



# SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY MINUTES

Monday, February 12, 2007  
6:00 p.m.

701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025  
Menlo Park City Council Chambers

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## **6:00 p.m. SPECIAL MEETING (Menlo Park City Council Chambers)**

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL** - Fergusson, Cohen, Boyle, Cline, Robinson

**Staff present** - David Boesch, City Manager, William McClure, City Attorney, Silvia Vonderlinden, City Clerk, Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager and other City staff were in the audience.

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

Elias Blawie commented on February 13, 2007 agenda. He finds it too lengthy and he does not agree that contract matters with the Unions should be on Consent. He opined that items that are not routine should not be placed on the Consent Calendar.

### **B. REGULAR BUSINESS**

1. Consideration of and possible direction on a Council goal related to economic development and land use issues along the El Camino Real Corridor/Santa Cruz Avenue Area. (Staff Report #07-022)

City Manager Boesch introduced Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager. Mr. Murphy explained that the purpose of the Study Session is to have a discussion about the issues and to help frame the dialogue. Mr. Murphy asked Council to review the specific items such as the goal statement and how it should be accomplished.

Council Member Robinson said that he is interested in understanding where Menlo Park fits in the regional economic scene. He commented that a key question is what types of businesses we either want or do not want in Menlo Park. He further commented on the stakeholders in the process, noting landlords, business owners, residents, the city itself, commuters and possibly others. Mayor Fergusson drew Council's attention to the five bullet points in the staff report. She asked for preliminary thoughts. Council Member Cline said that generally he believes that economic development needs to be a separate issue.

The Mayor welcomed public comment.

Jeff Warmoth, with time donated by another speaker, addressed the current process and while he understands how new Councils want to make positive changes, he opined it is important to understand that sometimes the applications take years to move forward. He asked Council to consider the practicality and the fairness of having projects start over again every time there is a change in Council. He supports refining the process versus developing a new plan for El Camino Real.

Elias Blawie does not find the current goal statement readable and he suggests changing the word "create" to "adopt". He believes that economic development is an input to this process but it should not drive the process. He has concerns with the use of consultants and he thinks that the question of who on staff will have ownership of this goal should be posed. He opposes grandfathering of projects.

Michael Kandl, representing the owners of Stanford Inn, said he is an architect and is working towards a new mixed use project with underground parking at that location.

Paul Collacchi, former Mayor, referred to other neighboring cities that are approving various plans and implementing changes such as Burlingame and Redwood City. He referred to a consultant that was used in the past and produced a report that was useful regarding market forces and potential for development in the City. Mr. Collacchi believes in this plan and he strongly urges Council to build consensus, however he said this will take a long time. He believes that nine priorities are too many and he hopes that the Council can find another City Manager as good as the previous City Manager, Mr. Boesch. He believes this should be the first priority. He made comments about the Derry Project and suggested a particular approach for its approval.

Vincent Bressler supports the discussion and finds this an important issue. He opined that the plan will set the look and feel for El Camino Real. However, he is concerned that medical office could take over and the Council needs to take charge of that possibility and maybe impose a moratorium.

Manfred Kopish finds El Camino Real a dangerous route to bike on. He hopes Council keeps in mind people who walk and bike on El Camino Real. He suggested that the Santa Cruz model not be repeated.

Elizabeth Lasensky believes that there are two parts to this: a long term goal and a short term goal. She believes life in 20 years will be different and Council should focus on the future.

Michael Gullard agreed in part with the previous speaker and he believes that economic development should be a side issue and not a primary issue. He thinks grandchildren and the future should be part of the planning. He encourages the use of a task force or a group of consultants who are not afraid to be bold.

Patti Fry spoke about the need for a plan that improves what we have. She commented that there are plenty of visions and no plan that helps property owners and/or the city predict what will happen. She believes that what is needed is a specific plan that will make people work together and solidify what the city wants for its community. She asked if this project will take precedence over other efforts such as the commercial streamline. She believes the two could be complimentary and Council should consider that.

Robert Cronin introduced the concept of complete streets. He agrees with comments made by Mr. Kopish. He believes there is more to a street than concrete and vehicles. He read statements from certain web sites relating to the definition of complete streets. His recommendation is that the future of El Camino should include being a complete street.

Sam Perry supports a plan for El Camino that is representative of a joint effort from residents, businesses, drivers and cyclists who can work together. He hopes that Menlo Park will be tapping into the knowledge from neighboring cities such as Redwood City and Mountain View.

Reg Rice said that he has been crusading for years for reasonable and varied traffic flow to improve on El Camino. He spoke about various projects in neighboring cities, including Mountain View's and Redwood City's long term vision. He shared Redwood City's vision to place housing along El Camino Real. He said that these communities accept everybody's point of view and he is impressed with their process. He would like the same thing in Menlo Park and have all sides heard and represented. He supports a committee of fifteen people representing different interests.

Clark Kepler spoke about the community support he received for the continuation of Kepler's Books and he hopes that the value of independently owned merchants is considered. He is

concerned with an application from BevMo and he wished independently owned merchants would be stepping forward to use this vacant space.

Mort Frank, representing the American Institute of Architects, is excited about the discussion tonight and the comments from the public. He appreciates the dialogue that is occurring tonight. He offered to be part of a future charrette.

Matt Henry spoke about El Camino Real and Santa Cruz and he believes the latter should be a no car zone. He suggested that Santa Cruz should become a plaza with no cars from El Camino Real to Crane and instead allow foot traffic only. He also suggested a pedestrian bridge going over El Camino Real and connecting the two sides. He commented that a great downtown is a place where people want to be for no reason at all.

Council Member Boyle thanked the public present for getting involved. He agrees with many of the comments made, even the conflicting thoughts. He believes that Paul Collacchi hit the nail on the head when he said that it is important to know what the city wants and needs and what the market wants and needs and find where those intersect. He cautioned Council to design for the future but not over design and instead let things evolve and be open to different needs and wants as these progress. He commented that the compilation of past works is the vision for Menlo Park and the goal is to pull all these visions together. He does not want to throw away previous plans and visions but instead pull them all together. He supports moving forward with the commercial streamline, surveying residents, or holding a workshop to find consensus.

Mayor Pro Tem Cohen thanked all those present and he pointed out that the speaker cards do not have an area for email addresses. He commented that concerns have not changed much over the decades. His suggestion is to do something in less than five years and one way may be to focus solely on El Camino Real. He supports the idea of a taskforce or committee and referred to the speakers, suggesting they could come together. He further commented that this may not be possible because there is no structure to capture these members of the public. Council Member Robinson said that decoupling the items of vision for El Camino and Business Development may be a good approach; however he does not think we can talk about them separately.

Council Member Boyle stated support for understanding what people want and acting on it. He does not believe that a plan can be developed that will define things indefinitely. Mayor Fergusson would like to have a specific plan with a land economist as a member of the team. Council Member Robinson asked Mr. Murphy to explain what Redwood City is doing. Mr. Murphy provided examples of other cities where a vision plan was embarked upon prior to a General Plan update, citing Livermore as an example. He said that research could be done but staff would need direction since it requires significant staff time. Mr. Murphy said that the goal might be to have staff look at what is being done in neighboring communities.

Council Member Cline said that this is a big endeavor and if Council gets caught up in particular discussions it will not get done. He believes the General Plan should be behind this plan and it should be the general guide for this plan. He would rather have a vision for the community and then move on to sketching a model. He is concerned about the prioritization of this project and so he asked if it could be phased. He believes the General Plan should be the backdrop of this vision however he thinks M-2 needs to be revised. He is leaning towards adopting the General Plan as the guide for this endeavor. Mayor Fergusson does not think the General Plan is incentivizing the type of development that Council wants, and that sometimes developers have to guess what Council wants. She supports the commercial streamline efforts.

Council Member Boyle agrees that the commercial zoning update is important; however, he does not fully agree with the statement that the General Plan does not address development needs. He said that there are documents in place that have worked and provide guidelines.

He supports fixing the process we have and moving forward with the applications that are in the pipeline and he does not believe a moratorium is in order. Council Member Cline believes we need a plan because there aren't consistent guidelines. Council Member Cline asked for clarification on the cost outlined in the staff report. Mr. Boesch added that staff looked at recent studies and the cost estimate relating to El Camino and Santa Cruz Avenue ranges between \$500,000 and one million dollars. He added that staff's recommendation is a more community driven process with a lot more visuals and more possibilities for community engagement.

Council Member Cohen referred to pages C3 and C4 of the staff report. He referred to the past projects that took a lot of work and he believes that somewhere in this list is the raw material that could help the new vision. His thought is that among staff and long time residents there is a lot of accumulated knowledge that could be shared and gathered; out of it might come a direction for a new downtown center. Mayor Fergusson asked if the iterative model resonates with Mayor Pro Tem Cohen and he said that this process is good as a step but he is concerned about Brown Act issues and how to make this happen.

Council Member Robinson does not believe the Council is ready to make a decision because there is a need for more input. He said that there is a healthy disagreement and there may be a need to flush out the vision. He does not believe the Council should rely merely on the market to define its plan. He opined that there will be a lot of battles if there is a freeze on development and he is not advocating that step at this point but he has seen it happen in other communities.

Mayor Fergusson asked Council to go through the bullet points. Council Member Boyle said that he views this as a living document that will hopefully be updated. He favors having a plan but he does not want to slow down or place a moratorium on other projects, and he asked why for certain projects a study session would be required.

Council Member Cline supports making a quick modification on the goal to make it sharper. He does not want to prioritize this goal in a way that will omit other items. He believes this is urgent and so he supports making it a top priority but he is concerned about the other things that would get dropped. City Manager Boesch provided details about a possible approach which would include trying to move forward expeditiously recognizing that it is hard to keep the community involved during the summer time and so use the next four months for outreach. At that point staff would reassess the path. In the case of the commercial streamline update, he said this is an implementation measure and so looking at it would be important and seeing if it would match with the plan.

Council Member Cline supports this first phase if it does not preempt some of the other goals. He supports a Community Advisory Committee that is fair and with a proper process. Mayor Fergusson said Council would have something in June and then make a decision at that time if the Council will step into this plan. Council Member Robinson agrees with the spirit of the comments made by Council Member Cline. He asked staff about projects that have been previously adopted. City Manager Boesch said that when there is any project that is coming forward, it is important for Council to approach staff and inquire how consistent it is with the current plans and other policies. He said it is incumbent on staff to show Council if these projects match or don't with the current documents in place and what kind of feedback the community provides.

Council Member Boyle does not believe that adding more study sessions is needed. Instead, he believes we should allow the previous projects to move forward and when and if the plan changes, then there is a new process. He believes that adding the need for a study session might detail projects. He asked for clarification that in June, Council would have a plan for a plan. Staff responded that in June Council would have a framework for what the plan would be. Council asked why staff is recommending an RFP (request for proposal) free process.

Mr. Boesch said that the firm that is being suggested is well known and one of this firms' strong suits is community involvement. Mr. Murphy said that the timeline is an overarching issue.

Council Member Cline believes that an RFP is the correct way to go. Council Member Robinson is concerned about putting too many constraints on this body. He believes this body should be reconvened and pick this back up in August. Mayor Fergusson believes that in terms of the goal statement there is a need to stay focused on a specific outcome. She believes that a Specific Plan becomes the guiding document for development. She is willing to do this on a three to four month phase to get this started and maybe wait on the citizens' task force. She would like to use some of the polling techniques that have been used in other communities to get instant feedback. She would like to get a lot of data at the front end of the process. In terms of a moratorium, she believes that things should be moving forward and it is not fair to pull the rug from under current projects. She agrees with Council Member Cline on this matter. On the issue of medical office she wants to know how much medical office there is already, the newness of the buildings and she would like to have more data.

Mayor Fergusson said that the advisory committee could be used to look at different options. She believes that during the first three months the citizens' task force would not need to be convened but there would be community outreach. Council Member Boyle believes that the spirit of the law is that if meetings are taking place these meetings should be open and public. Mayor Fergusson clarified that she envisions broad community engagement such as the Your City/Your Decision. City Attorney McClure asked if the Council is going to have an RFP process or not. Mayor Pro Tem Cohen said he is not sure how to reconcile the two issues. Mr. Murphy asked for clarification and confirmation that in this case the advisory committee would be formed after the community outreach efforts. Mayor Fergusson confirmed.

Various Council Members shared their views on the RFP process and the consultant. Mayor Pro Tem Cohen said that while he was outspoken in opposing sole-sourcing he also understands the time constraint and so he is willing to withdraw his opposition. Council Member Boyle does not object going with someone who did not go through an RFP but he would like to know if this firm has a reputation for having a preferred style. In this case, he wants staff to pick one as neutral and unbiased as possible. Mayor Pro Tem Cohen asked that Council Member Cline and staff look at a letter that he has regarding allegations about the suggested firm. Council Member Robinson asked staff about a previous RFP and staff explained the methodology and the criteria used. Council Member Robinson agrees with going with this consultant. Council Member Cline believes that an RFP will drive down cost.

*Council Member Robinson left the Council Chambers.*

Council Member Cline said he has a tough time proceeding without an RFP.

Mayor Pro Tem Cohen asked that Council Member Cline and staff discuss the consultant and the previous RFP's and if that information satisfies Council Member Cline then he would be satisfied. City Manager Boesch said that this contract will require Council approval and so staff is available to discuss the matter with Council Member Cline and will provide information on the matter when it comes back. **Council agreed on continuing the historical pattern for study sessions, noting that one option if there was an influx of applications, could include a weekly memo listing the applications with a brief description of each one. Council could then decide to schedule a particular application for a future study session.** Mayor Pro Tem Cohen asked if the public could have access to this information and staff said it could work on having a topic on the website for the public to subscribe to.

Council Member Boyle shared concerns about placing the CZOU (commercial zoning ordinance update) matter on the back burner and then not being ready to move forward in June. He believes the CZOU has taken so much effort from the community and he hates to see it get derailed, conceivably for a long period of time. Mayor Fergusson said that with the

matter of the CZOU it gets down to environmental review because there was a piece that was easy to implement and a piece that was going to require environmental review and so, in her opinion, there is a benefit to having a specific plan in place. Mr. Murphy provided an update on the CZOU next steps, recommending that this item wait until June.

Council Member Boyle stated that he has heard from residents that this is a good process and he believes Council is taking something concrete that is the CZOU and going in search of another plan. Mayor Fergusson shared a timeline that anticipates beginning environmental review sometime in the near future and having a more concrete specific plan in 2008. Council Member Cline agreed with waiting until June to have the CZOU addressed with this plan.


**C. PUBLIC COMMENT #2**

Patrick Brandin said he has noticed that there is an application from a large discount liquor store to locate on Santa Cruz. He believes that this would be allowing for inappropriate uses in that area. He thinks the Council needs to evaluate any type of discounted liquor store.

Morris Brown, representing Menlo Park Tomorrow, asked Council why it wants a plan if it might continue issuing zoning ordinance amendments. He believes that any of the plans that need General Plan amendments should be discouraged by staff and by the Council.

**D. ADJOURNMENT** - the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Silvia M. Vonderlinden, Certified Municipal Clerk

Approved at the Council Meeting of March 20, 2007.

**RECEIVED**

**AUG 14 2007**

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
CITY OF MENLO PARK