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PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF: July 14, 2020

APPROVED MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF July 14, 2020

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The notice of the meeting was posted on July 9, 2020.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Fernandez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read an opening statement.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Kelley, Oetinger, Wilson, Lindenbusch and Haug
Absent: Commissioner Douch (excused)
Staff: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director
Alan Montes, Associate Planner

Chair Fernandez commented that items 7A and 6 on the agenda will be switched.

Chair Fernandez called for a moment of silence for those that have lost their lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic and for those that have suffered or are suffering due to various social injustice issues.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 09, 2020

Vice Chair Fritz amended the minutes.

Vice Chair Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Oetinger seconded the motion.

The Commission voted on the motion as follows:

- AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Oetinger, Kelley, Lindenbusch, and Haug
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: Commissioner Wilson
- ABSENT: Commissioner Douch

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:

Laura Dalzell commented:

- Grew up in Sebastopol.
- Has been living in San Francisco for the past 4 ½ years.
- Noticed that there is nothing on the agenda in Sebastopol about addressing police brutality and racial profiling.
- This is a very pertinent topic.
- There have been issues around these matters in Sebastopol and Sonoma County as a whole.
- Wants to make sure that Sebastopol is looking at its relationship to this.
- San Francisco is partially defunding the Police and reallocating those funds to having mental health professionals who can intervene unarmed into situations and deescalate matters.
- Hopes Sebastopol can follow suit in some way.
- Works as a teacher in San Francisco.
- Hopes to eventually move back to Sebastopol.
- Sebastopol has become so unaffordable that she feels like she may not be able to afford to move back.
- Interested in knowing what Sebastopol is doing to provide lower income housing.
- It is important that Sebastopol be at least somewhat diverse.
- Has noticed, especially since she moved away, that there is no diversity and no low-income housing.
- Thanked the Commission for their time.

Chair Fernandez responded:

- The City Council has been working to address police brutality and racial profiling.
- The Planning Commission has looked at ways to address the lack of affordable housing and will continue to do so.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Fernandez closed the public comment period.

5. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: There were none.

7. REGULAR AGENDA:

- A. IVES PARK PATHWAY PERLIMINARY DESIGN** – This item will include a presentation by the Landscape Architecture Firm, RHAA, of the preliminary design for the replacement of the main east-west pathway through Ives Park for Planning Commission review and discussion.

Director Svanstrom provided a summary of the staff report.

Chair Fernandez asked for questions of Director Svanstrom.

There were none.

Chair Fernandez invited the consultant to present on this item.

Chelsea Andersson and Doug Nelson, RHAA, presented.

The Commission asked questions of Ms. Andersson and Mr. Nelson.

Comments from the Commission included:

Chair Fernandez commented that he would like something other than asphalt, if possible, although he understood that cost may be an issue.

Vice Chair Fritz referred to the triangular carve out near the pool building and commented:

- Likes removal of the asphalt and opening things up around the tree.
- Concerned over a defacto path being made from the east side of the pool going around to the north side of the pool.
- The consultant mentioned that there is no additional landscaping planned at this time.
- A future consideration could be to place a significant hedge or a small retaining wall or seat wall to discourage people from cutting through the area.
- The Master Plan shows a path in this location.
- This will be a natural desire line.

Mr. Nelson responded that they could look at that and noted that if it is a minor path that would not need vehicles on it, something other than asphalt could be used.

Commissioner Kelley commented that she likes what she sees.

Commissioner Wilson commented:

- Likes reducing the amount of asphalt.
- Asked a clarifying question about the options for the High Street entrance.

Commissioner Oetinger commented:

- Regarding the pathway at High Street, she expressed a concern as there is a tendency to cut the corner as people are entering in from either direction.
- If the path is not wide enough, there may be issues with maintenance there unless there is landscaping that would prevent people from cutting diagonally into the park.
- The half circle plan solves that problem a little bit.
- Asked a clarifying question about the area at the northeast corner of the pool.
- Referred to 'Site Enlargement 3' and asked for the width of the pathway as it looks narrower than the one at the entrance.

Ms. Andersson responded that the minimum path width is 5' and apologized for not having labeled the exact width on the plan.

Commissioner Oetinger thanked Ms. Andersson for the response and commented that 5' should be sufficient for people to pass through single-file in two different directions.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:

- Did not see plans for lights to accompany the new pathway.
- Lighting and security are something that comes up a lot when hearing from residents.

- Has heard a lot of people talking about not walking through Ives Park late at night because it is dim.
- Lights will be especially important as we move towards creek naturalization for safety.
- Would like to see more photographs as soon as possible as we move forward with this.
- It can be hard to say what should be prioritized.
- We are getting ready for a bit of budget crunch.
- We are not going to be able to realize everything in the Master Plan right away.
- Having a clear understanding of where the most pressing safety concerns are will help them to know where they need to be focusing their attention and resources.
- It is good to be thinking about the broader issue of connectivity, especially as we are looking at what aspects of the Master Plan might be implemented.
- Referred to improvement #25 (converting the turning lane into park land) and commented that the pathway not connecting at the southwest corner, which is not currently park land, should be a definite consideration.
- We need to think of connectivity in a broader sense in how Ives Park connects to the rest of town.
- Does not know if we should be putting all of our energy into creek naturalization and that pathway being the grand entrance, if that is what we are going to be looking for, when the Joe Rodota trail more naturally spills out at Willow Street.
- The area at Willow Street may be a more pressing area in terms of safety, given the condition of Willow Street on that last block before it hits the western portion of 116.
- Welcomes responses to the issues he raised.
- Appreciates the report.

Ms. Andersson responded that lighting is not part of their scope.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Generally, our parks are intended for dawn to dusk usage.
- Spoke on existing electrical conduits in the area near the proposed sculpture garden that the Superintendent of Public Works wants to be maintained so future lighting could occur.
- Believes this is being designed with some chases that go across the pathway that could accommodate future irrigation and/or electric.

Ms. Andersson responded that it would not be a problem for them add chases to accommodate irrigation and/or electric and commented that they could coordinate with the Superintendent of Public Works about that.

Director Svanstrom continued:

- Mounting to the Ives Pool building would be an easier way to get electric for that area.
- It is good to think about how we may be able to integrate lighting into the park in the future.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Asked if a border would be placed when the asphalt is laid to make it look more like a formal pathway.
- Currently, the asphalt spills over like a blob.

Ms. Andersson responded that their approach would be to have something more refined although that may come down to cost.

Mr. Nelson responded:

- They typically use a steel edge and noted that that would be an additional expense.
- Ideally this would have a sharp edge that would be beveled and then blend with the landscape.
- Unraveling on the edge should be avoided.
- That can happen where there is a downslope adjacent to the asphalt.
- Does not think Ives Park has too many conditions like that.
- They will investigate that.
- Will try to avoid the condition where the path can get undermined by erosion.
- Maintenance is important.
- Vehicles driving off the edge can cause breakage.
- Ideally, with good maintenance and careful maintenance truck driving, the edge should stay intact for years.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- We are building an ADA pathway on the Willow Street and Jewell Avenue side.
- The crosswalk at Willow Street and Jewell Avenue is very inaccessible.
- Is there a way to connect the new ADA pathway with Willow Street and make a safer crossing?
- Commissioner Lindenbusch just mentioned usurping that turn lane.
- That whole area there needs to be looked at, especially if we are trying to make that side of the park more ADA compliant, as there is existing asphalt that does not look like it is going to be removed or repaved as it does not seem to be in the best shape, especially for ADA.

Mr. Nelson responded:

- They were told that their scope was a phase 1 project.
- Understands that there are other parts of the park that will be addressed.
- That area was identified as not being part of this phase 1 project.
- Director Svanstrom can speak to whether that needs to be looked at as a priority.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Understood that the intent was to address the southwest area as part of a larger vision that would be consistent with the Master Plan, rather than just repaving the pathway.
- The larger diagram of Ives Park in the Master Plan does look at the turn lane (where improvement #25 is).
- The larger vision of the Master Plan is to take over that turn lane and expand the park out to the corner.
- Anytime you shorten crosswalks or make streets smaller (meaning there is less area to cross) the area inherently becomes safer and easier for pedestrians of all kinds.
- That is not in the City's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan right now.
- It would be good for Commissioners to identify priorities that they see for future planning.

Chair Fernandez commented:

- Referred to the number of events that are held at Ives Park and commented that it may be good to confer with some of the organizations that hold said events as they

might have some useful suggestions in terms of crowd flow and in sectioning off the park in ways that could be integrated.

- Asked if vehicle access into Ives Park by the public is regulated currently.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- People are not supposed to drive into the park.
- There is a vehicle access area at the northwest corner of the Sebastopol Center for the Arts parking lot (near #5 on the plan) that is not blocked off very well.
- Because Public Works needs to access the park with their vehicles, the City has asked RHAA to ensure that a secure gate is added for Public Works to be able to gain access while keeping other vehicles out.
- That will help with the degradation of the asphalt.
- Ensuring that private vehicles are not driving on the same path that a pedestrian or bicycle might be using is best for public safety as well.

Chair Fernandez commented that the entrance from Willow Street (area #15 on the plan) is often used for events and may need to be looked into further. He noted that the area is chained off with signs to discourage vehicular access currently.

Chair Fernandez asked if members of the public wished to speak on this item.

Hearing none, Chair Fernandez brought it back to the Commission and asked Director Svanstrom to identify specific areas she was hoping for feedback from the Commission on.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- The comments the Commission has already made have been helpful.
- Welcomes additional comments from the Commission.
- As each member of the Commission is an avid park user, their comments as a user of the park are appreciated.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Supports the half-moon approach.
- Ives Park is kind of like a city promenade park and all the entrances could be a little more significant and welcoming.
- In general, Sebastopol needs better park entrances.
- Part of the connection to city streets is the park entrance itself.
- Thinking about the entrances is a very important part of the concept and overall usability of the park.
- Cohesive and visually coherent design elements are important.
- Suggested a half-moon at the entrance on Willow Street as well as High Street.

Vice Chair Fritz commented:

- Not necessarily opposed to the half-moon idea but believes there will be some physical limitations on it as there is a tree and some grade in the area which could make it tricky to get a large element in there.
- Suggested emphasizing or celebrating the entrance to the park (which is also mentioned in the Master Plan) with a trellis or some kind of structure over the pathway.
- The corner of Willow and Jewell is an important item for the City to consider in terms of funding, in some capacity, even if it is just a temporary solution to block of the intersection because it is a horrible intersection to cross and is very hazardous.

- If not fully implementing the vision of this Plan right away, he would support doing an intermediate step that would be cost effective while really improving the safety of the intersection.

Chair Fernandez concurred on that intersection being challenging to cross.

Commissioner Haug referred to area #6 on the Master Plan and asked if the improvements will interfere with access to the restroom(s) that are in the area.

Ms. Andersson responded that they would field verify that in the coming weeks as ensuring that there is adequate access to the restrooms is important.

Commissioner Oetinger commented that the Master Plan has the restrooms in another location (closer to the ball field) eventually.

Mr. Nelson concurred and commented that they are proposed to be placed in area #13.

Commissioner Oetinger commented:

- People tend to cluster and mill there in lines while waiting for the restroom so being able to accommodate a lot of people is important.
- The semi-circle at the east entrance is not her preferred option.
 - Wants to make sure that the angle is good enough, so people are not cutting across landscaping.
- The City did a fairly recent study on the intersection at Willow and Jewell.
- Recalled the intersection, while seeming scary, did not have bad marks in the study.
 - Recalled that the study provided some costs and options for the intersection which may be worth looking into.
 - Recalled those options being fairly expensive.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:

- Attended Analy High School.
- On the last day of school, a tiki-themed island party took place on the traffic island at Willow and Jewell.
- The event grew to be very popular.
- The first year it took place was when he was a freshman at Analy and about 60 people attended.
- By the time he was a senior, hundreds of people attended, and it overflowed from the island.
- Aside from Apple Blossom, that was the most used he's seen it in his experience growing up in Sebastopol.
- It would be great to consider how that can be bridged with some of the opportunities we have in that area.
- Would like to see it fully realized as to what is shown in the Master Plan.
- The Master Plan is a really great plan.
- Should look at opportunities like putting up some bollards and giving that space for people to take their food to go and do some alfresco dining.
- It is important to consider how we can improve and expand some plaza space, especially with social distancing, however noting that it is a promising space even beyond that.
- Doing something low cost in the interim, that is CEQA exempt, could do a lot for our community, and could help generate further interest in Ives Park.

- Knows that that is a lot to be thinking about and that it is not necessarily related to the pathways.
- Looking at a CEQA exemption, and potentially securing funding through a public/private parks foundation, could be a great way to galvanize the support of the community and the action of the community to really shepherd this plan forward.
- This Plan cannot be done by just the Commission, consultants, or staff. It is going to take the community to continue to have interest in this project to move it along.
- Grateful for what RHAA and the City have been doing to work on Ives Park.
- Ives Park is a really important jewel to our community, not just for its connectivity to our downtown but also a lot of the sentimental reasons to why people care about this town.
- It would be great to have some immediate term solutions in place for allowing people more space to congregate when this pandemic slows down, and people have more ability to congregate.
- Expressed his thanks to all involved.

Chair Fernandez thanked the consultants for the presentation and for their time.

Ms. Andersson and Mr. Nelson thanked the Commission.

6. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT (Update on Future Agendas, Action of Other Boards and City Council)

Director Svanstrom updated the Commission on the following:

- The Development Impact Fee Study is taking a bit longer than anticipated.
- The City Council held a special meeting on June 23 in place of the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting.
- The City Council held two special meetings to talk about police use of force and funding issues. Those meetings occurred on June 23 and June 30.
- A special Public Arts Committee meeting was held on July 6 to discuss a proposal, by a group of young activists, for a 'Black Lives Matter' graphic at the plaza. The project was approved by the City Council.
- Spoke on upcoming items that will be before the City Council in the next couple weeks. Those include an extension of our vacation rental moratorium, development of a Tobacco Retail License Ordinance, and
- Policy revisions to our Vacation Rental Ordinance will be coming to the Commission at a future date.
- The Tobacco Retail License Ordinance, as proposed, will most likely require a revision to our Zoning Ordinance.
- The Davis Townhomes project (18-unit townhome project at the south end of Morris Street and Sebastopol Avenue), that was approved by the Commission some time ago, was sold to a new owner.
 - The new owner is Stephen Wright and the Wright family. They own Wright Construction.
 - A preconstruction meeting was just held on the site and they are about to pull their building permit and start construction on that project.
- A lot has been going on in the city.
- Happy to answer any questions the Commission may have.

Chair Fernandez asked if liaison, Commissioner Lindenbusch had comments on recent Council items as well.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:

- Sat through approximately 11 hours of Council meetings.
- At one-point Mayor Slayter stated that the issue of police use of force and funding is the most important issue that the city has faced during his tenure, and possible in the tenure of any Council member.
- The community coming together on this issue is highly illustrative of some of the concerns that people have and how it will shape what we are looking at moving forward.
- Part of what came about was really looking at the process of budget formation and how money gets spent.
- People expressed concern over the City spending 46% of its budget on the Police Department which he believed was the highest share of any municipality in Sonoma County.
- The Police Department did not have really concrete data to present when looking at an audit or how money is spent within the department.
- The budget process should be opened up in a way because it currently involves two senior staff members and select members of the Council.
- We do not really talk about the budget as much as we should.
- Going into these meetings, he did not know that most of the budget was not really changing from the past year except for a cost of living increase.
- The various boards, commissions and committees in the City should have a strong, robust, and collaborative process for the budget.
- There is a wide range of very health and diverse opinion in our city which is something we welcome and support.
- Wants to make sure that we have an engaged public, not just an outspoken one.
- Found Director Svanstrom's updates informative and complete.

Chair Fernandez asked for questions from the Commission of Director Svanstrom or Commissioner Lindenbusch.

Commissioner Kelley asked the following about the proposed Tobacco Retail License Ordinance:

- Are tobacco and vaping nicotine two separate things that will be included?
- Asked if it will be coming to the Commission for review before adoption.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- The Tobacco Retail License Ordinance will not be coming before the Commission.
- To the extent that the adopted Tobacco Retail License Ordinance has an impact on allowed uses, that piece would come before the Commission at a future date.
- The regulation of sales of nicotine does not need to come to the Commission.
- This item is expected to go before the Council on August 4.
- All nicotine products are included in this.
- Offered to send a copy of the draft ordinance to Commissioner Kelley.

Commissioner Kelley responded that she would appreciate seeing a copy of the draft ordinance.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- This will be part of the vacation rental discussion; however, she still feels very strongly that ADUs should be built for permanent housing stock, not tourist accommodations.
- We really need to boost our housing inventory for residents.
- Hopes to discuss this further.

- We need more permanent housing.
- We need diversity in housing and lower housing prices.

Director Svanstrom responded that those items will be part of the vacation rental discussion.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Thanked Director Svanstrom.
- Asked if RHNA numbers are adjusted down when a house or ADU is rented out as a vacation rental because it is no longer providing permanent housing.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- RHNA numbers are not adjusted down because the unit could revert back to being used as a long-term rental for a resident.
- There are a lot of communities that do not regulate vacation rentals anywhere near as tightly as we do.
- We do not allow ADUs to be rented without a Use Permit.
- This body will be deliberating on this item during their discussion on vacation rentals.
- Unless the elements (kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping area, which are what defines a dwelling unit) that make a residence are taken, it doesn't get taken off of the RHNA numbers for being used as a vacation rental for a period of time.
- Asked for data, such as numbers of rental units, to be provided to the Commission when they discuss this matter again.
- Curious about how much housing is being built, and how much is being converted for use as a vacation rental.

Director Svanstrom responded that staff could provide the number of vacation rental units to the Commission via data from Host Compliance.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Is it possible for the City to be more proactive in creating discussions with developers or different types of housing consortiums?
- Seems like Sebastopol has a lot of areas for urban infill that could be used, not only for our community vitality, but also to broaden our housing base.
- In order to get a diversity of income level and housing it seems we would have to advocate for that because it seems like developers don't naturally want to develop that.
- Suggested outreach to see if more co-housing could be developed in Sebastopol.
- Encouraged creative solutions and outreach to get more housing that can accommodate people from different economic means.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- The Mayor has done a housing sites tour with community members through Sebastopol Walks.
- Spoke on Planning grant opportunities that the City has pursued and the projects they are anticipated to cover.
- The City's Housing Element Update is due to the State in January 2023.
- Intends to look at some sites for potential housing.
- Due to RHNA numbers being somewhat low last time, RHNA numbers for the entire Bay Area increased about 230%.
- RHNA numbers are provided as a target.

- Our Housing Element requires us to provide sites where that housing could be accommodated.
- If we have sites that we have identified as being great for housing, we would like to have conversations with developers and do some outreach to see what may be possible.
- We do not have anything specific in terms of talking to people about co-housing.
- Has had conversations with Burbank Housing, Housing Land Trust, and other non-profits on a regular basis in terms of things that we could be doing.
- The City has a housing subcommittee, which is a subcommittee of the City Council.
- The housing subcommittee may be able to have a Planning Commission liaison as well.
- The 10-unit Huntley Square development has submitted their formal application.

Associate Planner Montes commented that the Huntley Square developer is in the process of responding to completeness items.

Director Svanstrom commented:

- The 80-unit, 100% affordable project that is proposed for the north side of Bodega Avenue, which is known as Woodmark, has resubmitted and Associate Planner Montes is in the process of reviewing it.
 - The project still has some pretty significant issues with the site that need to be resolved.
 - Staff will be working with the developer on those.
- The approximately 100-unit project on the north side of town, which is known as the City Ventures project, are doing some due diligence work right now.
- There are a few larger projects going on, which may or may not move forward.

Commissioner Haug thanked Director Svanstrom for her responses.

Chair Fernandez commented:

- There should be an item for 'Communications' on the agenda.
- An email was sent out about a group called Co Mission which the City brought it as part of the vitality project.
 - Has been working on that committee.
 - The goal is to promote businesses in reopening in a lot of different fashions and safe ways.
 - They came up with, 'Sip, Shop, Savor, Safe Sebastopol'.
 - There is a list of activities as well as a raffle opportunity.
 - A number of local businesses and organizations are involved.
 - Encouraged people to get the word out about this.
 - Wants to help local businesses as much as we can and in different ways.
 - A survey for businesses has been conducted.
 - A survey for residents will be upcoming.
 - Connectivity for seniors, who may not be tech savvy, has also been a discussion.

Commissioner Kelley referred to the survey to businesses and asked Chair Fernandez about having more diversity amongst business owners.

Chair Fernandez responded:

- At this point we are trying to keep and support the businesses that are here.
- That issue was certainly something that was brought up before the pandemic.
- One of the comments that was made was about diversity in our community.

- There is not a lot to offer as far as bringing other diverse groups into the community.
- Those are areas that need to be looked at in the future.
- It would be helpful to offer products, services, and/or events that may attract a more diverse and inclusive group.

Commissioner Kelley thanked Chair Fernandez for his response.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:

- The Co Mission campaign is really good.
- Expressed concern over the central use of Facebook.
- Facebook is very effective, but it will hit one demographic more than others.
- The City's Twitter account did not make any mention of this campaign.
- The City's Twitter account is pretty limited in terms of activity, he has observed maybe one or two tweets per month.
- The City does not have an Instagram or anything else that might appeal to the younger generation.
- Diversity in age and opinion calls for more online platforms than just Facebook.

Chair Fernandez thanked Commissioner Lindenbusch for his comments and said that he brought him up in conversations with Co Mission as somebody who may be able to help with tapping into the younger demographic.

Commissioner Lindenbusch comments that he looks forward to talking to Chair Fernandez about that further.

Chair Fernandez thanked the Commission for their participation and thanked staff for all of their work to keep things moving behind the scenes.

Chair Fernandez asked about upcoming meetings.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- She and Chair Fernandez have a meeting to discuss upcoming agenda items tomorrow morning.
- Asked members of the Commission to keep their schedules open for the second meeting in July.
- Working with the consultant on the Development Impact Fee Study to ensure that it is ready for Commission review.
- The Development Impact Fee Study item is expected to come before the Commission at either the second meeting in July, or the first meeting in August.
- We have had a bit of a slowing with Use Permit applications given the business climate right now.
- The City does not have any pending development applications that are ready for review currently.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Fernandez adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director