MINUTES
JOINT CITY COUNCIL – PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP

CITY OF CERES, CALIFORNIA
Small Assembly Room, 2701 Fourth Street

Monday, November 30, 2015 – 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The City Council and Planning Commission of the City of Ceres met this date in a workshop session at 6:00 p.m. in the Small Assembly Room, with Mayor Vierra presiding.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Mayor:	Vierra	Chairperson:	Smith
Vice Mayor:	Durossette	Vice-Chair:	Kachel
Council Members:	Kline, Lane, Ryno	Commissioners:	Condit, Del Nero, Molina

Also present: Sophie Martin, Project Manager – Dyett & Bhatia
Ella Wise, Planner – Dyett & Bhatia

City Staff: Tom Westbrook, Toby Wells, Daryl Jordan, Tom Hallinan, Suzanne Dean, Farren Williams, Steve Hallam, Michael Brinton, James Michaels, Traci Farris, Marjorie Blom, Ann Montgomery

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Vierra led the community in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATIONS

A. Tom Westbrook, Director of Community Development provided a brief PowerPoint presentation regarding the City's current General Plan and Sphere of Influence, noting that the General Plan has not been updated since 1997.

B. Sophie Martin, Project Manager from Dyett and Bhatia provided a PowerPoint presentation on the General Plan Update process, and introduced Planner, Ella Wise, who will be assisting her.

DISCUSSION

Following the presentations, Mr. Westbrook began the discussion with posing the question regarding the Planning Study Area; is that boundary enough or should we plan to expand that boundary which is Tuolumne River in the north, flanked by Carpenter Road in the west, Washington Road in the east and fundamentally Grayson Road in the south. That area represents approximately 14,700 acres; our existing city limits measure just under 6,000 acres.

Mayor Vierra said he felt that the current General Plan boundary is sufficient, with a review of the land around the Mitchell Road interchange, confirming there's an adequate area for economic development for the City's future needs as well.

Council Members Lane and Kline noted they agreed with the Mayor's statements.

Council Member Kline questioned what would be the requirements for LAFCO regarding the City's General Plan study area and Sphere of Influence.

Mr. Westbrook provided an example regarding typical planning timeframes, referring to the West Landing Annexation with a 10-year timeframe. The current Sphere of Influence represents a 20-year timeframe.

Vice Mayor Durossette asked what issues with the County could arise.

City Manager Wells noted that he did not see any issues with the County.

Planning Commission Chair Smith said she agreed with the Mayor's statement that the current General Plan boundary is sufficient for the City's needs. She also expressed interest for including Economic Development as a separate component in the General Plan. She felt that Economic Development should be prioritized and land uses be available to promote economic growth.

Mr. Westbrook remarked that more language could be added to the existing General Plan for Mitchell Road; for example the updated sign code.

Council Member Kline said there must be vertical consistency with current City Specific Plans/Master Plans.

Vice Mayor Durossette noted concern of County development within the City's current General Plan area.

Mr. Westbrook explained we can set policy in our General Plan, stating that we don't want county development within our sphere of influence and/or within our study area. If they do decide to develop within our sphere of influence, they have to develop to our standards.

Mayor Vierra said this process will allow the City the ability to clean up inconsistencies within the General Plan, from signage to aesthetics; and not necessarily how big the City should grow over the next 20-25 years. He noted his concern for the current image of the City and felt that the focus should be on economic development with the City being a destination place with bike paths and trails, while addressing AB 170/Air quality issues per the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Mr. Westbrook mentioned that the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) is in the process of updating its General Plan Guidelines, which will address air quality and public participation issues. Ceres will be one of the first cities to have to comply with the new guidelines.

Council Member Kline's biggest concerns are land use and zoning issues; noting it may be necessary to rezone land in order to develop Mitchell Road to its fullest potential.

Mayor Vierra mentioned potential County planning for the Faith Home Expressway and bridge connecting to Modesto; that currently low density residential backs up to Faith Home Road in our current General Plan, rather than industrial uses.

City Manager Wells explained that the County's North/South expressway along Faith Home Road has been in the works to allow for regional goods movement. He noted that Hughson has provided reduced land use density to create a buffer between Hughson and Ceres.

Vice Mayor Durossette wondered how much public opinion would be gathered during the community workshops.

Consultant Sophie Martin stated that the amount of the public participation will depend on the input received. She noted that the process will include different means of outreach, from workshops to a citywide mail-in survey.

Mr. Westbrook added that City staff is developing a General Plan Update master e-mail distribution list and that there will be a devoted website for the General Plan Update process.

Council Member Ryno said she would like the process to include addressing the downtown area, to allow for a vibrant downtown with shops, restaurants and perhaps housing upstairs. We need to look forward and look at what larger cities do, that will draw people to our downtown.

Council Member Lane agreed with more shops downtown. He also felt that the City's recent effort to update the Sewer and Water Master Plans was a good start for the General Plan Update process. He noted that the Monte Vista Crossings in Turlock was a good regional example; and perhaps the area east of Moffett/Redwood along State Route 99 could allow for more commercial opportunities.

Mr. Westbrook also mentioned issues relating to island annexations and disadvantaged communities.

Council Member Ryno inquired about churches within the downtown area and perhaps the area along 4th Street could be better suited for retail uses.

Mr. Westbrook briefly explained the specifics of the Downtown Specific Plan, including conditional use permits which are required for a new church facility in the Downtown area.

City Manager Wells asked Consultant Martin what her experience has been with how other communities address economic development within their General Plans.

Consultant Martin mentioned the communities of San Pablo and Fresno that they prepared the General Plan Updates for, where economic development has been a primary driving force for decisions.

City Manager Wells stated that the City Council has consistently stated that economic development is a top priority.

Consultant Martin said the City could address economic development within the land use element or could develop a separate economic development element. She cautioned that with separate elements the document must be careful to cross reference; and future changes to one

element must be made to other to ensure consistency within the General Plan.

Mayor Vierra then stated he would like to allow feedback from community members in the audience.

Leonard Shepherd, resident asked if the relationship between population and growth will be addressed. He felt that City police and fire staff are already stretched. He noted that the City has been historically surrounded by agricultural land, which has given the City's its original character, and thus didn't want this process to lose this part of the City's historical heritage.

Renee Ledbetter, President of Ceres Chamber of Commerce, noted the following comments for the City to consider: how will the schools fit in to the General Plan; will there be a community health component; will land uses/zoning be addressed along Whitmore Avenue; and will a mixed-use component be included?

Consultant Martin then outlined the General Plan Update process including: holding a kick-off meeting with Department Heads; meeting with police and fire to garner their service issues; and meeting with school district representatives to discuss facility needs/student ratios. She then addressed the issue of community health which is a relatively new/popular topic, which crosses several general plan elements including land use (locations for healthy food opportunities) to circulation (locations for encouraging walking/biking).

Mr. Westbrook mentioned that community stakeholder interview meetings have been scheduled for December 8th & 9th. Stakeholders will include the School District and Turlock Irrigation District, to name a few. He also invited Council Members and Planning Commissioners to participate in the stakeholder meetings.

Council Member Lane noted that the City had adopted a Healthy Cities Resolution.

Council Member Lane also inquired if there would be presentations available to community service clubs, such as the Lions Club.

Mr. Westbrook noted that he would be happy to meet with the Lions Club and other service clubs. He also stated that as the City's liaison to the Chamber of Commerce Board, he would be providing updates to its members.

Commissioner Condit said he would like the General Plan to reflect the image of Ceres, for the City to have a clear vision, and to think beyond 20-25 years. He noted that the current General Plan's mission was to maintain the City's small town character.

Consultant Martin stated that following the community outreach meetings, what we hope to craft is a new vision statement.

Vice Mayor Durossette noted that the City has a Strategic Plan regarding economic development, and may have to be changed throughout this process.

City Manager Wells stated he would soon be bringing back the Strategic Plan to the Council for direction.

Renee Ledbetter mentioned that as the process moves forward, consideration should be given to recognize the views of the various generations (Baby boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials). She said she likes the concept "Dream Big" with regards to this process.

Mr. Westbrook provided an outline of the upcoming outreach efforts, including the date of the next Community Workshop set for January 28, 2016.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Submitted by Ann Montgomery, Deputy City Clerk

Chris Vierra, Mayor

ATTEST:

Lori Frontella, MMC City Clerk