

**CITY OF CERES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

July 17, 2017

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Del Nero.

ROLL CALL:

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

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Director of Community Development Tom Westbrook, Director of Engineering Services/City Engineer Daryl Jordan, Senior 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 shared that when was Commissioner Condit's age, he read a science fiction magazine that talked about the San Joaquin Valley that had one continuous city from Sacramento to Bakersfield, and Highway 99 was the main thoroughfare. He has noticed lately that this is coming true.

Mr. Shepherd also suggested that the name of Moffett Road, between Hatch and Whitmore Avenue be changed to "Old Mattress Avenue." It's the most disgusting thing he's seen, with old mattresses piled up on the sidewalk. He realizes that the new Code Enforcement Officer has his hands full, and doesn't understand why people don't take better care of themselves, their homes and their City. The phrase "Together We Achieve," doesn't mean anything to him anymore; it should be "Together We Ignore."

Mr. Shepherd also noted that about 90% of the people he's talked to around Ceres, think Downtown is a mess and they don't know why it ever happened. They'll all be glad when the Downtown Revitalization project is finished.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. Clerk's Report of Posting. The Agenda for the regular meeting of the Planning Commission of July 17, 2017 was posted on July 12, 2017.
2. Approval of Minutes
 - a. June 19, 2017 (all present)

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

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

CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

3. Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 17-05; Proposal to allow for the expansion of an existing auto repair shop at 2352 E. Whitmore Avenue. Felipe and Carmen Hercules, applicant.

Senior Planner, James Michaels presented the staff report.

The Public Hearing was opened at 6:08 p.m.

- Renee Ledbetter, Ceres Chamber of Commerce President

Mrs. Ledbetter thanked City Staff, specifically Mr. Michaels and Mr. Westbrook for meeting with the owners of St. Jude's. There were some concerns when we first met with St. Jude's, that the City wasn't listening to them. As soon as the Chamber got involved, we talked with Mr. Westbrook and Mr. Michaels and we were able to facilitate a conversation and develop a plan that works for us now and into the future to meet the Downtown Specific needs. She really appreciates everything the City Staff did in terms of keeping an open mind, looking at the way we're doing business now and how we can do it in the future. Even though things are going to change once and if the owners ever transfer the property, it's going to really improve that corner. It's going to allow current business owners to expand their business, to provide more jobs and create more sales tax, which is everything that we need. The City is really to be commended for taking the time to listen to these business owners, and to work and cooperate with them to come up with a plan that works for all.

Mr. Westbrook wanted to follow up on what Ms. Ledbetter stated, since the applicants did not wish to speak. He remarked that it was important for the applicants, Felipe and Carmen Hercules, to keep the character of their property. He pointed out on the exhibit, the canopy and overhang. Originally when staff spoke to the applicants, staff suggested

if they remove that feature, there could be some better site design. But the applicants wanted to hold firm, saying that they really liked that aspect and want it to be a focal point of their development. Staff really thinks that this is going to be a win for 4th Street and for St. Jude's. The site today is not as improved as other areas in town, but when the project is developed, ultimately it will be as nice, if not better, as many others. Staff is very excited to see this project move forward.

Commissioner Kachel inquired about the six parking spaces on site, if that was sufficient.

Mr. Westbrook stated that meets the minimum threshold.

Commissioner Molina thanked Mrs. Ledbetter for getting involved. He remarked that he wishes the Commission could know when something like this is happening, so they might be able to intervene and assist with getting something done.

Mr. Westbrook explained that this is a pretty rare circumstance. Generally staff works with applicants all across the board, and we get them into a position where staff can make a positive recommendation. What threw this one into a little bit of a twist, is that it's a non-conforming use. He thinks that's what staff had focused on originally. Carmen and Felipe did reach out to the Chamber and with their assistance, we said, let's go ahead and talk and we came up to something that we think is really going to be beneficial for the community.

Mr. Westbrook remarked that he understands Commissioner Molina's reservation on not knowing this happened, but these are pretty rare circumstances, where we don't get to some type of resolution at staff level. Typically, if something like this was going to happen, usually the Council would be lobbied and then directed to direct staff to intervene or come up with another solution. This one was just a rare circumstance, like he said. Generally it doesn't happen a lot with the staff and the projects that we present to the Planning Commission. We certainly do thank Felipe and Carmen for their perseverance and reaching out to the Chamber, because we get to a spot where we're all happy.

Commissioner Molina stated that that kind of goes back to what he's saying, that if there happens to be something similar to this out there right now, the Commission's job or position per se would be to send this to the Council and say, we're considering something like this, would you look into it? Because from a City Staff point of view, there were reservations and don't really know if it's going to work out. But, if it comes to the Planning Commission and we don't have the ultimate say, we could refer it to the Council because overall we are looking at being business friendly. This project is beautiful, so congratulations and thank you to the Chamber and the applicant, for putting together a really nice project. This is definitely going to highlight that piece of land. He's glad that the ultimate result is that it's going to happen.

The Public Hearing was closed at 6:15 p.m.

Commissioner Condit thanked City Staff, Felipe and Carmen Hercules and Madam President Ledbetter for getting involved. They all did a great job. It looks great; a great update, while preserving Ceres history. It's going to be a great addition to downtown and he's excited to see it happen.

Commissioner Smith totally agrees with Commissioner Condit. She thanked Mrs. Ledbetter for always looking out for Ceres' businesses. She appreciates her continued effort and interest in Ceres. She appreciates the property owners for sticking with it and reaching out, asking for assistance with something that's going to liven up that corner. And, with the street work on 4th Street, hopefully this will spur some other development to make that street the center of downtown that we know it can be.

Chairperson Del Nero inquired about the sign shown in the drawing that says "Downtown Ceres Shopping District;" is that going to be there.

Mr. Westbrook explained that was just an illustration, shown for representation. They can have their own signage on the building.

Commissioner Molina stated the project is very nice. He noted that Mrs. Ledbetter has a passion for what she does; representing the Chamber and all the businesses; she's amazing! He suggested that maybe next time we have our Downtown Board meeting, we can have a letter of commendation for Mrs. Ledbetter.

ACTION: It was moved by Commissioner Smith; seconded by Commissioner Condit to approve PC Resolution No. 2017-10. Motion passed by the following vote:

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

NEW BUSINESS:

None

PUBLIC MEETING(S):

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

MATTERS INITIATED BY PLANNING COMMISSION AND STAFF

None

REPORTS:

Commissioner Kachel attended the LAFCO workshop, along with Commissioner Condit and City Staff. It was good to attend and get caught up on some of the topics that were covered. LAFCO has a new Commissioner, so it was the perfect time to have a workshop. He appreciated being notified of the event.

Commissioner Molina remarked that normally the City Attorney doesn't have anything to report, but announced that Mr. LaGrassa got married recently.

Director of Community Development Tom Westbrook reported that there will be two more Concerts-in-the-Park events this season; one tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. and the last concert on July 25th, Senator Cannella will be in attendance. He was instrumental in securing some funding for a potential ACE Train stop in Ceres and we want to thank him for his efforts.

Director of Engineering Services/City Engineer Daryl Jordan reminded the Commission that 4th Street businesses are still open during construction. If you're patronizing those businesses, please continue to do so.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Commission adjourned at 6:20 p.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting of Monday, August 7, 2017.

APPROVED:



Hugo Molina, Vice-Chairperson

ATTEST:



Tom Westbrook, Secretary