

MONO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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MINUTES

May 9, 2013
(Adopted June 13, 2013)

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Scott Bush, Chris Lizza, Mary Pipersky, Dan Roberts, Rodger B. Thompson
STAFF PRESENT: Scott Burns, CDD director; Gerry Le Francois, principal planner; Heather deBethizy, associate planner; Brent Calloway & Wendy Sugimura, CDD associate analysts; Nick Criss, compliance officer; Garrett Higerd & Joe Blanchard, public works; Mary Booher, finance; Stacey Simon, assistant county counsel; C.D. Ritter, commission secretary

- 1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Dan Roberts called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. at the county courthouse in Bridgeport and led the pledge of allegiance.
- 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.
- 3. MEETING MINUTES:** Review and adopt minutes of Special Meeting in Mammoth, April 11, 2013.

MOTION: Adopt minutes of Special Meeting April 11, 2013, as amended: 1) Item 4A: ~~Commissioner Thompson asked about eliminating lots by adding to 55. Commissioner Thompson asked that since the number of lots has been reduced, how has the corresponding change in lot acreage been incorporated into the final project? Lehman indicated the acreage was added to selected lots, and one pool/spa lot was eliminated to retain the viewshed.~~

2) Suggestion: When a resolution has many changes, include along with minutes at next meeting to make sure it's correct. (*Bush/Pipersky. Ayes: 5.*)

4. WORKSHOP:

A. TRAILS PLANNING: Heather deBethizy, associate planner, introduced current trail-planning efforts. Staff has worked with RPACs and CAC, with funding from LTC for staff time. Paradise: Small working group of interested persons, Lower Rock Creek accessible to public. Recognize existing trails, make improvements for cyclists such as wider shoulders. Long Valley: Connecting residential areas as future work item. Community survey next month will help decide direction. June Lake: Well-established trails subcommittee of CAC. Gull Lake brochure shows interpretive walk around lake, working with residents and Friends of Inyo. Want to connect Gull Lake trail to Double Eagle Resort and June Mountain. USFS is finishing environmental studies that Mono pays through LTC. Apply for Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant for construction funding. Strong community commitment. Bridgeport: Just starting with RPAC, Jaryd Block, AmeriCorps volunteer, is creating trail maps. Mono Basin: Connect Lee Vining for pedestrians and cyclists. Conceptual trail plan to Mono Basin Visitor Center and connection to Yosemite. Create master trail plan with different alignments, amenities, signage, strategies for long-term maintenance and operations, and partnership opportunities. Antelope Valley: Connection from Mountain Gate Recreational Area to Walker community. USFS is unwilling to create new trails unless Mono takes on construction and maintenance. Look for partnership opportunities that support project and delivery of recreation and tourism services.

Trails as utilitarian or user amenity? Mono is focusing on utilitarian trails within Lee Vining. June Lake has much-more-developed trails plan, with goals for each segment. Focus is on utilitarian trails within canyon to avoid driving cars.

Any work in Tri-Valley area? Went there a few years ago, no interest at that time. Commissioner Thompson noted Chalfant has rerouted to Fish Slough with BLM. Geocaching with GPS is recreational

DISTRICT #1
COMMISSIONER
Mary Pipersky

DISTRICT #2
COMMISSIONER
Rodger B. Thompson

DISTRICT #3
COMMISSIONER
Daniel Roberts

DISTRICT #4
COMMISSIONER
Scott Bush

DISTRICT #5
COMMISSIONER
Chris Lizza

activity going on. Stay out of maintenance responsibility. Scott Burns indicated a visioning process by Chalfant showed mixed feelings on trails. Didn't want to designate them and invite people into the area, yet want access to public lands. Burns noted trails planning is held off at this point until community wants to step forward.

B. BRIDGEPORT MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION PROJECT: Wendy Sugimura reported that staff and Caltrans have gone through project's final report. August 2012 design workshops had amazing turnout by business owners and community, with consensus on what to do. Strong focus on reducing four lanes to two. Back-in angle parking was new, increasing number of parking spaces for more customers, traffic-calming outcome. Caltrans will conduct formal speed survey later this year. Perception is reduced speed, easier crossing. Caltrans was cooperative on project. Other recommendations included land use changes, designs for County roads, and connectivity with Main Street. RPAC continues to work on specific projects.

Commissioner Lizza wondered if it'd be appropriate to wait a season to see traffic flows, or just discuss implementation, not results. *Final report reflects design fair with consensus points to implement then, but mostly to define projects to pursue later. Caltrans wants to evaluate striping plan as is, so no new changes are recommended.* Lizza thought it would be powerful to document results at end of season. Was speed truly reduced? Accident rate? Business improvement? *Caltrans will monitor first two. No way set up to monitor third.*

Store fronts? *Additional grant funding exists for consultant to do more design work of built environment theme. Private property owners have inquired, even new paint and new frontages for unified building theme along Main Street. Communities don't want regulatory aspect, just suggestions. In Bridgeport, it caused people to want to take ownership of main street and frontages, the feel of main street.*

Will drivers who don't use back-in angle parking be cited? *It's a challenge. CHP educates people, but they leave and don't come back. Enforcement eventually will occur.* Commissioner Bush noted more parking, but it's not comfortable. Drivers bypass backing into parking space when they've never had to do it before. *There's no way to measure who moves on through. Notebooks at businesses capture comments. Same maneuver as parallel parking, so in theory should be easier. Maybe uncomfortable as people not used to it. Bike lane intended to be wider for cars to pull out of traffic. Make little nervous at first, but actually easier than parallel or front-in angle parking.*

Bush noted some drivers pull straight in instead of parallel parking. Does traffic flow stop when someone's backing in? All great in theory, but if it doesn't work, is there a backup plan for next season? Could we undo it if it doesn't work? *Not entirely finished, will have other options for RVs and vehicles pulling trailers. If Caltrans sees problems, it will make changes. It's only paint on pavement. Absolute support exists for two travel lanes and center lane. People do not want to go back to how it was before.*

Bush always looks at unintended consequences, so wanted to know of backup plan. It's an uneasy feeling when you can't see around cars parked that way. *Stripe distances used on previous street remain exactly same, and parallel spaces scattered throughout enable better sight distance.*

Garrett Higerd indicated the School Street Plaza project is under way outside right now, with heavy equipment operating. Plan should be consistent throughout Bridgeport. Striping plans for head-in and back-in so they could work with handicapped spaces as well.

Bush has seen drivers cross the center lane to park head-in across the street and back up into traffic because it looked easier. *Backing up into traffic is dangerous. Only other choice was parallel parking. People would pass in bike lane and wider shoulder. Other viable street designs were more costly. Bridgeport seems like an unlikely place for progressive parking.*

Lizza noted people would load/unload cars from sidewalk, not middle of Main Street. Bush thought not that many were on Main Street. Sugimura explained that opening doors funnels people toward sidewalk, not going around the doors. Higerd saw it as safer once cars were in a parking space, but drivers need to watch for pedestrians on sidewalk. Speed difference is reason for bike climbing lanes. In Bridgeport, people were speeding through town.

Sugimura noted parking spaces were designed for old-style vehicles (9.5-10' wide, 20' deep). Bumpers would overhang onto sidewalk originally, but Caltrans denied and increased depth of space from 16' to 20'.

Higerd saw a motorhome backed up so rear tires were 6" off curb, overhanging 5' even with extra space in front. Curb stops would work, but be a hassle for snow removal. Sidewalks are wider now.

Sugimura stated making parking space deeper could find RVs parking farther back, whereas they were not likely to park in 16' space. It will be watched over summer. Better parking for RVs exists off-street.

Commissioner Pipersky asked about Appendix C and requested analysis of implication of figures in economic study on a future agenda. Scott Burns noted Tourism is conducting an economic study, and deBethizy noted it would be a few months off.

C. BRIDGEPORT FACILITIES REPORT: Wendy Sugimura described an unfamiliar, more-complicated issue with steep learning curve. Staffing levels in 2009 were entirely different from current economic uncertainty.

Staffing: Should Mono acquire new land for staff space needs? Retail store frontage is ideal use on Main Street, but staff space would be better use than vacant property. Mono does not need to acquire more land, just use what it has now. Visitor center: Concept was well received as Main Street use, has momentum. Space planning, maintenance issues, and ADA access are involved. Better signage and way-finding are needed as a public service. Use what we have. Relocate medical clinic to removed hospital (expensive utilities) or incorporate into visitor center. Jail: Move jail where Mono County Office of Education (MCOE) exists. Separate jail study was done to qualify for State funds, but Mono didn't compete well with other jails throughout state. Building separate jail in south county where service needs are generated would double cost of staff and operations, so keeping jail in Bridgeport was ideal option. Twin Lakes Road site would be too close to schools. Existing site could expand vertically or horizontally. Coordinate with court system to avoid logistical nightmare proposed in Inyo County. MCOE: Relocate because it doesn't use full building. Note: Big-ticket items exceed Mono's resources. Prioritize needs and timelines. Probation: Department of Justice could take away from County. Need room for computer system. Keep wards of state (juveniles) away from inmates.

Commissioner Lizza cited lack of CAO, who should do this. Grand Jury saw jail roof and probation front door five years ago. Cost of inmate transport from Mammoth to Bridgeport. Why couldn't Mammoth jail be operated by MLPD? Commissioner Bush cited money. MLPD has down-staffed. Cost to build a jail is \$1 million/bed. Where to get that kind of money? Not enough inmates, keep low-level offenders out of jail. Have 30 inmates instead of 40-45. About half stay. Have long-termers the State doesn't want. Courts are more lenient on low-level offenders.

Booher noted that State laws mandate that counties provide jails. Town has no obligation. Mono contracts with Mammoth at \$300,000/yr for dispatch. Jail in south county would be extremely expensive.

Burns noted new Mono Supervisors want to run anything planning related through commission. Need higher-level vision for capital facilities in county. Each community has its own wish list and wants feedback on facilities. Commission is to review annual capital improvements. Hope to clarify process through GP.

Lizza recalled the medical clinic has been an issue a long time, nice to resolve it. Is bond an appropriate way? Booher noted that bond issues require voter approval. Last one took three tries. Lots of energy and effort, not sure would fly in this economy.

Sugimura noted the umbrella for all projects could be the General Plan. Countywide strategy is important.

Commissioner Pipersky noted general hospital closed 20 years ago. Amount of money spent in supporting building is phenomenal. She thought sheriff and hospital most important.

D. CAPITAL FACILITIES PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: Mary Booher noted Buster's market discussion as good example of how not to put ideas out there. Staff thought it could use office space in defiance of General Plan. Every project is priority for its proponent, with funding the #1 issue. Process is to set priorities in thoughtful way. Most of Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is maintenance projects.

Joe Blanchard indicated no process, just whoever's loudest. Go from concept to funding plan with screening committee.

Le Francois described the process as patterned off transportation funding. When projects come in, staff separates wheat from chaff, takes to LTC where Town and County desires emerge. Staffs look at work loads, see where money is. Project is assigned priority and funding identified. Simple projects (<\$10,000) likely not fall into this.

Booher cited condition assessment for facilities, noting minor pavement rehab every five years avoids total resurfacing.

Steering committee input? Le Francois noted LTC and Mono Supervisors emphasize RPAC input. Community member could initiate project, and staff would help with project brief. CSA input is community-driven. Booher noted staff hoped that screening committee would take emotions out of it and balance with needs and facilities throughout county, taking on projects that make the most sense. Facelift of Mono General vs. demolition showed lots of public input doesn't necessarily lead to projects.

Le Francois noted Caltrans tries to have list of projects when funding arrives. Identified need helps get projects through. High Point got state funding instead of Mono funding.

Joe Blanchard described public works as being overwhelmed with outlandish requests. Process still may seem cumbersome. He liked the idea of RPACs for community viewpoints.

When prioritizing, would all money available go to one project? Le Francois replied that for a big project, money would be put aside on incremental basis. Booher noted Mono Supervisors see heavy equipment replacement that previous Board had in place, but now problem is larger. Also, Benton landfill.

Blanchard described safety and accessibility as major focus of projects.

E. HOUSING MITIGATION ORDINANCE: Mary Booher noted Housing Mitigation Ordinance (HMO) requires inclusionary housing in subdivisions. Location factors, jobs created, larger home needs maintenance. Two years ago Mono Supervisors suspended HMO till July 2013, and recently extended suspension 18 months. Money collected over time is \$350,000, with unclear direction on implementation. Some funds were spent to renovate Benton houses and June Lake condo. Lee Vining needed housing and first-time homebuyer support. Bridgeport now has >50% second homes. Businesses in Bridgeport don't have customers in winter to keep them going. Integrity of communities depends on affordable housing. This is a planning issue.

Can a developer pay money into fund in lieu of building units? Money for purchase or rent subsidy? Booher will consult county counsel.

Commissioner Bush noted building one house helps one family; could help more families. People flee Mono to Nevada, leave vacant property with no tax revenue.

Booher noted property values of vacant homes are less, and foreclosures occur. Maybe buy foreclosed house and rent it. Each community has different needs. Options for housing money? Adjust location factors periodically. One board member wants to repeal HMO, two want to suspend, one wants original plan.

F. SIGN REGULATIONS/LED CONSISTENCY: Scott Burns acknowledged Mike Pinizzotto, who attended for this item. Brent Calloway showed photos of Inyo signs. Current Mono requirements: Sign ordinance is dated (20 years old), but intent remains. Examples from Southern California influenced ordinance. Emphasis is on clarity, as sign ordinances can be contentious. Focus today on direction in regulations for how to deal with LED signs. LED signs: Message boards at school properties (no authority there) are animated. Old marquis signs have removable letters. Size is regulated on county signs. Illumination: Want indirect, prohibited neon or internal lighting. Prohibitions: Animated signs, neon, internal lighting. Lighting seems more intense with LEDs. No strong sign policy in General Plan, except Dark Sky Regulations, especially fugitive light. Safety, nuisance, nighttime sky quality and energy conservation are considerations. Maybe dial down intensity of LEDs? Issue was really not vetted, so has been brought to commission for feedback.

Commissioner Bush thought LEDs would be prohibited unless change regulations, could change copy every day. Coleville school sign is visible five miles away. Commissioner Lizza thought LEDs fell squarely under prohibition. Commissioner Roberts thought changeable was OK, but not animated. Bush suggested changeable periodically, but not flashing.

Scott Burns explained any ambiguity of regulations goes to commission for clarification. Compliance has received complaints. Is neon still prohibited, or new lighting source, LED? Maybe daytime use only. A General Plan Amendment could change it. Individual signs could come to commission for interpretation.

Commissioner Lizza noted neon signs at his Mono Market. If LED fits into architectural theme, he saw no need for change. Or just specify neon or LED. Commissioner Pipersky asked if LEDs fit into sign ordinance. If specifically name things, ordinance could change all the time.

Nick Criss wondered if LEDs are more similar to neon or channel lettering? LEDs are new technology, therefore not mentioned.

Changing vs changeable? Give direction to staff, maybe go to county counsel. Does LED fit into General Plan cleanup?

Bush noted Antelope Valley chose to ignore Dark Sky Regulations, so how does that affect signs? Gerry Le Francois, Antelope Valley RPAC coordinator, indicated business owners in Walker commercial corridor want to revisit, set Walker-specific. Walker business district as subset of County plans?

Pinizzotto noted Nicely's neon changeable-letter signs are brighter than LEDs. He wants to advertise community events such as town cleanup and RPAC meetings as marquis. Time/temperature would show constantly at bottom of sign. He could operate the sign only during business hours. He prefers LEDs to changeable letters. Signage for business is critical, he stated.

Burns suggested not focusing on Pinizzotto's situation, which seems like existing regulations and Director Review process would work.

Commissioner Roberts noted old, nonconforming signs throughout the county, so did not support an ordinance.

Commissioner Pipersky suggested quantitative measurement of light intensity (lumens) similar to sound measurement in decibels.

Bush recommended seeking community input at the RPACs.

6. REPORTS:

A. DIRECTOR: 1) Double Eagle Ranch: Transient occupancy approved; 2) Rock Creek Ranch SP: Approved; 3) Special Events: Ordinance next week; 4) SCE utility fund: Underground; 5) Mammoth Lakes: Town seeks a loan from Mono County; 6) Digital 395: Applied for extension beyond July, subterranean at June Lake; and 7) Association of Environmental Planners: Late September CEQA training conference at Mammoth Lakes.

B. COMMISSIONERS: Lizza: Tioga Pass opened. Bush: Will miss June meeting.

7. INFORMATIONAL: No items.

8. ADJOURN at 1:30 p.m. to June 13, 2013.

Prepared by C.D. Ritter, commission secretary