



MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

April 28, 2003

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

801 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Bims, Fergusson, Fry (Chair), Halleck (Vice-Chair - arrived at approximately 7:45 p.m.), Pagee, Sinnott, Soffer

INTRODUCTION OF STAFF – Heineck, Murphy, Smith

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

B. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. **Consideration of the draft transcripts of the October 7, 2002 Planning Commission meeting.**

Commission Action: M/S Fergusson/Pagee to approve the transcripts of the October 7, 2003 Planning Commission meeting with the following modifications

- Page 4, Line 20 – Insert “Ms. Heineck:” at the beginning of the line
- Page 5, Line 8 and throughout – Replace “Mauica” with “Mavica”
- Page 25, Line 12 – Replace “scare” with “stair”
- Page 86, Line 12 – Replace “prosperous” with “preposterous”
- Page 103, Line 23 – Replace “plant” with “project”
- Page 104, Line 9 – Insert the word “letters” between the words “received” and “of”
- Page 133, Line 8 and throughout – Replace “Slough” with “Sloo”
- Page 133, Line 8 – Replace “Elena” with “Alaina”
- Page 138, Line 19 – Replace “levy” with “levee”

Motion carried, 5-0-1, with Commissioner Sinnott abstaining and Commissioner Halleck not yet in attendance.

C. REGULAR BUSINESS

2. **Sign Review/Stephen Coulthard/611 Santa Cruz Avenue:** Request for sign approval for a cabinet sign containing the color orange.

Staff Comment: Planner Smith said that the applicant was requesting approval of one new

cabinet sign to include the use of an orange background color at 611 Santa Cruz Avenue for the Johnson Lane frontage of the building. As the use of bright colors is a discouraged sign element in the Design Guidelines for Signs, the request required Planning Commission review of a sign permit.

Public Comment: Mr. Stephen Coulthard, Amcoe Sign Co., said that Mr. Cashin, the business owner, felt it was very important to keep the corporate identity of his business by using the same sign on all of his businesses. The sign as proposed is the same as used at his businesses in 16 other cities. Mr. Coulthard said that a different sign had been approved about a year ago, but was not acted upon, because Mr. Cashin felt strongly that he wanted to use the orange color consistent with the signs at the other business locations rather than the gold color suggested by staff.

Commissioner Soffer said that he would recuse himself, as his office was located in the vicinity of the subject property.

Chair Fry confirmed with the applicant that the sign would be located on the Johnson Lane side; the sign for "Hustons" would be removed and replaced with the proposed sign, which would be smaller than the existing "Huston's" sign; and the raised lettering signage on the Santa Cruz Avenue side of the building would remain.

Commission Action: M/S Fergusson/Pagee to close the item for comment.

Motion carried, 5-0, with Commissioner Soffer recused and Commissioner Halleck not yet in attendance.

The Commission's discussion was brief and in agreement that the Commissioners supported the proposed signage and staff's decision to bring the signage to the Commission for their review.

Commission Action: M/S Fry/Sinnott to approve as recommended in the staff report.

1. Make a finding that the project is categorically exempt under Class 3 of the current State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Make a finding that the board sign above the front entrance is appropriate and compatible with the downtown, and is consistent with the Design Guidelines for Signs.
3. Approve the board sign above the front entrance subject to the following conditions:
 - a. Development of the project shall be substantially in conformance with the plans prepared by Amcoe Sign Co., consisting of one plan sheet received by the Planning Division on March 27, 2003, and approved by the Planning Commission on April 28, 2003.
 - b. Prior to installation of the sign, the applicant shall submit a complete application for any required building permits for the cabinet sign. This building permit application shall be submitted for the review and approval of the Building Division.

Motion carried, 5-0, with Commissioner Soffer recused and Commissioner Halleck not yet in attendance.

3. **Sign Review/Carlos and Jesus Garcia/1933 Menalto Avenue:** Request for sign approval for the retention of a painted fascia sign containing the color red.

Chair Fry stated that Commissioner Fergusson and Planner Murphy were recusing themselves as they both own property within 500-feet of the subject property.

Staff Comment: Planner Smith reported that the applicant was requesting approval of an existing fascia sign at 1933 Menalto Avenue. Since the sign includes the use of red lettering, which is listed as a discouraged sign element in the Design Guidelines for Signs, the proposal requires Planning Commission review of a sign permit. He also noted that there was a correction to the staff report on page two in the second paragraph, which stated "The grocery store is one of four tenants on the property." He said that in fact the grocery store is on an independent parcel and therefore is allowed 100-feet of signage. He said that staff had received a letter of support from a neighbor indicating support of the fascia sign as well as two other signs. He noted that the two other signs were not part of the Commission's sign review.

Commissioner Halleck arrived at the meeting.

Public Hearing: Laure Laprais, Menlo Park, indicated that she lived in the neighborhood and thought that the meeting was to be on other signage as well. She indicated her support of the proposed signage and indicated that she had also liked the signage in the window that had been removed. She said the removal of the sign from the window exposed a cabinet situated against the window that was unattractive.

Bess Greenfield, Menlo Park, said that like Ms. Laprais she thought the meeting was about the other signage as well as other issues regarding the property. She said that she felt the business owners have been very cooperative with the neighbors in a number of instances and that she supports the signage.

Commission Action: M/S Soffer/Halleck to close the public hearing.

Motion carried, 6-0, with Commissioner Fergusson recused.

Commissioner Halleck moved and Commissioner Sinnott seconded to approve as recommended in the staff report.

Commissioner Bims questioned condition "3.c" as recommended and whether the neon sign would need to come back before the Commission for approval. Director Heineck said that the Commission could direct staff to administratively approve that sign permit application with some direction as to the use of red and neon. Chair Fry asked about the size of the neon sign. Director Heineck said that the ordinance regulates the size of signs and noted that the neighbors had expressed support for that sign.

Commissioner Halleck, the maker of the motion, said that a modification to condition "3.c" to allow staff to review and approve administratively the neon sign was acceptable to him and Commissioner Sinnott, the maker of the second, agreed.

Commission Action: M/S Halleck/Sinnott to approve as recommended in the staff report with a modification to condition "3.c" as indicated.

1. Make a finding that the project is categorically exempt under Class 3 of the current State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Make a finding that the sign on the fascia of the building is consistent with the Design Guidelines for Signs.
3. Approve the fascia sign subject to the following conditions:
 - a. Development of the project shall be substantially in conformance with the plans prepared by All Brite Signs, consisting of two plan sheets received by the Planning Division on January 16, 2003, and approved by the Planning Commission on April 28, 2003.
 - b. The sign approval is limited to the fascia sign as shown on the submitted plans. Window signs are not included as part of this approval.
 - c. Within 30 days of the Planning Commission approval of this item, the applicant shall either remove the neon "Open" sign from the storefront window or submit an application for approval of the neon sign. If the applicant chooses to submit a sign application for the existing neon or cabinet signs, or for the restoration of the painted window signs that contained the color red, then this application can be reviewed and approved at an administrative level by the Planning Division.

Motion carried, 6-0, with Commissioner Fergusson recused.

D. COMMISSION BUSINESS

1. Discussion of upcoming Joint Study Session with the City Council scheduled for May 6, 2003, including status updates on advance planning projects such as the Housing Element and General Plan Update, coordination with other City commissions, exploring ways of being more proactive, and learning about training opportunities for Commissioners.

Chair Fry opened the discussion noting that there would be a Joint Study Session of the City Council and Planning Commission on May 6, 2003 and that the tentative agenda indicated the topic would be "The Planning Commission – Its Roles, Communication and Responsibilities." She said that the meeting would also include status updates on advance planning projects such as the Housing Element and General Plan Update, coordination with other City commissions, exploring ways of being more proactive, and learning about training opportunities for Commissioners. She asked if the Commissioners had other matters they would like to discuss.

Commissioner Fergusson said that she would like general discussion on the Sign Ordinance under the topic "...ways of being more proactive." Commissioner Bims said that he would like discussion of the Residential Zoning Ordinance and how that might be made more streamlined.

The Commission discussed the written reports of the Planning Commission meetings that Chair Fry has been preparing and forwarding to the City Council. In general, there was appreciation for those communications. There was concern expressed as to whether that work was onerous on the Chair and whether a future Chair would be able to prepare reports as well-written as Chair Fry's, if that was a task that the Chair would want, or if the role should be shared by different Commissioners. Commissioner Sinnott noted that the reports were well written but that they had not always represented her dissenting opinions. She noted that the City Council sees the minutes of the meetings. Director Heineck indicated that the Council receives the factual summary of the meetings. In reference to Commissioner Sinnott's observation that the Planning Commission was intended to work separately from the Council, Commissioner Halleck noted that the Council had indicated that they wanted to open up communication with the City commissions and work in concert. Commissioner Soffer said that he had previously suggested when the Planning Commission was reviewing the Allied Arts proposal that there be Joint Study Sessions with the Council to provide them with the thought process and principles by which the Commission came to its decision. Similarly, he thought Joint Study Sessions with the Council was a viable idea for major issues that come to the Commission and the Commission's decisions that are appealed to the Council.

Chair Fry noted that two of the Commissioners had attended the Council meeting that addressed Planning Commission roles. It seemed that the Council did not have a substantial awareness of the issues the Planning Commission struggles with in its review and the process through which it reaches a decision on those tough issues. She said that the factual summary of the meetings would not provide the Council with the Commission's thought process and principles by which it reached a decision. She said that it was important for the Council to have that information as the Council sets policy and could see areas that need a policy set or policy changed.

Director Heineck said that when an item is appealed or needs to go to the City Council, the Council reviews the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting that addressed that item. Commissioner Soffer recommended that the Council be made aware of issues that the Planning Commission faces. Planner Murphy indicated that in those situations, the Council members receive an electronic copy of the minutes and the City Clerk's office receives a hard copy of the minutes.

Commissioner Pagee noted that the Commission worked many hours on the Allied Arts proposal, yet when the proposal came before the City Council, the review covered much of the ground already covered by the Commission, which she thought was a waste of valuable information. She suggested that the Commissioners could provide a concise report that summarized the Commission's review and reasoning. Chair Fry said the Commission might recommend Joint Study Sessions with the Council on the larger issues. Commissioner Fergusson noted that she had met with each of the Council members to review the issues related to the Allied Arts proposal. Chair Fry noted that the concept of a construction plan for the Allied Arts proposal as used by the Commission seemed to get lost as the proposal went to the Council. Commissioner Halleck said that perhaps continuing with the report as had been made recently by the Chair to the Council was the best way to communicate; he suggested that the report be reviewed for comment by each Commissioner before it was sent to the Council. Director Heineck said that would conflict with the Brown Act. Commissioner Fergusson said that it was important that the Council also be apprised of dissenting opinions of the Commissioners. Chair Fry expressed concern that such a level of detail would mean the person

preparing the report would have much more to do. She asked how the strength of the dissenting votes would be determined when the Commission's vote was not unanimous. Commissioner Fergusson suggested that the Chair might ask a Commissioner who votes in dissent for the reason for that vote. Chair Fry indicated that three of the Council members had indicated that the reports were helpful. She suggested that the Commission suggest the summary reports of the Commission meetings and joint study sessions and ask the Council at the Joint Study Session how they would want communication to occur.

Commissioner Fergusson said that the Commissioners put in long volunteer hours with a common goal to make Menlo Park the best place it can be. She said the Commission sees the process in action and can identify patterns and assess things that are not helping the Commission in improving the City process.

Commissioner Sinnott said that she had heard about changes to the residential development review and that some types of applications might not come before the Commission. Director Heineck said that the draft Residential Zoning Ordinance Amendment would come to the Planning Commission for review at its May 19, 2003 meeting. Commissioner Sinnott asked about sign review and how to get the Council to look at changing the process. Chair Fry said that Commissioners Fergusson and Sinnott had both identified areas that needed review and suggested that with the slowdown in projects that the Commission might spend time reviewing such areas and making recommendations to the City Council for change.

Director Heineck said that the Commission could identify areas to be reviewed for change by the City Council. She said that traditionally those matters have been relayed to the City Council annually; the Council then developed its priorities list. She noted that a comprehensive update to the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance have been on that list for several years, but was not high enough on the priority list to be considered. She said that in the past year, the Council had expressed an interest in a comprehensive update of the General Plan, either simultaneously with, or immediately followed by, a comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance. She said that those two items are still on the table and would be looked at through the budgeting process in light of budget restrictions. She said that there are also other priority projects the Council wants to address and those include the Residential Zoning Ordinance Amendment that would come before the Planning Commission on May 19 and June 2, 2003. She said that proposal could substantially change what the Planning Commission does as it could reduce the number of projects that come before the Commission. She said that another priority project is a Business Development Program and staff is aware that the Council is interested in looking at specific changes to the Zoning Ordinance related to commercial development, which also might result in the elimination of some kinds of projects or permits the Planning Commission reviews. Chair Fry asked whether the annual priority listing by the Council had occurred. Director Heineck said that the Council chose to do a broader goal setting rather than the traditional priority list. She said that priority projects are dependent upon the budget and would be considered by the Council at its May 13, 2003 meeting on the budget.

Chair Fry said that there are some things that the Planning Commission looks at such as true divided lights and simulated divided lights that could be included in the Ordinance so that the applicant knows upfront about such details. Director Heineck said that the appropriate time for such issues to be raised would be when the Commission reviews changes to the Residential Zoning Ordinance. She said that there would be proposed changes to development standards for single-family residences and that the Commission might review and make recommendations.

Discussion ensued as to whether the Commissioners should begin developing suggested changes to the existing residential zoning regulations or respond to the proposed amendment as drafted by direction of the City Council.

Chair Fry noted the Council's goal to identify ways for the City to save and make money for the City and said she was uncomfortable that the Commission would be restricted to giving only annual input to the Council. She said that the Commission might come up with a great idea in July and to wait a year for the Council to look at it seemed wasteful. Director Heineck said the Council does review the priority list regularly as new things come before it. She suggested that the Commission discuss with the Council at the Joint Study Session how best to relay the Commission's ideas and suggestions to the Council.

Commissioner Sinnott confirmed that the Commissioners might e-mail Council members with concerns or issues and not violate the Brown Act. It was discussed that the individual Council members could respond to such e-mails, but could not discuss the matter between themselves unless it was an agenda item.

Commissioner Halleck said that he thought that the Commissioners should be prepared to discuss the proposed residential zoning ordinance amendment on May 19, 2003, but he wanted to see the proposed ordinance first before making suggestions. He said that if needed he hoped additional meetings would be scheduled for the Commission to review the proposed residential zoning ordinance amendment.

Chair Fry suggested that the Commission might want to consider listing specific concerns and recommendations as they came up through review of individual projects at each meeting under Commission Business. Commissioner Fergusson suggested that the discussion of these items be done quarterly. Commissioners Halleck and Sinnott indicated that such points were best made during the Commission's review of individual projects. Director Heineck said that identifying key issues during consideration of specific items would be captured in the record. She cautioned that the Commission's discussion of the items would be limited unless the matter was agenda item. Chair Fry said that at the end of the meeting the Commissioners could just flag issues, but not discuss the issues. Director Heineck said that the Commission could then direct that those issues be considered at a future meeting.

Chair Fry noted that the Commission had discussed communications and being proactive, and asked if there were additional comments. Commissioner Fergusson said that it would be proactive to review the sign ordinance and make some recommendation to the City Council. She noted that she thought the ordinance was flawed in that businesses could comply with the ordinance by not having a sign. Commissioner Soffer pointed out that there are reasons why a business might not have a sign or would have signs that conformed to other standards than the City's ordinance, noting the Town & Country campus. Commissioner Fergusson suggested that this item might be agenda item for a future meeting for discussion. Director Heineck suggested that both the sign ordinance and design guidelines be included for discussion.

Commissioner Pagee said that one of the speakers tonight had indicated a desire that the view through a store window be made more attractive and asked whether that was required by the sign ordinance. Director Heineck said that there was nothing in the sign ordinance regarding that, but the Commission might address that issue through its use permit or other discretionary

review. Commissioner Pagee said that issue had not been a red flag previously and asked how it could become a flagged issue. Director Heineck said that certain issues become flagged through the actions of the Commission in identifying certain conditions to use permit approval. She recommended that legal counsel be present for any sign ordinance and design guidelines discussions as business owners have certain legal rights in that regard. Commissioner Pagee asked if there was anything in the ordinance to require businesses to have visibility through the front of their businesses for security reasons. Director Heineck said that there was not.

In response to a question from Commissioner Sinnott, Director Heineck said that about 12 years prior there had been a sign committee. Eventually, the committee was abandoned in order to streamline sign review. Commissioner Soffer said that a former Planning Commissioner, Jose Fernandez, did the work that led to the current Design Guidelines.

Commissioner Fergusson asked what the focus of the Environmental Quality Commission, formerly the Beautification Commission, was. Director Heineck said that the Environmental Quality Commission focuses on environmental issues such as the creek and tree preservation. She said that the Environmental Quality Commission does not do environmental review for CEQA. She said the Commission continues to make awards annually for beautification.

Discussion ensued as to which Commissions the Planning Commission shared focus and responsibilities. It was determined that those Commissions were the Environmental Quality, Housing, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation Commissions. It was decided that Chair Fry would contact the Chairs of those Commissions to determine if they would like to agendize a discussion of how the Planning Commission might work more effectively with them and if so, to designate a Planning Commission representative to attend that meeting or do a joint study session.

Commissioner Sinnott asked about the Council's intention regarding the General Plan. Director Heineck said that the Council had prioritized that project and would consider it during the budget discussions as the work would require substantial staff resources and fees for consultants. She said that the Housing Element was moving forward, although that might change with the budget discussions. She said that the Council might determine that the Housing Element update be combined with the General Plan update or that the Housing Element update move forward separately because of the amount of work already done. She said that there is preliminary work on the General Plan that staff might begin such as land use data collection and analysis possibly in the second half of the fiscal year. She said that the best-case scenario would be two and a half years for the General Plan update and the Planning Commission would have an important role in that work. Commissioner Sinnott recalled that when the previous General Plan update was done, the Parks and Recreation and Bicycle Commissions had become upset with the Planning Commission's recommendations as some conflicted with their goals. Director Heineck said that the General Plan update would require input from various Commissions. She said that for larger projects, staff identifies those Commissions that need to provide input and also may schedule a joint study session. She said that there were pros and cons to joint study sessions in that it was good to get a number of people together for their views and ideas, but sometimes the sheer number of the participants made discussion on a single issue difficult.

Chair Fry asked about the Housing Element update. Director Heineck said that the project was moving forward on a timeline and that staff was working on completing the draft Environmental Impact Review document and the Element itself. She said that it was anticipated those two

documents would come before the Planning Commission in mid- or late-summer. She noted that the budget discussions might impact that project.

Chair Fry noted that the League of Women Voters and the Housing Leadership Council for San Mateo would hold a two hour Housing Element workshop on May 3, 2003 that might be beneficial for education purposes.

Commissioner Fergusson asked about giving the Commission a report on the Belle Haven Development meeting that Commissioner Bims and she attended concerning the selection of a developer for a project to build residential units and a park. Director Heineck said that the decision to select the developer was on the next evening's City Council agenda. She said upon that selection there would be a wide public outreach to ascertain the details of what the neighborhoods wanted in that development. It was suggested that the report occur after the Council's selection of the developer. Discussion ensued about when that report might be placed on the agenda as the Commission's agenda was full through September. Director Heineck indicated that staff would look at opportunities to include the report on an agenda as soon as was possible.

Chair Fry raised a concern regarding how best to get a response from the Council. She said that at the unanimous request of the Commission, she had written a letter to the Council requesting that the Commission's large nameplates be returned for use. She also asked a couple of individual Council members the same thing and had not received any response. She suggested that the Commission discuss this with the City Council at the Joint Study Session to convey to the Council the need for the Commissioners to be identifiable for the public process and to ask how generally to get Council's response on future communications.

Commissioner Fergusson raised a concern that Planning staff seemed to paint the Planning Commission as draconian and related a conversation she had with a staff person when she visited the Planning Division regarding her property. Director Heineck said that the planning staff respects the work of the Planning Commission, does its best to relay the position of the Commission to the public on development matters and that it would be highly unusual for any of the planners to speak in such a manner. Commissioner Sinnott said that realistically there was a big difference between the administrative and discretionary review processes in terms of money and time. Commissioner Fergusson asked about the cost and time involved in a use permit. Director Heineck said that it depends upon the thoroughness of the application. She said that the current application fee is \$1,250 for use permit review. She said that in March 2003, the Council approved a new Master Fee Schedule. She said that all applications for development would be at full cost recovery for staff's time with an initial deposit of \$850. She said that developing the plans and speaking with neighbors takes about two months and the public noticing process for single-family development takes about six to eight weeks. She estimated that it takes five to six months for a design to get on the Planning Commission's calendar.

Chair Fry said that the Commission's input to the Council regarding a fee change would have been beneficial. She said that the Commission sees projects for which the plans are not well done and recognizes that the applicants have financial constraints. She noted that those who can least afford it are usually required to submit revised plans. Commissioner Soffer suggested that the drawings were the responsibility of staff's quality control process. Director Heineck said that staff routinely works with applicants to prepare appropriate plans, but that staff's

recommendations are not always followed by applicants. She noted that on occasion, it takes action by the Commission before applicants are willing to prepare revised plans.

Chair Fry said that at the Council's meeting on the roles and responsibilities of the Planning Commission, some Council members said that they did not know the current Commissioners and there was some discussion of asking Commissioners to reapply. She suggested that the Commissioners might want to introduce themselves at the Joint Study Session with the Council and provide some background information.

The Commissioners decided to make introductory remarks.

Commissioner Halleck said that he works as a landscape architect and environmental specialist for the City of San Jose. He said that he ran for the City Council, has served on the Environmental Quality Commission, has worked with various creek groups, and chose to apply for the Planning Commission to be more involved with CEQA.

Commissioner Fergusson said that she is a Civil Engineer and works as an independent consultant and her specialty is computer mapping for utilities. She received her B.S. in Land Use Planning and a Master's in Infrastructure Management Planning from Stanford University. She has a PhD in Civil Engineering. She said that she was passionate about creek and neighborhood issues and that is what led her to apply for the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Soffer said that his field is Computer Science and that he consults as a technology expert in intellectual property litigation. He has a home in Linfield Oaks and an office in downtown Menlo Park. He said that petitioning for a stop sign in his neighborhood and interest in neighborhood issues got him involved and led him to apply for the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Sinnott said that she worked downtown and had circulated a petition for two years regarding overflow parking in that area. After two years of petitioning, she was asked to apply for the Planning Commission. She had previously served for eight years and then took five years off.

Commissioner Bims said that he moved to Menlo Park a few years ago. He said that he has been in the area for 18 years since he graduated from Stanford University. He has a PhD in wireless communications, has worked with a number of wireless communication start-ups and owns his own business with 30 employees. He said he became involved through his wife who took him to local neighborhood meetings in the Belle Haven area. He said that his interest was to improve that neighborhood. He said that serving on the Planning Commission has given him a broader view of the Menlo Park community and its diversity.

Commissioner Pagee said that she began as an architect but did not like the 24/7 hours. She returned to school for math and engineering. She is a Mechanical Engineer. She began her career designing heating and air conditioning systems, and now is a project manager on new project development.

Chair Fry noted that she was a former Midwesterner and had lived in Chicago, but was happy to be in California. She is a graduate of Stanford University where she received her BS and MBA degrees. She said that she had worked for IBM in sales and consulting management roles for

over 20 years during which time she worked with many companies including a number of dot coms as they went up and down the boom-bust roller coaster. However, her clients mostly were in the financial services, health and life sciences industries.

Chair Fry asked staff to introduce themselves.

Director Heineck said that she grew up in southern California and received a B.A. in Behavioral Sciences, followed by a teaching credential and then pursuit of a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning. She began her planning career in Los Angeles County followed by three years in a small rural community. Later, she moved to the Bay Area and was hired about 15 years ago by Menlo Park as an Associate Planner. She is now the Community Development Director.

Justin Murphy said that he was from Rhode Island. He came to California to attend Stanford and received a degree in 1992 in Urban Studies. He interned with many different agencies, including the City of San Jose, Santa Clara County, and the cities of Albany, Palo Alto and Alameda. He worked as an Associate Planner for the City of San Leandro for three years. He applied to the City of Menlo Park and was hired in 1996. During his tenure with the City, he took a year's leave of absence to get his Master's in Public Administration and returned to Menlo Park Planning.

Commissioner Fergusson suggested that the Commission might want to develop a relationship with the East Palo Alto Planning Commission as the two entities share boundaries. She said that there might be other communities that they might want to contact. She asked how to develop a relationship the relationship. Director Heineck suggested that the Commission discuss this with the Council at its Joint Study Session.

Chair Fry said that she had met with the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem as invited in her capacity as Chair to discuss the Commission's roles and responsibilities. She said that the Council asked how to involve the Commission more in policy and planning processes and whether the Commission had ideas on how to meet the budget challenge and support Council priorities. They also asked about the Commission's goals. Chair Fry noted that because the Commission's meeting times are for projects, the Commission does not have the time available that the other Commissions have to discuss such matters.

Discussion followed on the Council's priorities. Chair Fry noted that the Council had indicated it would like to work in concert with the Planning Commission. Commissioner Fergusson read several priorities of the City Council listed in the City Manager's staff report for the Council's study session the next evening. These included a balanced budget, improving the quality of life in the Belle Haven neighborhood, encouraging business development, review of the single-family residential development ordinance, reviewing the community's need for playing fields and recreational opportunities, and improving Council and community engagement.

Commissioner Sinnott asked about possible educational opportunities for Commissioners, noting that she had once attended training through the California Planning Commission Association. She asked if staff would relay opportunities to the Commission when they received such information. Director Heineck said that staff would and noted that there might not be a budget for Commissioners' training opportunities. The Commission talked briefly about what types of training would benefit the Commission.

Chair Fry said that the Commission would honor former Commissioner Stein at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Justin Murphy, Principal Planner

Prepared by: Brenda Bennett, Recording Secretary

Approved by Planning Commission on February 23, 2004.