

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
MINUTES**

Monday, March 23, 2015

5:32 P.M. Mayor Vierra called the March 23, 2015 Study Session with the following in attendance:

ROLL CALL Council Members Durossette, Kline, Lane, Ryno, Mayor Vierra

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Gene Yeakley, 3904 Sweet Gum Drive, Ceres, CA

Mr. Yeakley stated that he has spoken to Mr. Wells, the Council and Brent Smith in the past regarding his concerns about the noise ordinance in the City.

Mr. Wells explained that we do have a noise ordinance, but Staff is planning to bring several ordinances to a Council Study Session sometime in the next two months to discuss several ordinance amendments that are being suggested, seeking Council direction and priority.

Mayor Vierra assured Mr. Yeakley that he will be notified when that Study Session is scheduled.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Code Enforcement Discussion

City Manager, Toby Wells provided a brief overview, explaining that Code Enforcement's role is the enforcement of the Ceres Municipal Code. For nearly the last three years, there has been one person, Frank Alvarez, handling Code Enforcement. Our goal for this next fiscal year 2015/16 is to hire a Secretary, to be provide administrative support; 50% for the Fire Department and 50% for Code Enforcement.

Chief Bryan Nicholes presented a PowerPoint presentation, explaining Code Enforcement and where the focus has been.

Code Enforcement Supervisor, Frank Alveraz explained the various forms and notices that Code Enforcement utilizes in day-to-day activities. He also reviewed the procedures that are followed, noting the time required to process citations and letters.

Council discussion ensued.

Chief Nicholes commented that when Code Enforcement was with the Planning Department, it was much different. When it moved to the Fire Department, they were given guidelines from the Council; a very focused program which included cleaning up roadways, entryways, and making the city look presentable, particularly the downtown area. It's a different climate now in the City, and Code Enforcement needs clear direction from the Council as to what the Council wants them to prioritize on. They are more than happy to redirect their efforts.

Mayor Vierra suggested that when the budget comes around, we may need to have the discussion about budgeting for additional staff for Code Enforcement. Mr. Wells responded that he is planning on having that discussion at the Goal Setting meeting on April 17th. It would be ideal to have 3 or 4 positions to do

Code Enforcement adequately in Ceres; however, it is a difficult decision to make, keeping in mind that we need to balance the needs of the rest of the City.

In response to Council Member Lane's inquiry, Mr. Alvarez explained the State certification process that is required to become a certified Code Enforcement Officer. An individual has to know and understand the California health and safety codes, attend several classes and pass the exam.

Mayor Vierra asked the City Attorney, citing an example of someone having a rooster and a warning letter is issued, followed by a 2nd and 3rd; what is the City's liability?

City Attorney, Tom Hallinan replied that it's not very high in most individual cases. Depending on Council's direction, what he would recommend is that we go back and look at the process and tighten things up; however, some won't be without controversy.

Council and Staff discussion ensued.

Mr. Wells requested, in order to assist staff, that each Council Member go through and prioritize the top three items on the list of Code Enforcement calls.

Council Member Ryno commented that it's difficult. Her hope was that the City departments come together and help each other out. We need to have a different mindset. City employees and citizens need to start caring; pick up trash, etc.

Mayor Vierra suggested staff take this back and categorize these by A, B & C, and have a conversation amongst all departments, and determine the top three. He'd like to get some kind of consensus from staff.

6:48 P.M. Mayor Vierra opened the Public Hearing.

- Ken Groves – 1909 5th Street, Ceres, CA

Mr. Groves commented that he is happy that Council has agreed to tighten up on Code Enforcement. He particularly liked Council Member Kline's idea related to shopping carts and notifying the stores.

- Don Cool – Ceres, CA

Mr. Cool remarked that he understands that we need more people to assist with Code Enforcement; perhaps get the Police Department involved with this. He mentioned the issue with signs; Mitchell Road is getting bad again. We need to get more people involved. Frank needs help.

- Gene Yeakley – 3904 Sweet Gum Drive, Ceres, CA

Mr. Yeakley stated that nobody seems to care. We need to make changes to the process. We need to do it now, as it's getting out of hand.

6:55 P.M. There being no further comments, Mayor Vierra closed the Public Hearing.

Mayor Vierra directed staff come up with some of the tiers, but then also see if there are ways other departments can help out and give Frank some support. Also, from the budget staffing standpoint, we need to see about potentially adding some support.

Mr. Wells reiterated that the Goal Setting meeting for April would be discussion of the budget, and ask that we do that Goal Setting session first, and that would direct the next steps of this activity. Council concurred.

6:56 P.M. There being no further business, Mayor Vierra adjourned the City Council Study Session.

Chris Vierra, Mayor

Ann Montgomery, Acting City Clerk