

**CITY OF CERES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

October 3, 2016

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice-Chairperson Del Nero.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Commissioners: Condit, Del Nero, Molina, Smith

ABSENT: Chairperson Kachel

ALSO PRESENT: Director of Community Development Tom Westbrook, City Manager Toby Wells, Director of Engineering Services/City Engineer Daryl Jordan, Associate Planner James Michaels, City Attorney Christopher LaGrassa, Administrative Secretary/Deputy City Clerk Ann Montgomery

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION:

None

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Leonard Shepherd, 2841 Fowler Road, Space 71, Ceres, CA

Mr. Shepherd stated that he's hoping that the Citizens for Ceres group, who he believes doesn't have the money to pay their attorney, Brett Jolley, and is supported by the Service Employees International Union, has the State Supreme Court tell them to "go away." Then we can get on with the business of making Ceres a better place for everybody without any declarations of having to be a union member or a non-union member or whatever. What he'd like to see is the Planning Commission do their best to help get that project going once the courts say "It's a go!" He advised the Commission to not throw any road blocks in their way. Let's just go on with it and get it done.

- Dave Pratt, 1905 Lupin Lane, Ceres, CA

Mr. Pratt expressed his concern about when a City is forced to eliminate bus

routes and stops and the traffic lights are a nightmare. You don't dare be out on the streets once school starts because of the backlog of vehicles. Also, it doesn't do any good putting more parks in because when you have to chase off the kids that are playing ball in the street, bouncing balls off of cars and houses in the neighborhood. When he was younger, he was able to go over and play ball at the school; but the way things are now, everything is locked up. He doesn't think we'll be happy with Walmart moving into a new building. The only reason they're hanging on is because they want to rub it in all these other towns that decided they didn't want a Super Walmart in their town. And, hopefully when they do move over there, the surrounding businesses will be enough to draw.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. Clerk's Report of Posting. The Agenda for the regular meeting of the Planning Commission of October 3, 2016 was posted on September 28, 2016.
2. Approval of Minutes
 - a. September 6, 2016
 - b. September 19, 2016

ACTION: It was moved by Commissioner Smith; seconded by Commissioner Molina to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Commissioners Condit, Del Nero, Molina, Smith
NOES: None
ABSENT: Chairperson Kachel

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR

None

PUBLIC HEARING:

3. Whitmore Ranch Specific Plan – Conceptual Site Plan

Director of Community Development, Tom Westbrook explained the purpose of this is to evaluate the Conceptual Site Plan for the Whitmore Ranch Specific Plan. No study has been done on it yet. We need to see the circulation pattern; we need to get the unit count before we can start the Environmental Impact Report. The Environmental Impact Report will look at a number of things, including: traffic, noise, sewer capacity, water capacity, etc. The purpose of the Conceptual Plan is to check in with the Planning Commission and then ultimately the City Council to see if this meets the intent of the General Plan as it's shown

today or there are some changes needed; maybe that's elimination of some of the park acreage, or increasing the size of the lots. That's kind of the purpose of the meeting this evening; is to check in with the Planning Commission to see how they like the conceptual layout that has been drafted to this point.

Mr. Westbrook noted that he did receive some correspondence and notified the Planning Commission. He received two e-mails that are effectively in opposition to the project as a whole. They didn't necessarily talk about the Conceptual Site Plan, but they rather suggested that they were neighboring property owners and they wished the City wouldn't consider this Specific Plan at all.

The second thing he wanted to mention and he'll go through the Power Point, one of the property owners within the annexation area contacted the City, (actually his representative did; a local engineering firm) and suggested possibly the removal or reduction of some parkland that's included in the conceptual plan.

Mr. Westbrook provided a PowerPoint presentation, explaining the Whitmore Ranch Specific Plan – Conceptual Site Plan.

Mr. Westbrook introduced Matthew Gerken, consultant with AECOM.

Mr. Gerken apologized for being a bit late, but from what he heard, Mr. Westbrook did an excellent job providing the overview. As he said, we're here to kick-off this process and to hear from the public and the Planning Commission in terms of the direction this specific plan should look like. There's already a lot of excellent guidance in the General Plan covering everything from agricultural effects, air quality, mitigation requirements, the purpose of open space and lots of other topics. As Mr. Westbrook mentioned, in the small lot design guidelines, there's a lot of relevant direction for us already that hits on the bigger picture aspects of design, how big lots should be, how the focus should be on various forms of residential development, but also the details. Guidance on fencing and walls, and so there's a lot of raw material that we'll be using in the design of the specific plan project itself. As Mr. Westbrook mentioned, this is the first opportunity for input; right direction, wrong direction, guidance from all of you, and he'll be taking copious notes, so that he can take it back to the shop and use it.

The public hearing was opened at 6:25 p.m.

- Lourdes Perez, 1317 Grandview Avenue, Ceres, CA

Ms. Perez stated that she is representing Ceres Partnership Family Resource Center and is also a Ceres resident.

Ms. Perez shared that we were involved in a Safe Routes to Schools project for the City of Ceres at the beginning of this year. We were able to engage

community residents from the Eastgate community. Many of the concerns that came from community residents; we held a forum with over 70 individuals, residents from the Eastgate community as well as conducted surveys and walkability assessments. The surveys that were conducted and collected; over 300 surveys. The major concerns that came from the community were: access to pedestrian safety measures, as well as bicyclists' measures and connectivity between Eastgate and the schools and the lack of a thorough way beyond the schools for La Rosa and Cesar Chavez. So, as a resident of Ceres, she knows how important it is for our children to walk safely as well as having good circulation in our City for families to go to school and every place they go to within our City in a safe manner. She really feels the community of Eastgate would support this; they have mentioned the huge need for families that attend both of those schools. And, as a Board Member for Ceres Unified School District, she definitely takes that seriously and would support that and the community and advocate for the best for the community, especially the Eastgate community there.

Commissioner Smith asked Ms. Perez, with regard to the feedback she received both in the forum and from the surveys; they brought up issues that they were concerned with; were there any suggestions on how to address those issues?

Ms. Perez responded that a couple of the things the folks that attended the forum as well as the responses to the surveys conducted, they were mentioning the need for sidewalks, so the construction of sidewalks. They also mentioned perhaps doing some signal lights, etc. at Lunar, Boothe because they've had some issues. We had bicycle injuries as well as pedestrian injuries on Boothe not too long ago. The concerns came from parents of those children that had been injured. They definitely want to work with the City and were in support of what the City presented at that point.

Commissioner Smith inquired about Ms. Perez mentioning the connectivity between the two schools.

Ms. Perez explained what they spoke of was really the unincorporated area where we have families attending La Rosa and Cesar Chavez schools where they are not able to walk to school, because of not having connection because of the lack of the thorough ways on Eastgate. One, it contributes to the congestion of traffic at both of the schools as well as the Eastgate and Whitmore intersection.

- Dave Pratt, 1905 Lupin Lane, Ceres, CA

Mr. Pratt commented there was one thing he forgot to mention; Cesar Chavez School, there's no sidewalk on the south side of Whitmore. It looks like this thing will eliminate that, but if this doesn't go in, I hope that you'll still put the sidewalk in. When you have to hire a traffic guard to force the kids and parents to cross

over heavy traffic on Whitmore to the north side, and then they have to walk all the way down to Eastgate, and then walk back across Whitmore, go to school and then coming back. Right now traffic is pretty heavy on Moore Road, and a lot of traffic comes from Hughson, and he can imagine what it's going to be like when this is in. Because a lot of them don't like going all the way down to Mitchell Road, and taking Mitchell Road down; they just cut off there at Moore Road, and go down as far as they can before they jump on to Mitchell Road. So, it's going to be pretty interesting.

- Leonard Shepherd, 2841 Fowler Road, Space 71, Ceres, CA

Mr. Shepherd expressed his concerns regarding water and sewer, fire protection, and police protection with over 1400 people expected to move into that area eventually. What we need to know is how are we going to support them with fire and police emergency services; how are we going to support them with water and sewer system. He knows, Mr. Westbrook was telling him that things are there for hook-ups, etc., but after five years of drought, and a bunch of other things that have been thrown at the San Joaquin Valley, we still need to think in the future about the availability of water and how much sewage is going to be produced by these 1400 people. And what are we going to do when the time comes, that maybe we may have to cut down or raise prices so that the people are saying, "Hey, we can't afford this." Those are long-range things you need to think about. He's not against the project; he just thinks we need to think in long-term, not just short-term. Oh, we've got the water now; we've got the sewage supply where we can get it, but what about 10 years, 20 years from now. And, he knows there are people who think Ceres ought to be 80,000 people in 10 or 20 years, and that thought just boggles his mind because we don't have resources right now, in his own humble opinion, for all the people we've got.

- Jeanie Knox, 4455 Roeding Road, Ceres, CA

Ms. Knox remarked that her family actively farms 40 acres of land. She's asking the City to please stop annexing prime quality land, explaining that what she's asking is to please stop moving east, onto prime sandy loam soil. We've been farming for over 40 years and we have neighbors that along with us, want to continue to farm this prime soil. Just like west of Highway 99 in Modesto, Wood Colony is also a prime agricultural area. We need to save and protect these rich soil areas for now and future generations so we can feed the local and world populations for generations to come. Yes, the Valley population is growing. What we need to do in the Valley towns, is to plan smarter, to use what we have for the best uses. Take the high road of growing smartly, upward instead of the low road of short-sidedness and sprawling outward and turn this valley into another Los Angeles or Bay Area mess. Please stop annexing this as it's a drain on the aquifer. She's asking the Planning Commission to plan smartly. She's suggesting that in the Eastgate subdivision which has been there for a while, there's a section of unused land, in the north end of Eastgate Boulevard, at

Hatch Road; she suggests building condos with elevators for down-sizing seniors who may want to live near the family, but have their own space and less home up-keep. For young adults, just starting out. Livermore Valley has many well-designed, multi-storied condo units, that active families may be comfortable living in. Younger adults are minimalists. They are not looking for big mansions; they're active and don't want a lot of home upkeep. They want to be out there doing things; traveling. Look at the blighted areas within the City. Build up with condos and apartments like north Turlock has done on Cristofferson Road. There are some excellent apartment buildings, and there are some excellent condos in that area. She realizes this committee isn't discussing this tonight, but for one more time, she wants to say, please do not turn Faith Home Road into an expressway. Want to improve the quality of this area; add more safe bike routes? The bike lanes from Hatch Road to Whitmore and on Moore Road and to Roeding are being used and they are a healthy asset. She realizes in this plan that's been shown tonight, there are some good bike routes; good, if we end up with it! But she still likes keeping farm land, farm land. She realizes that the Planning Commission doesn't have the power to do this, but could work with the County and Hughson to consider turning Roeding Road into a bike lane, from Moore Road to connect with the bike lane that's already on Tully Road in Hughson. This would make a safer experience for those that currently bike on Roeding and would connect Ceres and Hughson in a friendly way. She knows it's out of order; earlier there were comments about Super Walmart stores; been there, been in them, don't need them in this area.

- Patricia Melugin Cousins – 3865 and 3831 Roeding Road, Ceres, CA

Ms. Cousins noted that she, along with her sister are co-owners of 3865 and 3831 Roeding Road, and submitted the email messages that Mr. Westbrook referenced earlier, in opposition to the Whitmore Ranch Site Plan Concept. She will not repeat what she said there, but only to summarize her opposition and to lend her face and voice to the words she had e-mailed earlier. She's not often on the same page with Mr. Benziger in the Courier. She subscribes and she reads it, but the last issue with the color headline, "Blight, Fight" about all the blight in the City of Ceres that's already here, and another related article about "Valley Readies for Water Fight." She wants to focus on the blight that's already there. Do we need more? And the water fight, that's desperate, is our ever sinking, ever more contaminated water, is a threat to all of us. Just to read one paragraph:

"The water necessary to develop and sustain this proposal will hasten and exacerbate the sinking water table, encouraging increasing contamination by nitrates, uranium, and other noxious elements. Who wants to drink (to) that?"

Ms. Cousins suggested that the City forget the whole project, go back to the west side where you already had a project going.

- Norm Caulkins – owner of farm at corner of Faith Home and Roeding Roads

Mr. Caulkins stated that his family has been operating the same land since 1903. He has a vested interest and totally opposes any more expansion of the City in our direction. It's great farmland. It's phenomenal ground, but as you take more and more over, it's not good. He pointed out a couple of issues that the Environmental Impact should double check: there's a lot of wildlife in the area; it's going to greatly impact it. He can name all the species that are there. If you want, you can come out to his farm and he'll show you the footprints in the mud after he has just irrigated, of a whole lot of different species that are out there. If you put all those bodies out there, all of these species are just going to fade away. As farmers in the area, we deal with them. We don't shoot them; we don't kill them. We deal with them even to the extent, of when the killdeer nests in the ground on his farm, they put a levy around it, so the water won't disrupt the nest until after they hatch. If you don't believe him, he has pictures at home over the whole process, he'll bring in at some point in time. There's a whole lot of wildlife in the area that's going to affect a lot. He mentioned that they objected to the school when they first proposed to put it there; they lost. He still doesn't believe it's a good place, but we still have to deal with it. He doesn't think anyone would be opposed to widening Whitmore to get to the school and put in a walkway there and a greenbelt. That is probably not an issue; that's a safety deal for kids. The kids are walking through that ground all the time and it's not safe. They could step in a gopher hole and that could snap their ankle, if they're not used to looking for them, and that is a safety issue that you desperately need to do whether this project goes through or not. One other issue that you may or may not have thought you need to put into the Environmental Impact, that's going to affect his farm in the area of right now. By law, when he uses certain chemicals, he has to go to the two schools there and find out what's happening, and he can not spray if there's an activity going. He has to check all the time. Okay, you put 1400 people there, he can't go to every individual house and ask, "Are you going to be outside tonight; are you going to have a barbecue?" What is he going to do? You're going to cut his farm back where he can't even spray. He can't go organic; it's too expensive. He has looked into it. It's just not economically feasible for his particular farming operations.

- City Attorney, Christopher LaGrassa

Mr. LaGrassa stated that CEQA issue is a future issue and this limits the design of the site plan. If you have any comments about the Environmental Impact Report, we're going to discuss that at a later date and that will be an issue at that time.

- Jay Cargill – 3926 E. Whitmore Avenue, Ceres, CA

Mr. Cargill commented that he's already blocked in by the City on one side. He only has 2-3 questions.

Under this project, is this Stanford Boulevard being put in under this project?

Mr. Westbrook responded that hasn't been identified yet. That will be realized in the process as we go through the Environmental Impact Report.

Mr. Cargill asked about the bicycle lane that comes in there to Esmar. He heard one of the gentlemen speak about the bicycle lane that runs east and west, that comes in there, right into the middle school. If the kids come off of Moore Road direction, down the bicycle lane, how are they going to get to La Rosa School from there?

Mr. Westbrook explained that's something we'll identify with the school district. He had a discussion with Amy Peterman, Business Services Supervisor, about a potential connection through Cesar Chavez Elementary, so that the kids coming through that paseo with their bicycles may have the ability to go across the junior high school to get to the elementary school.

Mr. Cargill inquired about the street we just discussed; if it goes in according to this map that was sent out to him; it will have to go along the south side of the schools. Stanford, he's talking about. And the school is backed up to their 20 acres, each parcel. Both schools had a 20 acre parcel. And if this street goes in, then you'll have to obtain property from the neighbors to the south of the school there to put this Stanford Avenue. And if it doesn't go in, to tie in and go over to the canal, you're going to have a traffic problem deluxe on Whitmore. Mr. Cargill remarked that he just had a few questions to ask because he's been in that area 45 years and he knows that he has seen a lot of things happen.

- Sandra Wheeler, 3024 Moore Road, Ceres, CA

Ms. Wheeler commented that if any of you have been down Moore Road lately, you will see the new bicycle lane, which is very nice and there are people using it. But what it's done to Moore Road, with them putting the bicycle lane in there; it's very hazardous. In the mornings with all the parents that are coming from the Boothe Road area and Eastgate area to take their kids over to the other schools, we can't even get out of our driveway. You can't get out onto Whitmore without waiting for 30 minutes. We need a light at Whitmore if this goes in. We need something more at the other end of Moore Road, at Moore and Roeding. There are little wrecks there all the time. It's just the people using the roads to the schools and if they put that many more people in that little area, it's going to be like this gentleman said, a real mess because Moore Road is a tiny little road; it's been a farm road. Now it's a zig-zagged little thing. It's a danger and if somebody doesn't have a wreck pretty soon, and sue everybody, she will be surprised. It is really not right. We have two acres there; we like our little place; we love it, and we like our people around us. But this many people coming in there, and us trying to get in and out of our property already is quite a hassle.

This will not work. We're going to need lights. Who's going to pay for those lights? Like the other gentleman said, you need lights at Lunar and at Boothe Road, for kids to go across those roads safely otherwise you're going to have some real bad deaths. Four lights right in that area; is that going to work? It's just unbelievable to her that you're thinking of putting this in. She wouldn't mind a small housing development, even a little apartment unit, but all of that in that area, is just too much. Water? We have our own well. We already have to run it through Britas to make sure that it's clean to drink. What is this going to do to us? And especially to the people who are going to come in and buy these houses. What are they getting? Stuffed up little neighborhood where they're crammed in like sardines. She doesn't mind something going in down there; she would like to see that corner cleaned up, because it is an eye-sore, but that is too much; too much density, not enough arrangements on those roads for kids to walk or people to even drive.

Norm Caulkins – owner of farm at corner of Faith Home and Roeding Roads

Mr. Caulkins asked if he might make one more comment. He has a question for the Planning Commission. He knows friends in town got this beautiful, nice questionnaire about what you want to see in Ceres, but everybody out there that lives in the sphere of influence of the City of Ceres, and he knows that a planning person told him years ago, that eventually it's all going to be City. Why didn't you send that questionnaire out to all those people? Even if you keep it separate from the people in Ceres, you'll have an opinion of what all those people think about this plan and all the other plans he knows that are on the books, You guys need to take into consideration that there's a lot of people out there, small farms, small ranchettes, and they bought high-priced property because they want to live in the country and now the City is creeping up. Any answer as to why you didn't include those people in your questionnaire?

Commissioner Smith stated that she thinks the issue of the questionnaire is not on the agenda tonight, but maybe staff can respond to the gentleman's question about the manner in which the questionnaires were mailed out.

Mr. Westbrook explained that they were mailed to folks within the City limits, and postal codes that were surrounding the City, but we couldn't encompass every postal code within the General Plan study area.

Commissioner Smith noted that this was in addition to several workshops that were publicized and held within the community.

Mr. Caulkins stated you guys are excluding a bunch of people that are connected to the City and you need to have their input. He would suggest, please send the questionnaire out to them.

City Manager Toby Wells remarked that the information can be found on the City's website.

- Jay Cargill – 3926 E. Whitmore Avenue, Ceres, CA

Mr. Cargill remarked that he backs right up to La Rosa School. He has no problem with this because he's already surrounded with school, church, etc., but his farming; he's irrigating today. As far as the water running on down into the houses, it won't affect him one bit. He just wanted to say that he backs right up to the La Rosa School.

- Fred Gowan - 6893 St. Andrew's Lane, Tracy, CA

Mr. Gowan stated that he was raised in Ceres, but currently lives in Tracy. He owns property in the affected area that was described up here. He has a question about the proposed General Plan. Is it being worked on now and what part of the General Plan does this proposed Whitmore Ranch take up?

Mr. Westbrook explained the General Plan concept for the entire General Plan study area; the land use designations that are proposed for Whitmore Ranch are consistent with the existing General Plan, so there's no effect on one versus the other.

Mr. Gowan asked where this is in the General Plan; requesting some parameters on the General Plan.

Mr. Westbrook inquired, in terms of where it's at in the process or location.

Mr. Gowan responded, where it is physically.

Mr. Westbrook pointed out the location on the map and the relationship of the Whitmore Ranch Annexation area to the entire General Plan study area.

Mr. Gowan asked if there are any other projects being considered at this time.

Mr. Westbrook clarified this is the only annexation being considered at this time.

Mr. Gowan made one suggestion. The aides in the upper corner of the map are very colorful and very nice, but are blurred, particularly if you're sight challenged like he is. He suggested that the City appropriate the funds somehow to make a better presentation screen.

- Jerry Wheeler, 3024 Moore Road, Ceres, CA

Mr. Wheeler invited everyone to, after the meeting, to come down to Moore Road and smell the skunk. It's bad; it gets in our house. There's marijuana down

there; all over the place. So when you do your environmental report, maybe you can settle that. He's been there 41 years. Next thing, come there at 7 o'clock in the morning and stand in front of his driveway and see if you can get out. Or go up to Whitmore and Moore Road and watch the people turn the corner with their cell phones. You can't even get in there. You've got to take this under consideration. You've got to do something. We only used to have 30 cars come by there, 40 years ago. Now, he gets 300 in an hour, easy. But anyway, come down and smell the skunk because if you put in this project, you're going to have to address that. Now he's just probably past where you're going to build this, but he wanted to get that two cents in. Come on down!

The public hearing was closed at 6:54 p.m.

Commissioner Condit remarked that there are a lot of concerns out there. We all hear your concerns. He shares a lot of your concerns. We have an infrastructure problem in Ceres. We haven't kept up with our traffic and that's something our new General Plan needs to take a look at. We have a year and a half to really take a look at that concern and get that problem fixed. He's very adamant about protecting our farmland. We're surrounded by some of the richest agricultural land in the Central Valley. We have to do everything we can to protect that. Now, he knows we need to grow too, but we need a balance. In Ceres, we're unbalanced. Our job to resident ratio is 1:5. We have one job for every five residents. In Turlock and Modesto, it's 3:1. We need to fix it and we can't fix it with just adding more houses. We're going to keep being unbalanced. So, until we change our way of thinking, we're going to keep going down the same road that we've been going on. We're going to be a bedroom community for Modesto, for Turlock and for the Bay Area. Now, he's going to vote against sending this plan to the City Council because he doesn't think they need to consider it right now. We're not in the right state to consider this plan. Our water is not right. Our Public Safety isn't there. We had to make cuts to our Public Safety Department this budget. We have to make tough cuts every budget every year for the past couple years. And, we're going to have to make cuts this next year. So what are we going to do? We have to figure it out.

Commissioner Smith stated, well put and she agrees with almost everything Commissioner Condit said. She appreciates the comments from members of the audience and their concerns about all of the things that the Specific Plan will look into. She agrees we have serious issues that need to be considered before we move forward with any plan. But, this is not the question that's here tonight. The question tonight is input on a concept plan that the Council will then determine whether or not it moves forward. Her comments about that are these:

- There was a discussion about the open space, the 1.1 acres that are included in the southeast end of the proposed site and whether or not that would be something that could be disposed of and absorbed by additional lots. She doesn't oppose that, but she would like to see the size of the single-family lots larger; instead of 50x100, something wider.

- She's concerned about the open space, the pedestrian corridor. She likes that, but her concern is to whether or not how that will be maintained. It will probably be addressed as the Specific Plan is developed. But whether or not this will be funded through a CSD because it's beautiful in the picture, but the maintenance of these kinds of areas are one of the first things to go, when the funding gets short. So she'd like to see some sort of financing mechanism that's included in the project; whether or not it gets approved because she's just addressing what she'd like to see, not whether or not she supports it.
- Just wants to close with saying, she feels the same concerns. She's concerned about the water, she's concerned about the waste-water. She's concerned about the jobs to housing ratio, and when the time comes for discussion on that; she's sure it will be a robust discussion with a lot of fantastic input and she hopes all of you return to have that discussion.
- Tonight her concern is, she's not opposed to getting rid of the open space; she would like to see the lots wider, and there was a discussion about two-story vs. three-story on the multi-family. Her preference would be two-story instead of a three-story, and that concludes her comments.

Commissioner Molina stated that he would like to echo both. He actually shares both their feelings about the project. Initially, when he first saw it, he wasn't too excited about the amount of new homes coming in. From hearing the members of the audience, citizens of Ceres, his neighbors, he does feel their concerns. They're very valid points. As Commissioner Smith said, our input mainly today is about the concept of what the project would look like. If it really came down to it, he doesn't think that he would be ready to approve this to go through tonight, and see all these new homes within the next year. But because we are commenting on the concept only, he would like to echo Commissioner Smith's feelings about the size of the lots. He was thinking that if it has to, and his understanding is, that if that project was to go ahead and move on, and Council decided to go ahead and annex this part of town, that the individual property owners don't have to go through with building and developing their land, is that correct?

Mr. Westbrook replied that's up to them, at the time they wish. If somebody made them an offer, and they were agreeable to it, then the property could be developed. If there's somebody that says they just like their little ranchette lifestyle, or living in the country, they're not obligated to develop.

Commissioner Molina remarked that the members of the audience were sitting here opposing, not feeling in accordance 100% with this, who own property in this specific area. If they don't want their property touched at all, we will have no say in making them do anything, right? So this is kind of laying a blueprint for what could be, should they decide to go ahead and develop their land.

Mr. Westbrook stated that is correct.

Commissioner Molina commented, with that, if he personally owns land here, and he doesn't know if he should say, given the right, but if he's in the position and he chooses not to, and he doesn't want to, he's making sure he's leaving it in his will. He does agree with Commissioner Smith that he would like to see bigger sized lots. And then the concern on Moore Road; the traffic is a very valid one because it's a very narrow road. And the bike path is really nice, but somehow, the drive around it doesn't have a nice feeling to it when you're driving around the little curve that was added and the size of the actual road wasn't really minimized because all they did was build from the sidewalk onto the canal. But now that we have a wall, it just seems like we're getting more narrow space. When this gets built, if we can consider a nice sized drive along Moore Road.

Mr. Westbrook remarked that the proposed right-of-way would be 70 feet along at Moore Road side. In addition, we talked about a couple of times, once the concept plan has been blessed, if the Council gets to that point, then we'll do the Environmental Impact Report. A key component of that is the traffic study. He's confident, that with any type of study relating to traffic, there's going to probably be at least one signal placed within this area, maybe more. That's one of the things that will be identified once the traffic study begins.

Commissioner Molina inquired about this open space corridor (paseo); will that be for bikes and pedestrians only or will there be cars driving by?

Mr. Westbrook clarified that it will be everyone: bikes, pedestrians and vehicles.

Commissioner Molina asked if it's going to be wide enough for cars to go through.

Mr. Westbrook replied yes.

Vice-Chairperson Del Nero stated that since we're on that subject, he wanted to ask something else; is that considered part of parks?

Mr. Westbrook replied yes.

Commissioner Molina commented, with that in mind, as long as the property owners have the right to sell or not sell, according to their placing, he thinks because his job as a Commissioner, at this point would be to consider the concept, if you take into consideration, larger sized lots, and then everything else as far as the water, the police and fire and that stuff; that's a separate meeting.

Mr. Westbrook explained that will be part of the Draft Environmental Impact Report and will address all of those things: sewer, water, public safety, etc.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Westbrook, the required action tonight is to make a motion with direction for the City Council to consider the Whitmore Ranch

Specific Plan Site Plan Concept. So, the Planning Commission's options are this:

- Make a recommendation that the Council consider the site plan with any input we have for changes
- Or, to not recommend that the Council consider it.

Mr. Westbrook explained that either way, the recommendation of the Commission, regardless of what it has in it; whether it's in support of the project with changes, or not in support of the project, will be forwarded to the City Council.

Commissioner Smith stated the Council will be considering this on October 24th and accompanying the Site Plan consideration will be the Planning Commission's recommendation.

Mr. Westbrook remarked that we will just need a motion in that regard.

Commissioner Smith stated, and the motion is to move it forward, if we have recommendations for changes to the site plan, and the motion could also include concern that the Commission has and the attendees here today with regard to development of this area that may be revealed in a future Environmental Impact Report.

Mr. Westbrook stated that is correct. If this project is blessed by the City Council, there will be multiple Planning Commission meetings throughout the process.

Commissioner Smith remarked this is another hypothetical and she appreciates Mr. Westbrook's toleration. But let's say that it doesn't make it through any of the processes; what's happens? Are you able to project what happens to this property if it's not successful here and it's not successful in the future at the Council?

Mr. Westbrook responded that the project would effectively stop.

Commissioner Smith continued, and the property would remain in the County. Can this project be developed in the County?

Mr. Westbrook replied, absolutely not. It will remain just as it is today. There may be some provisions to allow a single-family home or something to be developed there, but to the extent that it's identified in the proposed layout, would not be possible. And, just for perspective, because he knows some of the folks that spoke tonight talked about this. The City, with the help of the Ceres Partnership and Lourdes Perez, were successful in obtaining a Safe Routes-to-School Grant. He believes in the next calendar year, improvements to Whitmore Avenue will be made between Moore Road and Cesar Chavez Junior High, to kind of provide that dedicated path. That won't provide any signalization; it would

just be the curb, gutter and sidewalk along the south side of Whitmore. So, that's going to happen regardless if this project moves forward or not. If this project moves forward, then that area would be even more enhanced to provide better pedestrian access to the school sites.

Commissioner Condit added that he did speak with Supervisor Jim DeMartini, who sits on LAFCO. He's opposed to this project. He said that Ceres has gone around annexing land for the past decade and we haven't done much with it. And, we still have a lot of houses that aren't built in Eastgate, for example. And we have the West Landing Specific Plan that nothing has gotten done on. So, he's told Commissioner Condit that he's going to be adamantly against this project if it makes it past the Council and the Environmental Impact Report comes back clear. We're going to have a lot of problems on the road ahead. So, he's going to go ahead and make a motion that the Council not consider adopting the Whitmore Ranch Specific Plan.

Vice-Chairperson Del Nero asked to wait, as he hasn't said anything yet. His first concerns were similar to what Commissioners Smith and Condit's; where are we going to get the water, where are we going to get the sewer and police protection. He even sent an e-mail to Mr. Westbrook this morning, and he replied that would come out in the EIR in the future. That's not what we're voting on today, but he understands the concern.

ACTION: It was moved by Commissioner Condit; seconded by Commissioner Smith to forward the Whitmore Ranch Specific Plan – Conceptual Site Plan to City Council with the recommendation to not consider moving forward with this project. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Commissioners Condit, Molina, Smith
NOES: Vice-Chairperson Del Nero
ABSENT: Chairperson Kachel

Vice-Chairperson Del Nero thanked everyone that attended this evening and spoke on this item. We appreciate your time.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

PUBLIC MEETING(S):

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

MATTERS INITIATED BY PLANNING COMMISSION AND STAFF

None

REPORTS:

Tom Westbrook, Director of Community Development reported that we did get the decision in the Mitchell Ranch case. There's still some time before the Administrative Remedy would cease for the Citizens for Ceres. So, probably within the next 30 days, we'll know more if that case has come to a conclusion or it's going to be referred for review at the California Supreme Court.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Commission adjourned at 7:12 p.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting of Monday, November 7, 2016.

APPROVED:



Gary Del Nero, Vice-Chairperson

ATTEST:



Tom Westbrook, Secretary