



CITY COUNCIL and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY MINUTES

Tuesday, September 23, 2003

7:00 p.m.

801 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Menlo Park City Council Chamber

7:00 p.m. REGULAR MEETING (Menlo Park City Council Chamber)

ROLL CALL - Jellins, Duboc, Kinney, Winkler, present. Council Member Collacchi absent.

STAFF PRESENT - David Boesch, City Manager; William McClure, City Attorney; Silvia Ponte, City Clerk. Various department heads and other City staff were present. Mayor Jellins introduced the City's new Business Development Manager, David Johnson.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

1. Presentation of the 2003 Environmental Quality Awards.

Dianne Dryer, Environmental Coordinator, introduced the Chair of the Environmental Quality Commission, Ms. Mary Kenney, who presented the 2003 awards to residents who have demonstrated outstanding efforts in respecting the role of the environment. Two awards were presented to:

- Eric Joustra and Paulien Strijland
- Trees for Menlo, Inc.

Mr. Joustra addressed the Council thanking the Council and the Environmental Quality Commission for the award. Mr. Joustra stated that being "resource efficient" is a very desirable concept that is spreading in this community, and he is very pleased that the Council is recognizing residents' efforts to be more conscientious about the environment.

Mr. John Arnold, President of Trees for Menlo, Inc. and also a recipient thanked the Council for their support and shared a replica of a plaque that will be placed at Menlo Center plaza acknowledging donors who have made monetary contributions towards beautifying El Camino Real.

B. REPORTS

1. Council Member Reports.

Council Member Kinney reported on a meeting of the BAWSCA that will take place in Belmont to review water items before the San Francisco Public Utility Commission. Mr. Kinney also reported on the upcoming fourth San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Agreement annual meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Duboc stated that she provided a tour of the Council Chambers to Brownie Troup 164 from Laurel. Ms. Duboc thanked the Police Department for providing a tour of their building as well.

Mayor Jellins invited all Council Members to the Council of Cities of San Mateo meeting on Friday, September 26, 2003. This meeting will include taking action on appointments to the newest JPA in this County, which is the Housing Endowment and Trust. Mayor Jellins asked for the support of the Council should he be nominated.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1 (*Limited to 30 minutes*)

Robert Cronin, representing the League of American Cyclists, informed the Council that he would be teaching a cycling course. Mr. Cronin welcomes all those interested to attend this course and he urges people to start using their bikes instead of their cars. The first session will be on 10/04/03 and 10/05/03.

D. CONSENT CALENDAR

Consent Agenda items are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion on these items unless members of the Council, staff or public request specific items to be removed for separate action.

1. Approval of the City Council Minutes for the Meeting of August 26, 2003.

M/S Winkler/Duboc motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Motion passes unanimously.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

1. City Council adoption of a Resolution for speed limit reduction on Middle Avenue from 30 to 25 miles per hour.

Jamal Rahimi, Transportation Manager, provided the staff report and shared a brief history of the process leading to the recommended change in speed limit. Mr. Rahimi informed the Council that the Bicycle Commission voted unanimously to support this recommendation.

Mayor Jellins asked about the public noticing process that occurred prior to the meeting, and Mr. Rahimi stated that notices had been sent to approximately 3,400 residents who reside between the area of the creek, El Camino Real, the City limit, and Santa Cruz Avenue. Mr. Rahimi summarized the emails and correspondence received as follows: 15 emails against the proposal, ten emails in favor, four phone calls against and four phone calls for this proposal.

Mayor Jellins asked if the City has complied with all legal requirements in order to make this change and if this is warranted under the California Vehicle Code (CVC). Mr. Rahimi stated that based on new regulations from the CVC that this decrease in speed is acceptable.

Council asked further questions of Mr. Rahimi pertaining to speed limit in other City streets such as Santa Cruz, Valparaiso, Olive, etc. Council also discussed supplementing the crosswalks with signs that announce "children at play". Mr. Rahimi stated that LED crosswalks and signage could be considered for use at the Little House and the Jack Lyle Park.

Mr. Bruce Goitia, Police Commander, explained how the speed change would be enforced, and answered Council questions in regards to the relationship between high speed and accidents.

Council Member Winkler would like to see a program of light-on-demand crosswalks implemented. Ms. Winkler believes this is an effective tool and should be followed up on especially for Middle Avenue.

Mayor Jellins Opened the Public Hearing

Bob Creamer stated that he does not support reducing the speed limit because there isn't a trigger that is forcing this action. Mr. Creamer believes the current speed limit is consistent with use, and shouldn't be changed.

Jim Harvey proposes that the current speed limit stay as it is because it is working for residents. Mr. Harvey believes that pedestrians and bicyclists are accommodated on Middle Avenue and there is no need to change the current infrastructure.

Mark Williams drew a comparison between the City of Menlo Park and Palo Alto and he believes there are no significant motives to change the speed limit so he believes it should stay the same.

Horace Nash stated that traffic is part of our community, and that 25 MPH is much safer than 30 MPH because accidents occur less with lower speeds. He also said that the right way to reduce speeding is to use traffic calming measures in residential areas.

Catherine McMillan shared her concerns about riding her bicycle on Middle Avenue. She does not agree that combining traffic with cycling is the right way to handle this matter. Ms. McMillan does not believe speeding is the issue, but instead the intersections are a real problem and dangerous. Ms. McMillan stated that more bike lanes and more crosswalks are needed. She wants better enforcement of current speed limits and traffic rules.

Mathew Calvert shared that he bicycles often and doesn't believe there is a real need to change the speed because the road is safe as is. Mr. Calvert stated that most of the pedestrians and bicycles on Middle Avenue are safe, however it is the number of cars and not the speed that is a danger.

Council Discussion

Mayor Jellins re-stated that substantial notice was given to the public, so they could express their views on this matter.

M/S Kinney/ to approve the staff recommendation and proceed with the changes in speed limit during a trial period of 6 months. Motion fails for lack of a second.

Mayor Jellins clarified that unless there was a motion and affirmative vote to implement the change, that the current speed limit would remain.

M/S Duboc/ to direct staff to create better signage on Middle Road and to indicate children will be crossing and investigate further measures of increasing safety such as LED crosswalks. Motion fails for lack of a second.

Mr. Boesch explained that the Council would need to decide on additional signage options because it might promote visual blight, but that staff could outline future studies for Council consideration at a later time.

Council consensus was to have staff look at creative ways to increase safety on Middle Avenue.

Mr. Boesch, City Manager, explained that he had to recuse and excuse himself from the Council Chambers due to owning property on Santa Cruz Avenue.

F. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Conceptual design alternatives for the Santa Cruz Avenue Streetscape Project.

Mr. Kent Seffens, Public Works Director provided a slide presentation covering the goals of the project. Subsequently, Mr. Keith Meyer, consultant engineer with Rajappan and Meyer Engineers shared the conceptual design for this project. Mr. Steffens stated that this is a different project from the short-term calming measures that were previously installed and then removed on Santa Cruz Avenue. He also stated that this consultant did not work on that particular project. A steering committee was formed to evaluate each option and two public workshops were held at Hillview School. Participants filled out surveys to express their preference, and the results from all these methods showed a wide range of opinions and consensus was not reached.

Mr. Meyer explained that there is approximately 1/3 of Santa Cruz Avenue that does not have sidewalks. LED crosswalks were also analyzed as part of the solution. The consultant stated that considerations were related to the trees, sidewalks, traffic lanes, parking, etc. Mr. Meyer stated that it was important to report the wide variety of opinions on both ends of the spectrum because these forced the consultant to create options for the Council to choose from. Some of the major problems that need addressing are the lack of continuous sidewalks all the way through Santa Cruz Avenue and the flooding issues in the wintertime.

Mr. Kent Steffens elaborated on the costs for each proposed enhancement. Mr. Steffens reiterated that staff's question was if Council wanted to start with design development on any of the options available. At this stage, Mr. Steffens said this is still in an exploratory phase because the public will have to give input.

Council asked questions of staff

Various questions were posed about the materials proposed under options two and three. Council also inquired about the cost of \$950,000 and what this amount would cover.

Public Comment

Jim Harvey was part of the Steering Committee and he is surprised that an asphalt sidewalk is suggested because he never heard this being discussed before at the meetings. Mr. Harvey asks that permanent concrete sidewalks be added to the existing configuration on both sides, instead of the suggested asphalt sidewalks.

Bob Creamer was a member of the Redesign Committee and he stated that the discussion of an asphalt sidewalk was not viewed as an option because it was very undesirable. Mr. Creamer urges the Council to not proceed with alternative 3B.

Horace Nash believes that the solution for Santa Cruz will take a long time and does not agree with the suggestions made by staff. Mr. Nash believes that we should focus on long-term remedies and not be driven by short-term motives that are bound by budgetary issues. Mr. Nash believes a unifying theme is necessary to the rest of Santa Cruz Avenue, just like it is used in other downtowns.

Charlie Bourne lives in Santa Cruz Avenue and has worked for many years in the Santa Cruz Committee and with the City. Mr. Bourne believes the options shared tonight are foreign to the community and have not been addressed in a public forum. He does not believe Council should take action on this matter.

Council Member Winkler asked questions of staff in regards to the recommendations and opinions originating from the committee.

M/S Duboc/Kinney motion to create a sidewalk on the South side of Santa Cruz Avenue and do only Segment G package 3A of the staff report (which covers Olive to Windsor), and direct staff to come back with cost estimates for the intersections of Elder, Olive and Orange, and consider cost estimates for LED crosswalks throughout, and return to Council with that information.

Friendly amendment by Mayor Jellins to have staff return during the priority setting session with a defined project for Olive and Elder, and include a Citywide traffic safety analysis for the intersections and street crossings provided in the staff report (Elder, Olive and Orange).

Motion carries unanimously.

Mayor Jellins thanked Mr. Meyer for his work and excellent presentation.

Mayor Jellins acknowledged the return of City Manager Boesch to the Council Chambers.

2. Community Development Agency: (1) adoption of CDA Resolution No. 269 appropriating \$60,000 from the Redevelopment Agency 2000 bond proceeds for design refinement and construction drawings and authorizing a Project Budget of \$60,000 for consultant and staff costs, (2) approval

of work plan for refining design and preparing construction drawings for public improvements in the 800 and 900 Blocks of Willow Road.

Mr. Don de la Pena, Housing and Redevelopment Director, presented the staff report explaining the area covered by this project and why staff is requesting additional funds. Mr. de la Pena stated that a meeting had taken place with the neighbors and there was some excitement about this project.

Council asked questions of Mr. de la Pena especially in regards to displacement of parking. Mr. de la Pena stated that he did not anticipate any changes in private use or direct impact. Council also asked about how much money had been spent so far and what the additional \$60,000 included. Discussion ensued about the current traffic pattern and how it is challenging because it forces continual backing up of cars. Mr. Rahimi, Transportation Manager, responded to questions about redirecting the traffic and how a new cut in the curb might work. Mr. Rahimi stated that staff could study this possibility. Council inquired about the involvement of private owners in this matter, and Mr. de la Pena stated that the current scenario reflects the unwillingness of the private owners to participate.

Public Comment

Craig Lawrence is a resident of the Willows and he supports the approach suggested by staff and in particular he thanked Mr. de la Pena's efforts and hard work with the community affected. Mr. Lawrence hopes the Council will see eye to eye with staff and support the recommendation.

John Donald is a Commissioner in the Housing Commission but he spoke as an individual. Mr. Donald supports this project and thanked Mr. de la Pena for his communication with all parties involved. Mr. Donald believes the Redevelopment Agency can afford this expenditure.

Council Discussion

M/S Winkler/Duboc to adopt the staff recommendation to move forward and consider the circulation pattern inside the commercial (public) areas in an attempt to simplify and improve traffic flow in the area. Motion to include continuing a dialogue with neighbors to beautify the area.

Friendly amendment by Mayor Pro Tem Duboc to encourage staff to continue working with commercial property owners to promote an interest in redeveloping their properties. The maker of the motion agreed with this friendly amendment.

Council Member Kinney can't support the motion because it seems that the City is spending too much money on an item that requires a simple solution, i.e. fixing a sidewalk and planting trees. Mr. de la Pena clarified that the 60K includes producing construction drawings and going through the bid process. Council Member Kinney appreciated the clarification, and based on that he will support the motion. Mayor Jellins stated that he would do some outreach to the property owners who should also be investing in improving the "look and feel" of the community.

Mayor Jellins called for the vote.

Motion carries unanimously.

3. Consideration of state and federal legislative items or items referred to in Written Communications or Information Items, including decisions to support or oppose any such legislative, written communication or information item.

None

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS - None

H. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Information regarding the status of the El Camino Real Adaptive Traffic Signal Coordination Project.

Mr. Jamal Rahimi, Transportation Manager, gave the staff report explaining that there were two components to this plan, one was the construction of hardware on the street and the second was the implementation of a software system that would control traffic flow on El Camino Real in a very responsive manner. Mr. Rahimi stated that both components were accomplished, and now staff is fine tuning the system. An independent auditor reviewed all the measures and requirements.

Public Comment

Stuart Soffer spoke as a business owner in Menlo Park with a business on El Camino Real, and he opposes removing the parking on El Camino Real because it provides a buffer for pedestrians as well as it allows for delivery personnel to park for a few minutes and access businesses. Mr. Soffer believes widening will have a detrimental effect on downtown merchants, and he presented signatures of neighboring businesses that are also concerned.

Bob Creamer speaking as a resident and President of the West Menlo Home Owners Association, stated that all businesses from the West side of El Camino Real were surveyed and 2/3 of them agreed with the reconfiguration. They suggested diagonal parking on Live Oak, which would increase 14 parking spots. Mr. Creamer stated that many of these merchants suggested a downtown parking structure, and he urges the Council to move forward on this project.

Sharon Delly (with time donated by Auex Delly) strongly opposes taking away any parking on El Camino Real between Live Oak and Valparaiso. Ms. Delly believes that the gain of a third lane is a short lived benefit, because the third lane will only attract more traffic from 101 through El Camino. Ms. Delly does not believe there will be any long-term traffic relief. She believes eliminating the parking will have a detrimental impact on all business owners and pedestrians. Ms. Delly said that from a traffic and safety point of view this is not a good solution.

Jim Harvey spoke about Attachment A to the staff report and he is skeptical of the 5% improvement and the software is only reporting results based on information inputted. Mr. Harvey does not agree with this approach, and he believes the staff should refine the software prediction models and get more public input, or spend petty cash for 6 months and then the real result will be visible.

Sean Mulcahy spoke about how perspectives are different when you just drive once a day on El Camino Real, versus working on El Camino Real and witnessing the drop offs and loading and unloading. Mr. Mulcahy disagrees with removing parking on El Camino Real and adding traffic to this thoroughfare.

Reg Rice asked about how the results were obtained and questions whether the comparison is fair because of the timing of when the data was collected. Mr. Rice spoke about testing this plan before making a final determination to see if this works. Mr. Rice believes that parking is not a problem because there is parking behind the stores that face El Camino Real.

Lester Kaplan drives on El Camino Real almost every day and hasn't noticed any congestion at all. Sometimes he notices a slight slow down during lunchtime or after work. Mr. Kaplan does not believe a lane should be added because this will cause problems for pedestrians.

Council asked questions of Transportation Manager, Mr. Rahimi in regards to timing of testing. Mr. Rahimi is confident that the results are reliable. Council Member Winkler believes there is a problem and that more information is needed. Ms. Winkler believes creative approaches are needed to address this matter such as extending the left turn lane. Mr. Rahimi will take some measurements and study this suggested approach. Ms. Winkler would like to see some additional solutions for travelers going north on El Camino Real and especially at the intersection of Ravenswood going north. Mayor Pro Tem Duboc believes that additional outreach is needed to the businesses and community in general, however Ms. Duboc would like to see this matter resolved.

Council Member Kinney believes that this is not the right approach; he does not want to push more cars through downtown Menlo Park. Mayor Jellins believes that reconfiguring the lanes on El Camino Real may be a unique opportunity to alter the flow of traffic downtown Menlo Park. He also stated that in various parts the needs might be different and so he supports Council Member Winkler's approach to continue working and studying the matter so that the changes benefit the community. Council Member Winkler believes that some short-term solutions should be studied and defined in the near future.

Mayor Jellins commented that any changes should be considered in context and that Council should first be clear about its vision for El Camino Real.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT #2 (Limited to 30 minutes)

None

J. ADJOURNMENT – 10:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Silvia M. Ponte, City Clerk

Approved at the City Council Meeting of October 14, 2003.