

Citizen Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2011

Present: All members of the CAC except for those listed below.

Absent: Tony Catrino, Bruce Friedrichs, Wolf Gutscher, Jerry Hauser, Nancy Spivey, and Richard Young.

Staff: Planning Director Nancy Kaufman, facilitator Ben Noble, and Contract Planner Julia Capasso.

1. Announcements

Helen Heitkamp announced the publication of the new *Larkspur Past and Present* book and distributed a flyer for the book's launch party on April 9 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. Invitations will also be mailed.

2. Public Comment.

Barbara Salzman, President of the Marin Audubon Society and Larkspur resident, made the following comments:

- She has lived in Larkspur for almost 40 years and her husband owns a business in town.
- She was surprised there are no environmental representatives on the Citizen Advisory Committee.
- An important component of General Plans is protecting the natural environment.
- There are two or three endangered species in the City, including Clapper Rail, spotted owl, and steelhead trout.
- The marshes at the mouth of the creek are protected ecological reserves owned by the State and managed by the Department of Fish and Game, which are home to a core population of Clapper Rails.
- The Committee has to consider the impacts of development on all habitats, including the marsh areas along Corte Madera Creek.
- Sea level rise is another reason to not develop in vulnerable shoreline areas.

3. Staff report on the status of the SMART Station Area Plan grant application and opportunities for committee participation.

Planning Director Kaufman stated that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has delayed consideration of grant applications to March 2, 2011. She suggested to the City Council that Committee members continue to serve on the committee for the Station Area Plan. The commitment would be a minimum of 18 months. She will revise the Work Program for the General Plan Update if the grant application is approved, but until then the Committee will continue following the original Work Program.

Council member Joan Lundstrom urged everyone interested in the Station Area Plan to continue serving. This is an opportunity for the City to get money from MTC, as well as Caltrans and the Transportation Authority of Marin, to take a hard look at this area. All the questions the Committee has raised, including sea level rise and the unique mix of uses, will be covered in this study.

Ms. Kaufman asked that Committee members email her or Ms. Capasso by the first week of April to indicate whether they are interested in extending their participation to the Station Area Plan.

4. Staff report on status of selection process for consultants for General Plan Update EIR.

Ms. Kaufman stated that Planning staff sent out a Request for Qualifications to establish a list of environmental consultants to be used on a rotating basis when project applications are received or the City has a need for environmental consultants. They have completed interviews and will be taking a list of recommended consultants to the City Council for review. They will send out Requests for Proposals to consultants on that list for specific proposals for the General Plan EIR.

Elise Semonian asked whether the Station Area Plan will address needed infrastructure or public service improvements. Ms. Kaufman said that the environmental review process would address any impacts on schools and public services, if applicable. The EIR could identify the impact as an unavoidable significant impact.

Nancy Nakai asked whether the list of consultants had an adequate representation of non-local consultants. She knows there has been complaints and at times litigation in the past when consultants are too invested in local politics. It's better to bring someone from the outside in instead of having someone local who may be biased. Ms. Kaufman said that the list is a mix of large out of the area firms and smaller local firms. The initial list for consultants is often for small projects that smaller firms are better suited for.

5. Presentation and Discussion of Subarea 1 (North Magnolia) alternative scenario.

Ms. Kaufman thanked Committee members Jared Polsky, David Sternberg, and Joakim Osthus who participated in a subcommittee to determine whether the Committee's desired circulation improvements on North Magnolia Avenue could be accommodated. The end result is a draft sketch that shows how sidewalks, new parallel parking on the west side, and bike lanes could fit in the existing right-of-way. The roadway would remain at three lanes- retaining the middle turn lane- though the lanes would be slightly reduced in width (the reduced width is a standard width). The parallel parking stalls are eight feet wide, and sidewalks and bike lanes are five feet wide.

Most of the proposed improvements could be accommodated by removing the bulb-outs on the west side of the street, which provide some landscaping (though many are not maintained or are empty). The redesign shows that parking would be reduced by 5 spaces over what is currently available. The subcommittee did not address the Committee's land use suggestions, such as moving the buildings up to the property line with parking behind, or having restaurants or residential above the existing commercial on the west side of the street; staff is instead suggesting that these ideas be studied in a Local Area or Community Plan.

Daniel Kunstler asked about the pedestrian and bicycle boardwalk that was suggested by one of the Committee subgroups in November. Ms. Kaufman said that the subcommittee didn't go into the properties on that side of the street, and it is something that could be explored though it is an issue with the marsh adjacent.

James Holmes expressed concern about the reduced width of the travel lanes and the proximity of parked cars to the travel lanes. He equated the lane widths to those of the Golden Gate Bridge. Mr. Osthus stated that the narrowing of the lanes and the on-street parking are both mitigation measures to slow down the traffic along this corridor and make it more friendly and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. The width is narrower, but is still within the standard lane widths that are used in downtown areas. Ms. Kaufman noted that the Golden Gate Bridge is a highway and very

different from this corridor, which is much slower moving. The narrower lanes should allow for slower, calmer traffic.

Mr. Sternberg stated that currently bicyclists are on the street with no bike lane, so even though the current lanes might be one foot wider, bikes and cars intermingle. The sidewalk, which runs alongside the buildings, is not used by pedestrians who often walk through the parking area in front of the businesses. The design arranges the bike lanes, sidewalks, and on-street parking so there is room for the businesses to create outdoor seating and landscaping to create a community feel. There are many stop signs on that corridor that prevent people from speeding. Ms. Lundstrom said that as a longtime resident in that neighborhood, she can say there is no speeding along that corridor. Also, the merchants along that corridor really wanted the turn-lane both for merchandise loading and for access. Mr. Polsky added that the 11 foot lanes are adjacent to the five foot bike lanes, so they are effectively a lot wider. It was a simple math exercise to fit the travel lanes, bike lanes, parking, and sidewalks.

Julie Leitzell asked whether the Committee will vote on the sketch as proposed to decide whether it will be included in the General Plan. Ms. Kaufman said that first the Committee should give general feedback, and then staff will ask Committee members to volunteer to speak with business owners along North Magnolia to get their feedback. The Committee will then hold a public meeting with the residents and business owners to further discuss the area. After that point, the Committee could make refinements to the proposed redesign and make a formal recommendation.

Mr. Kunstler asked whether the Committee should adopt the general idea of the sketch and then have a session where amendments would be voted on before bringing it to for public review. Ms. Kaufman said that it is a good idea not to have a formal sketch when doing public outreach so it doesn't appear that the plan is set in stone and not open to change. Mr. Kunstler asked if the dimensions of parking stalls are mandated by the State. Ms. Kaufman said that they are determined by the City municipal code. Mr. Kunstler said that the 24 foot length of the stalls seems to be geared more towards larger vehicles that aren't as common today. Ms. Kaufman said that the City's regulations are very similar to surrounding communities.

Ms. Semonian asked whether the bike path on the east side can be installed now. Ms. Kaufman said it could be made a priority for the Department of Public Works, but would take surveying to adjust the striping. Ms. Nakai referred to the handout that listed comments made by Committee members at the November 8, 2010 meeting, in particular the comments regarding reducing to two lanes and creating a meandering pathway. This sketch does not represent those comments. She is also concerned with the amount of paving that the proposed redesign will entail and the removal of the existing landscaping. Mr. Osthus responded that landscaping could be provided in front of the businesses. Ms. Kaufman stated that the City could require businesses to provide landscaping when they submit applications. Mr. Noble clarified that the handout was a summary of the comments and suggestions made the Committee members and not all the ideas were considered by the subcommittee. The subcommittee focused on accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists better along this corridor, which was the Committee's general direction.

Mike Koeppel said he often bicycles on North Magnolia and he would appreciate having the bike lanes, but he wondered if they were wider than necessary. Mr. Osthus said that it was a standard size, and when a lane is directly adjacent to parallel parking it could even be a bit wider. Mr. Holmes was concerned that bike lanes would encourage bicyclists to ride abreast in the road and disrupt vehicular flow. Ms. Kaufman said that in her experience if bicyclists want to do that, they will do so no matter whether there is a lane or not.

Mr. Sternberg said that in San Francisco a volunteer organization coordinates tree planting for property owners, which decreases the cost as it is done en masse. Perhaps this could be done in Larkspur. Mike Folk asked whether there is a required setback for commercial development, as it appeared as if the buildings were all setback from the property lines. Ms. Kaufman responded that there was none. Ari Blum said that currently the landscaping is very visually oriented, attractive to drivers passing through, but it's not really for living in. The proposed outdoor areas in front of businesses seemed more in line with what the Committee discussed in terms of creating a second downtown.

James Moore said that it was very important to retain the middle turn lane. Ms. Semonian said that it might be prudent to mention in the General Plan that the middle lane should be retained. Mr. Polsky asked whether the General Plan can promote zoning incentives so that development of landscape and outdoor seating areas would provide for increased Floor Area Ratio or different parking requirements. Ms. Kaufman said yes.

Ms. Robin Gueth, owner of Stress Management Center on Magnolia Ave. and resident of North Magnolia area, made the following comments:

- Planting trees or other vegetation right in front of business fronts can block signage; this is not desirable to merchants.
- Parking is always an issue for businesses in this area and can determine whether a business can be established. If the parking is removed from the private property and put in the right-of-way, it will eliminate the on-site parking they have and will harm the merchant's ability to open a business.
- She would like to know if the reduced parking standards in the Downtown can be expanded to this area.

Ms. Kaufman stated that the City Council currently has a parking subcommittee looking at the parking standards. She noted that Ms. Gueth made a good point that policies should ensure that business owners aren't penalized for losing that parking. David Esposito asked whether podium parking could take care of the parking issue. Ms. Kaufman said that the General Plan suggests adopted a Local or Community Plan that can take a closer look at those types of site-specific options.

Mr. Noble summarized the concerns raised by the Committee, including concerns with the width of the travel lanes and bike lanes, removal of landscaping, sizes of parking spaces, and loss of parking and its impact on merchants.

Ms. Kaufman asked for volunteers to walk North Magnolia Ave. and speak with business owners about the proposed draft improvements. She said that staff will draft incentive policies to encourage property owners to landscape their property's frontage and provide at the next meeting. They will also provide a copy of the sketch for the Committee members to bring along. Ms. Nakai suggested developing a protocol and set list of questions for the volunteers so they have a uniform approach.

Mr. Folk asked about opportunities for greening or parklets on the east side of the street. Ms. Semonian asked if islands with landscaping were considered in the middle lane. Ms. Kaufman responded that they had looked at islands but found there was not enough space in between intersections and driveways to safely accommodate it. Other ideas for the east side of the street could be addressed in a Local or Community Plan.

6. Presentation and Distribution of draft Introduction and Land Use Element.

Ms. Kaufman stated that staff welcomes volunteers from the Committee to take a closer look at all the draft Elements as they are available. If anyone has a specific interest in an Element, they should email her or Ms. Capasso.

Ms. Capasso presented a summary of major changes from the 1990 Land Use Element, and a comparison chart that tracked changes to the 1990 Land Use Element goals, policies, and programs. (See handouts provided.) She noted that much of the original content from the 1990 Land Use Element has been retained, though it has been shifted into different locations in the Draft Element.

Barbara Salzman made the following comments:

- She asked when the Committee will be looking at the Environmental Resources Element, and said that the Land Use Element should be looked at along with the Environmental Resource Element.
- Different sections should repeat a particular restriction or constraint.

Ms. Kaufman said that the Committee will be looking at each Element and consistency will be achieved between all General Plan Elements. There will be public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council before anything is adopted. Alice Anderson referred to former Policy b which states that residential development density should not have an unacceptable impact on the street system serving the area, and asked why it was removed in the Draft Land Use Element. Ms. Capasso stated that former Policy a (or Policy 1.1 in the Draft Element) already required considerations on the circulation system when determining residential densities, which made Policy b redundant.

7. Next Steps

Mr. Noble stated that the Committee should review the Draft Land Use Element alongside the 1990 Land Use Element and should provide feedback at the next meeting. Feedback should focus on the main themes and ideas behind the draft goals, policies, and programs rather than on wording. The subcommittee to edit the Draft Land Use Element will look at the Draft after the Committee gives feedback. The subcommittee should attempt to have a final draft by the end of March. The Draft Land Use Subcommittee consists of Daniel Kunstler, James Holmes, and Nancy Nakai.

Next meeting: March 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The CAC will discuss the Draft Land Use Element and Draft Introduction.

Adjournment

The CAC adjourned at 8:35 p.m.