

SIERRA VISTA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 3, 2015
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
Meeting Minutes

The Regular Meeting of the Sierra Vista Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Members Present: Joe Kraps, Chair
 Bruce Piepho
 Ruben Miranda
 Bob Simon
 Dave Grieshop
 Sharon Lake

Members Absent: Kevin Jorgenson, Vice Chair

Staff Present: Donald Brush, Community Development
 Jeff Pregler, Community Development

Council Present: Councilmember Rachel Gray

Public Input: Bob Gent, Tourism Commission/Astronomer
 Ted Forte, Huachuca Astronomy Club
 David Roemer, Huachuca Astronomy Club

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:

Mr. Simon made the motion to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lake.

VOTE: Approved by a vote of 6-0.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

1. Mr. Simon made the motion to accept the minutes of February 3, 2015. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miranda.

VOTE: Approved by a vote of 6-0.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Mr. Kraps restated his comments that the City should fund projects that improve existing infrastructure rather than new infrastructure.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Kraps opened the meeting to the public.

There being no one wishing to speak Mr. Kraps closed the meeting to the public.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Resolution 1125, Abandonment of an 8-foot wide Public Utility Easement and a 1-foot vehicular non-access easement.

Mr. Kraps recused himself due to a potential conflict of interest with this request. Mr. Piepho continued with the proceedings.

Mr. Simon made the motion to approve the abandonments with a condition. Ms. Lake seconded the motion.

Mr. Pregler presented the staff report. In his presentation, Mr. Pregler stated that staff was recommending a condition of approval that requires a portion of Technology Drive right-of-way be abandoned within one year following the issuance of the certificate of occupancy. The abandonments will on the March 26 City Council agenda.

Mr. Piepho opened the meeting to the public. There being no response, Mr. Piepho closed the meeting to the public.

There were no additional questions from the Commission.

VOTE: 5-0 to recommend approval of the abandonments with the condition that a portion of Technology Drive be abandoned within one year after the issuance of the certificate of occupancy.

3. Resolution 1126, Development Code Amendments to Article 151.02, Definitions, 151.10, Sign Regulations, and 151.11, Outdoor Light Control

Mr. Miranda made the motion to approve the Development Code text amendments. Mr. Simon seconded the motion.

Mr. Pregler gave the staff presentation which included a brief history of the amendment process and a summation of the proposed amendments.

Mr. Piepho asked when referencing the message display time what the standard display time was for Cochise County and the City of Tucson. (Staff is recommending 15 seconds.) Mr. Pregler indicated that Cochise County has a message display time of 5 minutes and the City of Tucson has a display time of 24 hours.

The proposed amendments indicate that a Special Use Permit (Comprehensive Sign Plan) cannot be used to exceed the standards of the digital display portion of a sign. Mr. Pregler stated that the only process available to a business owner to exceed the standards for a digital display is through the variance process. Mr. Piepho asked about the difference between a variance request and a

Comprehensive Sign Plan. Mr. Pregler indicated that the Comprehensive Sign Plan can only be used for Shopping Centers and Commercial/Industrial subdivisions for the intent of providing additional signage than would otherwise not be allowed by the Development Code. However, there is an architectural element associated with the Comprehensive Sign Plan which considers the architecture of the entire center or subdivision. The variance process requires that the business owner prove a hardship as the basis for additional signage. Under the variance process, there is a higher standard for hardship as the applicant is required to meet five separate criteria, making the granting of a variance unlikely.

Mr. Piepho asked if the Special Use Permit process can be used to provide flexibility for the business owner, such as asking for a higher brightness level than what would be required in the code. Mr. Pregler stated that providing flexibility is always encouraged and indicated that if there were requests from the businesses to change a specific standard, that the Special Use Permit process could be used to address their concerns. However, Mr. Pregler did not support adding language to the current amendments allowing the use of the Special Use Permit process for digital displays.

Mr. Grieshop indicated that traffic safety should be paramount when considering the proposed amendments. He suggested that the Commission start with more conservative numbers to address traffic safety issues and stated that the Sign Code could always be amended in the future should the standards not provide the benefit needed to the businesses. He specifically referenced the standards for message display time and sign brightness levels.

Mr. Kraps opened the meeting to the public.

Mr. Bob Gent stated that many of the dark sky concerns have been addressed, however, he recommended that 100 nits be the maximum level of sign brightness. He also stated that distraction to drivers should also be considered and recommended that the message display length exceed 15 seconds.

Mr. Ted Forte recommended that 100 nits be the maximum level of sign brightness and also agreed that it's easier to start with conservative numbers and amend if necessary in the future.

Mr. David Roemer agreed that 100 nits should be the maximum level of sign brightness and that the message display length should be increased to reduce driver distraction.

There being no additional public comments, Mr. Kraps closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Kraps asked if digital displays could consist of a 3-sided sign. Mr. Pregler stated that the amendments propose only a 2-sided sign for Electronic Message Center signs (EMC's).

Mr. Kraps asked to clarify the difference between a Special Use Permit and Comprehensive Sign Plan. Mr. Pregler stated that the Comprehensive Sign Plan was a type of Special Use Permit and that the terms are used interchangeably.

Mr. Miranda asked about the origination of the 8 second and 5 minute message display standard. Mr. Pregler indicated that the 8 second standard originated with the Digital Sign Task Force and is

considered the industry standard for digital billboards. He further states that the 5 minute standard originated with the Cochise County Lighting Code.

Since there was not a consensus on the message display length during the work sessions, Mr. Kraps asked for discussion and resolution on this issue. It was decided unanimously that the Commission would recommend a 15 second display time consistent with staff's recommendation.

Mr. Kraps asked for discussion and resolve on the maximum nit level. Mr. Grieshop, Mr. Piepho, Ms. Lake, and Mr. Simon stated that their recommendation would be to have a maximum brightness level of 100 nits as this will provide the greatest amount of protection and preservation to the dark skies. Mr. Miranda and Mr. Kraps recommended a maximum brightness level of 200 nits. Mr. Miranda stated that his decision reflected the recommendation of the Task Force which also recommended a 200 nit maximum.

Mr. Piepho moved to amend the motion to state that a majority of the Commission recommends a 100 nit maximum brightness level and that two Commission members recommend a 200 nit maximum brightness level which is reflective of the Digital Sign Task Force recommendation. Mr. Miranda seconded the amendment.

VOTE: 6-0 to approve the amendment to the motion.

Mr. Simon made the motion to approve the motion as amended. Mr. Grieshop seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6-0 to approve the amended motion.

Mr. Brush stated that the Mayor and City Council will hold a work session to discuss the amendments on March 24 and hold a public hearing on April 9.

UPDATES ON PROJECTS

Mr. Brush gave an update on the following:

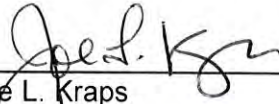
- 1) The Fed Ex Ground site plan was approved by the Development Review Committee on February 23, 2015 and the building plans are currently under review.
- 2) The Verizon communications tower proposed at the Vista Transit Center was approved by City Council on February 12. Verizon will be submitting a request for a Conditional Use Permit for another tower located behind the new hospital on Colonia De Salud.
- 3) The AT&T mono-pine tower at the Windemere Hotel will be fitted with new foliage beginning on Tuesday March 10.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON COMMENTS:

Councilmember Gray stated that she has been impressed with the process that the text amendments have gone through. She confirmed the City Council hearing dates.

ADJOURNMENT

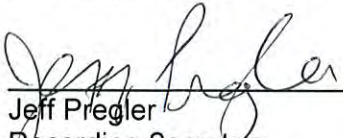
Mr. Kraps adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:00 p.m.



Joe L. Kraps
Chair
Planning & Zoning Commission



Donald Brush, AICP
Executive Secretary
Planning & Zoning Commission



Jeff Pregler
Recording Secretary