

CITY OF CERES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 5, 2011

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Del Nero, Kachel, Molina, Smith

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Deputy City Manager Sheila Cumberland, City Attorney Michael Lyions, Planning, Building & Housing Division Manager Tom Westbrook, Director/City Engineer Toby Wells, Associate Planner James Michaels, Secretary Ann Montgomery

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Kachel.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. It was moved by Commissioner Molina; seconded by Commissioner Smith, to approve the minutes from the October 3, 2011 meeting; Carried 4/0.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION:

None

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:

Mike Kline - 2913 Sergis Court, Ceres, CA

Councilman Kline thanked the Planning Commission and staff, especially Mr. Westbrook for the last four years. He stated that he appreciated the diversity amongst the Commission and will miss working with them.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AS POSTED (OR AMENDED) AND CERTIFICATION OF POSTING:

It was moved by Commissioner Smith; seconded by Commissioner Del Nero, to approve the agenda as posted; Carried 4/0.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

None

PUBLIC HEARING(S):

2. Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 11-05; Proposal to replace a previously entitled retail building with a new carwash and oil/lube shop at 3125 E. Service Road; Deanami Development Group, LLC, applicant.

Associate Planner, James Michaels presented the staff report.

Commissioners Questions:

- Commissioner Del Nero asked if staff or the applicant put page 28 in the staff report.

Mr. Michaels replied that staff did, to give an example to show how it could operate.

- Commissioner Smith inquired about staff's recommendation to eliminate the canopy, and whether staff is recommending that it be replaced by something or completely eliminated.

Mr. Westbrook explained that the canopy is intended to allow for somewhat of a more full service, detailing option. At the car wash facility, it will also house the vacuum units that will come down from the top of the canopy. He further explained that when staff was not recommending for this, it was due to the layout that was presented. (Admittedly, staff is not the operator of a car wash, and since those individuals are here, this may be an appropriate question for them.) Staff thought it could be better served if perhaps there was a canopy that was smaller in size, and it was aligned in a north/south orientation. So, we'd have a smaller canopy over double spaces, over spaces on both sides, in one little area, and the rest of it could be used for customer parking. Staff had made that mention to the applicant; that was not something they desired. They said this functions better for them, in terms of their car wash operation, so that's where the recommendation came from, to remove the canopy altogether from staff.

Commissioner Smith remarked that she'd hate to see the canopy come out of their plan, and then have little pop-up structures be erected, which are hideous.

Mr. Westbrook added that one of the things that was also included in the report, was they may explore the possibility of adding solar to the top of the canopy, which staff would be supportive of too. It's just the orientation of having the parking spaces oriented at 90

degrees and then some at 45 degrees, which staff was kind of objecting to. The applicants said it was necessary to have the canopies; it's easier for people to pull in and out of those spaces, when they're at 45 degrees. Mr. Westbrook further explained that if the parking spaces were at 90 degrees and you could pull straight through, the canopy would be acceptable to staff. It was the orientation of the parking spaces below the canopy, is what staff was objecting to.

- Chairperson Kachel asked staff to briefly explain their reasoning or objection to the 45 degree angle parking that's along that area.

Mr. Westbrook stated because within the same amount of area, we can have more parking spaces if they're oriented at a 90 degree angle. They have adequate parking now. There's a lot line adjustment that will be accomplished to include all of these spaces. But, the project, as it evolved, did not have all of these spaces. They agreed to do the lot line adjustment; now they have enough spaces. So, if the canopy is left, just as proposed, they will have adequate parking spaces.

- Commissioner Smith clarified that staff's position is to obtain more parking spaces and allow for driving completely through.

Mr. Westbrook responded that was correct, but as staff mentioned the carwash operator is here and they can explain why the spaces are at 45 degrees.

- Commissioner Molina inquired about the reason we don't want the canopy; is it because it doesn't really go with the design of the building.

Mr. Westbrook replied not necessarily; it's the function of the parking spaces. If all of the spaces were at 90 degrees, you wouldn't need a canopy that is that big. He certainly doesn't want to convey to the Planning Commission that he doesn't like this project and he doesn't want it approved if the parking spaces are at 45 degrees. From staff's perspective, when we looked at this and got the rationale behind this, a canopy at one end, with spaces that drive through, makes more sense. That's the reason we are recommending that.

- Commissioner Smith asked if people were there to wash their car, get a lube, vacuum their car, why would they be parked in these other spots on the other side.

Mr. Westbrook explained that the lube place doesn't have very many spaces, so if all the spaces in the bay were occupied, a car would have to park and wait until a space becomes available. The project is over parked. If the project, the canopy and the parking spaces stay just the way that they are, there will be no conflict with city code, whatsoever.

- Commissioner Del Nero clarified with Mr. Westbrook that a few years ago, there was another car wash project at the corner of Mitchell and Service Roads, but it was a different applicant.

The public hearing was opened at 6:23 p.m.

- Edmond Jacobs, Architect

Mr. Jacobs stated that based on the owner's research, study, analysis and traffic count, they feel that another car wash could be supported in that area. The concept is unique and becoming a very popular concept of combining these uses together, which will provide more services and quality of services for people.

The building will have a stucco finish, as Mr. Michaels described and be accented with towers and metal storefront, glass and metal panels on the wall. He explained the circulation throughout the site, as well as parking. This is the ideal layout in terms of operation of the business, with the 45 degree angled parking. They are asking for the support of this layout, but are open to staff's suggestion as well.

- Dave Bentley – Car Wash Unlimited

Mr. Bentley sells car wash equipment throughout northern California. Mr. Voulgarakis will offer a full service car wash, in addition to oil/lube services. Mr. Bentley explained the items that will be used at the car wash, including the chemicals. They are a Green Business and plan to re-use the water. He thanked the Planning Commission for having them speak at the meeting tonight, and stated that they are open for any questions the Planning Commission may have.

- Commissioner Molina mentioned this is similar to the Turlock Chevron on Lander. He asked if the vacuum spots could possibly be moved further down from the exit of the car wash tunnel.

Mr. Bentley explained that the original lay-out was for the flow, and has the first four vacuum spots being dedicated to full service, and the other five spots for express or "self-vac."

- Chairperson Kachel asked if there is a difference in ideal size for a parking spot as opposed to a vacuum parking spot.

Mr. Bentley answered that they are a bit wider, to allow for open car doors, and you can access the vacuums from two different sides.

- Commissioner Smith asked if the angled parking is wider than the parking on the other side, and will they still be able to get more parking spaces, if they are straight.

Mr. Westbrook replied yes, a couple more spaces.

- Commissioner Molina inquired about the canopy that was presented on page 37 of the staff report; if it's the only one being considered by the applicant.

Mr. Jacobs suggested they see the option on page 39. This will allow for the addition of solar, in the future.

- Commissioner Molina clarified that you need the canopy to be flat in order to fit the solar equipment. Also, that the canopy will only be over the first four spaces.

Mr. Jacobs confirmed that the canopy will cover the service spaces, and it will also accommodate the vacuum tubes, which hide in the frame of the canopies.

- Dimitrios Voulgarakis – Deanami Development Group, LLC., 2213 Patterson Road, Riverbank, CA – Property Owner

Mr. Voulgarakis stated that he has a pass-through car wash and a Chevron station. He has experience and provides a good service. His intention is to develop the area; it will look better, bring more tax to the city, plus payroll. He explained that the parking spaces are designed for ease of traffic flow through the site. He described the canopy, as a metal structure and is better looking than what is shown in the report.

- Commissioner Smith prefaced her question to Mr. Voulgarakis, by referring to Mr. Del Nero having made mention of a previous applicant (PrimeShine) for a car wash in the same area, about 4 years ago. This was denied by the Commission because of their concern about the overabundance of car washes on that corner. With this area originally identified as a retail pad, what happened to make you feel that a car wash would be better than retail?

Mr. Voulgarakis explained that four years ago, the economy and market were different. The reason that the car wash was chosen is because things have changed and he wants to give people what they're looking for; more auto services, including oil change, and provide a comfortable and safe place for them to wait. All of this together makes him think that this is the way to go to develop that area.

- Commissioner Molina asked about the staff to be hired; are they going to be local or his own.

Mr. Voulgarakis explained that his intention is to get local personnel for many reasons: traffic delays, in emergencies, if someone calls in sick, able to call someone close by to fill in, also hiring local helps the City.

The public hearing was closed at 6:42 p.m.

Commission Questions/Discussion

- Commissioner Molina asked staff about the homes across the street from this property; are they residential?

Mr. Westbrook replied that there are three existing homes on the south side of Service Road, adjacent to this. They are all zoned commercial, so they're residential units today, but at some point, it would be envisioned that they'll be a commercial use instead.

- Commissioner Molina stated that he welcomes the project, because it's going to give a different view to the entrance of Ceres, along with the recent project that was approved. He can see where the angle of the parking would benefit the exit of the car wash. It's also very convenient to have a canopy where you're doing the vacuuming of your car. Perhaps we can discuss the options involving the canopy.
- Chairperson Kachel asked for clarification on the picture of the canopy on page 39.

Mr. Westbrook stated that it's similar and was included in the report to give the Commission a similar representation of what the canopy will look like. The actual canopy will be flatter, with the goal at some point, being able to add solar on top.

- Commissioner Del Nero asked as we did four years ago; is this what we want to see when we're coming northbound into Ceres. He's not saying that he's necessarily against this.

Mr. Westbrook asked to provide a bit of historical perspective on the PrimeShine. He thinks it was quite a number of years ago, back in 2005/06. The difference being is that it was a PrimeShine at that time, and that use was on a singular parcel, where we had a larger commercial area. He thinks some of the objection that the Planning Commission had, was how is this going to work, in terms of access to the project site. Because the parcel was so narrow, with it's frontage on Service Road, that it would be hard for people to get in and out of the site. But, included as part of a commercial center, maybe we wouldn't encounter some of those difficulties. He thinks that may have led to the Planning Commission's ultimate denial of that project. He doesn't believe this project has any similarities to that one. A number of things have happened since that project was proposed; the Ceres Gateway Center was approved by the Planning Commission in 2008, for kind of that triangular shaped piece. And then as recent as this year, the Planning Commission and City Council approved the Mitchell Ranch Center project, which is another large commercial piece across the street. The circumstances are certainly different than they were in 2007.

- Commissioner Smith agreed that things have changed since 2007. One of the things we have to think about is stimulating activity in that area. There are some existing businesses in that area and any new traffic has the potential for bringing new business to those existing businesses. It's a different day and there are different considerations to be had in the world of business. She considered all those things when going through this process and plans to support the project.
- Chairperson Kachel finds the whole concept of this project attractive. He asked if these combined uses with car washes, oil lubes; if this is a trend.

- **The public hearing re-opened at 6:50 p.m.**

Mr. Bentley responded that the service station car wash is more of your impulse buy. What we're trying to do is capture a wider audience with this model. Ultra-impulse, which would be your express, your prime shine, as well as your planned washes, will become more destination orientation. The gas station model, is your express model; what he's offering here, may open up opportunities for the other local neighboring businesses.

The public hearing closed at 6:51 p.m.

- Commissioner Smith stated that she is ready to move to approve this project and doesn't have any objection with the parking, as it's proposed. But she would be open to any input from her fellow commissioners.

Mr. Westbrook explained that if that is the direction the Planning Commission wants to go, then we'll need to delete the first sentence of #3 of the Project Specific Conditions on page 11 of the staff report, which stated that they couldn't have the metal canopy.

- Commissioner Molina asked for an explanation as to why the staff was asking the Commission not to approve the canopy.

Mr. Westbrook replied that it was due to the orientation of the parking spaces. Actually, staff is supportive of the canopy concept, because it's going to possibly have solar on top of it.

- Chairperson Kachel commented that he thinks a use like this is a great thing to come in there. It has the potential to sell a few more hamburgers or sell some things in your coffee shop. He likes the lay-out the way it is, with the 45-degree angled parking. He can support it the way it is, knowing the canopy is going to look a bit different than the picture in the staff report and eventually solar, perhaps, which is terrific.

It was moved by Commissioner Smith; seconded by Commissioner Molina, to approve Conditional Use Permit (CUP 11-05), with removing the first sentence under Condition number 3, of the Project Specific Conditions and also revising item d. on page 13, hours of operation from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Carried 4/0.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

PUBLIC MEETING(S):

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

MATTER INITIATED BY PLANNING COMMISSION AND STAFF

None

REPORTS:

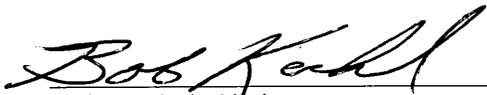
Staff – Mr. Westbrook stated that the City has announced for the Planning Commission vacancy. The filing period is open until December 16th. Applications will be taken in; Mayor Vierra will interview those applicants, and then it's taken as a consent item to City Council. Most likely that won't happen until January. You won't see a new Commission member until after the first of the year.

Tentatively, the Planning Commissioners' workshop is coming up in January in Riverbank, on the 28th. We'll have more details and will forward them onto the Commission as they become available. We have money to send everybody. It's on Saturday morning and will be over by noon.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Commission adjourned at 6:58 p.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting of Monday, January 16, 2012.

APPROVED:



Bob Kachel, Chairperson

ATTEST:



Tom Westbrook, Secretary