meeting of the City Council is on Tuesday, April 26, 2011, 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Respectfully submitted,

Ina Rios, CMC, City Clerk