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2
3 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
4 **PINOLE PLANNING COMMISSION**
5

6 **August 23, 2021**
7

8 **DUE TO THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA'S DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY – THIS**
9 **MEETING WAS HELD PURSUANT TO AUTHORIZATION FROM GOVERNOR**
10 **NEWSOM'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS – CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION MEETINGS**
11 **WERE NO LONGER OPEN TO IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE. THE MEETING WAS**
12 **HELD VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCE.**
13

14
15 **A. CALL TO ORDER:** 7:03 P.M.
16

17 **B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL**
18

19 Commissioners Present: Benzuly, Kurrent, Martinez, Wong, Vice Chair Moriarty,
20 Chair Banuelos
21

22 Commissioners Absent: None
23

24 Staff Present: David Hanham, Planning Manager
25 Michael Laughlin, Interim Community Development Director
26 Alex Mog, Assistant City Attorney
27 Justin Shiu, Contract Planner
28

29 **C. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**
30

31 James _____, Pinole, suggested the description for Agenda Item G1 was vague in
32 that the item should have been more descriptive in terms of what the Planning
33 Commission was being asked to discuss. He asked staff to clarify the intended
34 discussion to allow public participation. He also asked about the status of the
35 following projects: Dr. Lee's Ophthalmology Center, the stark white colors of the
36 exterior of the building were to be toned down but had yet to be modified; an
37 ingress/egress problem continued to persist for the major driveways for the Kaiser
38 building, dialysis center, Starbucks entry and the main entry for Sprouts, and he
39 recommended signage and landscaping; and questioned what was being done to
40 address the pre-erosion issues with the creek area behind the Sprouts building
41 and the bowling alley. He added that comments in the form of e-mails and letters
42 had been provided to staff on those issues in 2020 and 2021, although there had
43 been no response from staff.
44

1 Planning Manager David Hanham reported that there had been agreement to the
2 colors for Dr. Lee's Ophthalmology Center in 2017 and the Planning Commission
3 had recently approved a new landscape plan which would offset the stark white
4 colors of the building, and trees had been installed to screen the starkness of the
5 building. He clarified that Agenda Item G1 was an informational item for the Three
6 Corridors Specific Plan and no changes had been recommended to the Plan. As
7 to the creek area behind Sprouts, an update would be provided as part of Agenda
8 Item H. In addition, the ingress/egress issue that had been raised would have to
9 be researched by staff to determine whether the Public Works Department was
10 conducting any work in the area.

11
12 **D. MEETING MINUTES:**

13
14 1. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from June 28, 2021

15
16 **MOTION** with a Roll Call Vote to adopt the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
17 from June 28, 2021, as submitted.

18
19 **MOTION: Benzuly SECONDED: Moriarty APPROVED: 6-0**

20
21 **E. PUBLIC HEARINGS: None**

22
23 **F. OLD BUSINESS: None**

24
25 **G. NEW BUSINESS:**

26
27 1. Three Corridors Specific Plan: Informational and Discussion Item

28
29 Planning Manager Hanham provided a PowerPoint presentation of the City of
30 Pinole's Three Corridors Specific Plan (which governed the San Pablo Avenue,
31 Pinole Valley Road and Appian Way corridors) to be reviewed by the Planning
32 Commission over the next few meetings in terms of the Plan's relationship to the
33 General Plan and Pinole Zoning Ordinance, primarily given the submittal of five
34 multifamily residential applications totaling approximately 606 units in the Three
35 Corridors Specific Plan area.

36
37 The goal of the Three Corridors Specific Plan was to preserve the character of
38 Pinole and support commercial and residential development that could function as
39 the catalyst for economic revitalization and further the City's goals and objectives;
40 enhance Old Town Pinole as a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented commercial destination
41 with a strong civic identity; encourage Transit Oriented Development (TOD) within
42 the Priority Development Areas (PDAs) on San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road,
43 and Appian Way; and support economic development that would bring more
44 housing, retail, and employment opportunities to the community.

1 Responding to the Commission, Mr. Hanham and Assistant City Attorney Alex Mog
2 clarified:

- 3
- 4 • State housing laws, density requirements, the City's parking requirements,
5 and affordable housing concessions.
6
- 7 • Impacts from parking and vehicles in the downtown commercial areas,
8 encouraging the use of public transit and other types of transportation would
9 all be considered on an application-by-application basis.
10
- 11 • The City may mandate improvements directly tied to a project. As an
12 example, sidewalk improvements directly in front of a property could be
13 required but the City may not mandate that an applicant provide a sidewalk
14 improvement plan for the entire City.
15
- 16 • More citywide projects had been implemented via the use of impact fees
17 where a developer would contribute an impact fee based on the expected
18 impact from a project, with a study to identify any impacts.
19
- 20 • Projects subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) would
21 have to mitigate any environmental impacts associated with the project,
22 although most applications received by the City within the Three Corridors
23 Specific Plan area would be exempt from CEQA requirements.
24
- 25 • Pinole Valley Road had been identified as a gateway into the City of
26 Pinole/Old Town. Signature gateway features included gateway and branding
27 plans and would require community input given that much of the public
28 improvements would be in the right-of-way (ROW). Future discussions on a
29 wayfinding plan, which would outline different signage types for the gateways
30 and entries, would be encouraged with the possible use of grants or
31 partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
32
- 33 • The Three Corridors Specific Plan had been adopted by the City Council in
34 2010. Over the past 11 years the City had governed San Pablo Avenue,
35 Pinole Valley Road, and Appian Way using design guidelines and land use
36 standards from the Specific Plan. With the submittal of new applications in
37 the Three Corridors Specific Plan area, now was the time to discuss what the
38 City wanted for the future given more information available in terms of reuse,
39 all electric buildings, sustainability and new technologies.
40
- 41 • A senior housing project proposed for Roble and San Pablo Avenues would
42 be presented to the Planning Commission in the near future. Staff was in the
43 process of preparing conditions of approval and all issues would be reviewed
44 including potential safety measures and potential implementation of
45 stoplights.

- Sustainability, energy measures and overall landscaping would be reviewed and considered for all future projects.
- A State requirement for emergency shelters and temporary homes allowed by right was clarified.
- Staff was in agreement to avoid piecemeal planning given the cost of the Three Corridors Specific Plan, and staff acknowledged there may be policies and procedures as part of the Housing Element Update that may dictate other additional housing units in the mixed use areas of the City.
- Pinole Vista Shopping Center was the last property in the Appian Way Specific Plan area.
- Adding Fitzgerald Drive as the last (fourth) corridor could be an interesting idea since Fitzgerald Drive served as an entry corridor off of I-80, and there were opportunities that could be considered.
- The City Council Ordinance Subcommittee had been intended as a committee for updates from the City Council, but if the Planning Commission wanted to bring the idea of Fitzgerald Drive as a fourth corridor, Planning Commissioners may e-mail City Council members; ask the City Manager to place an item on a City Council agenda for discussion; or Planning Commissioners may participate in a City Council meeting and ask the City Council to decide whether to place the idea on a future agenda for further discussion.
- The City Council and Planning Commission had met jointly in the past to discuss specific projects and yearly to discuss general issues. A joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting would allow a general discussion of ideas; and
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds included certain parameters for eligible expenses, with the funds generally intended to be used on items directly related to the impacts of COVID-19.

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

Rafael Menis, Pinole, asked for clarification and the status of a number of items in the Three Corridors Specific Plan including: Page 41, referenced a plan to narrow San Pablo Avenue and Page 170 included more detailed discussion on narrowing the street from four to two through lanes; Page 46 included a discussion of active use open space park land on the hill near Appian Way and Doctor's Medical Center, and Page 89 included further discussion. He asked for consideration to open the open space area to allow more public access via public trails.

1 Mr. Menis also referred to Page 114 where there had been a discussion on the
2 expansion of shared public parking and possibly a parking garage in Old Town Pinole
3 to relieve individual projects of the obligation to provide parking on-site. He asked
4 whether any of the overall parking studies had determined that a garage was not
5 needed. He noted a prior discussion of public transit links and improvements to
6 public transit access in Pinole, and possibly a Park and Ride lot in a central area of
7 downtown Pinole.

8
9 Mr. Menis added that Page 32, Chapter 1, had discussed the core community
10 character goals of the General Plan and how they tied into the Three Corridors
11 Specific Plan, although in terms of sustainability only a brief paragraph had been
12 included on Page 57, and it had not included the community character goals which
13 should be further identified. He understood the Three Corridors Specific Plan had
14 last been updated in June 2020.

15 16 PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

17
18 In response to the public comment, Chairperson Banuelos provided an overview of
19 the background of the potential plans to narrow San Pablo Avenue to generate a
20 greater walking presence in the look and feel of the street, although San Pablo
21 Avenue had been designated as a regional road requiring a certain number of lanes,
22 and any bulb-out of areas for landscaping or seating would be in direct conflict with
23 the State requirements. He noted that when initially discussed, there had been
24 significant reaction from local businesses in the immediate downtown that had been
25 concerned with fewer lanes on San Pablo Avenue possibly impacting deliveries to
26 the businesses.

27
28 Commissioner Kurrent stated that San Pablo Avenue was considered a route of
29 regional significance as defined by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority
30 (CCTA) and any changes to routes of regional significance must be approved by the
31 CCTA. Also, a reduction of lanes would create traffic issues and the narrowing of
32 lanes would be in opposition to Measure J. As a result, the idea to reduce lanes on
33 San Pablo Avenue had ultimately not been pursued.

34
35 Chairperson Banuelos also commented that a parking garage by the U.S. Post Office
36 had been discussed in the past as part of the City's Redevelopment Agency. Given
37 the cost of a parking garage, it had not be pursued. He added that sustainability had
38 not been a high consideration when the Three Corridors Specific Plan had been
39 adopted in 2010. He also pointed out that current building codes required green
40 building practices, the transit area located in the City of Hercules had not been in
41 place when the Three Corridors Specific Plan had been adopted, and a certain
42 amount of area was needed for Park and Ride lots. While there had been past
43 discussions to take over the former shopping center in Tara Hills to install a transit
44 center, those discussions had not formalized into a project.

1 Mr. Hanham stated the City could work with business owners on Fitzgerald Drive to
2 designate a certain portion of their lots for Park and Ride use, Monday through Friday
3 in the outlying area of the parking lots and there were other ways to consider those
4 options. He acknowledged that while sustainability efforts had not been part of the
5 discussion in 2010, with the enhanced requirements of Title 24, Building Energy
6 Efficiency Standards and with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
7 (LEED) Certification standards, the City's plans must be updated. He understood
8 that would be a topic of discussion when the City had a new Community
9 Development Director.

10
11 Mr. Hanham reported he had done some research with the West Contra Costa
12 Transportation Advisory Committee (WCCTAC) as related to the number of lanes
13 required for San Pablo Avenue, and advised as part of the San Pablo Avenue Vehicle
14 Bridge project, San Pablo Avenue would be narrowed to two lanes and staff was
15 working with WCCTAC and Caltrans on funding opportunities. At that time, the
16 community would have a sense of what it would be like with a roadway reduced to
17 two lanes, which would be studied as part of the process for the bridge project and
18 WCCTAC's goal to get as much traffic through the area during the peak period as
19 possible.

20
21 Chairperson Banuelos also suggested the impacts of driverless vehicles should be
22 considered in the future.

23
24 Mr. Hanham acknowledged there was work being done with Google, Google Maps
25 and other mapping companies related to driverless vehicles and the road network.

26
27 As to open space on Appian Way referenced by Mr. Menis, Mr. Hanham advised that
28 most of the land was privately owned and the City would have to obtain easements
29 and work with the property owners to create trails in those areas.

30
31 The Planning Commission looked forward to more information, presentations and
32 insight on potential ideas and Mr. Hanham explained as part of the next
33 presentation on the San Pablo Avenue Corridor, the Planning Commission would
34 discuss opportunities and constraints, zoning and land use and then work through
35 the remaining corridors after that.

36
37 Vice Chairperson Moriarty encouraged the public to review the Three Corridors
38 Specific Plan. She looked forward to a future discussion of a gateway plan for
39 Pinole Valley Road into Old Town and the public realm sections of the Three
40 Corridors Specific Plan. She also urged creative use of the ARPA funds to assist
41 the community.

42
43 Chairperson Banuelos commented that many projects that had been controversial
44 had occurred prior to the implementation of the Three Corridors Specific Plan,
45 including the Pinole Valley Shopping Center which had a lot of moving parts.

1 The City Council at that time had allowed a variance for around 100 parking spaces
2 less than required which had generated a rejection of the project, which had been
3 appealed by the then City Council, although since the shopping center was in dire
4 need of renovation that had led to the reduction in parking. He agreed that
5 Fitzgerald Drive should be its own corridor. He also detailed the history and intent
6 of the Three Corridors Specific Plan, General Plan and Zoning ordinance, along
7 with the quick advancements related to autonomous vehicles.

8
9 Chairperson Banuelos also recognized there was a housing crisis and greater
10 interest in public transportation and that the development anticipated in the Three
11 Corridors Specific Plan area would have impacts on residents in the future. He
12 wanted a map of the proposed and anticipated development in the Three Corridors
13 Specific Plan area to be provided to Commissioners along with another area plan
14 for Fitzgerald Drive. He also sought ways to generate improvements with respect
15 to more defined bicycle paths, and wider sidewalks on San Pablo Avenue near the
16 Senior Center. He urged a review of the projects as a whole as opposed to a
17 piecemeal approach.

18
19 Mr. Hanham advised he would start identifying future projects in the Three
20 Corridors Specific Plan area and could provide that information at a future meeting.

21 22 **H. CITY PLANNER'S / COMMISSIONERS' REPORT**

23
24 Mr. Hanham reported the Vista Woods project had been tentatively scheduled for
25 Planning Commission consideration on September 13, 2021; and 2151 Appian
26 Way and 2801 Pinole Valley Road projects had environmental contracts signed
27 and were ready for the environmental work to proceed with the goal for all of the
28 projects to be entitled by January or February 2022. He continued to work with the
29 City Clerk on e-mail addresses for the Planning Commission, the Request for
30 Proposal (RFP) for the Housing Element Update was ready to go out, and
31 interviews for the vacancy on the Planning Commission would be held this week.

32
33 Mr. Hanham added that in discussions with the former Development Services
34 Director, he had been informed that the West County Storm Drain Protection
35 District had stipulated no trees around the creek area behind Sprouts, although
36 there had been some enhanced landscaping in the medians for the project as well
37 as some signage but was uncertain it had all been signed-off. As to the trail behind
38 Sprouts, most of which was located on private property, staff was working with the
39 property owner to maintain the area.

40
41 Vice Chairperson Moriarty expressed the willingness to send information to Mr.
42 Hanham via e-mail related to the history of the trees that were to have been planted
43 in the creek area behind Sprouts; Chairperson Banuelos recalled the original
44 landscape plan had discussed signage; and Mr. Hanham reported he had
45 reviewed the records and the Planning Commission's approval in 2015, and was
46 uncertain whether the landscape plans had been amended since then.

1 Vice Chairperson Moriarty inquired of the status of the tree replacement at the
2 property at 2518 San Pablo Avenue, and Interim Community Development Director
3 Michael Laughlin reported that staff had been working with the Public Works
4 Department on pricing for the tree, grate, and maintenance, with the property
5 owner to provide a deposit.
6

7 Vice Chairperson Moriarty asked the status of the Pinole Square landscape plan
8 and Mr. Hanham advised the applicant had requested and received approval for
9 the extension for the project, staff was processing the Parcel Map, and he hoped
10 it would generate movement on the landscape plan.
11

12 Mr. Laughlin reported the next week was his last week with the City of Pinole. He
13 wished the Planning Commission well as they moved forward.
14

15 The Planning Commission wished Mr. Laughlin well on his next endeavor.
16

17 **I. COMMUNICATIONS:** None
18

19 **J. NEXT MEETING**
20

21 The next meeting of the Planning Commission to be a Regular Meeting scheduled
22 for September 13, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.
23

24 **K. ADJOURNMENT:** 9:15 P.M.
25

26 Transcribed by:
27

28 Sherri D. Lewis
29 Transcriber
30