



City of Sebastopol
Incorporated 1902
Planning Department
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PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING OF: April 13, 2021

APPROVED MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF April 13, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The notice of the meeting was posted on April 08, 2021.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Fernandez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Director Svanstrom read a statement on meeting protocols.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Kelley, Lindenbusch, and Oetinger
Absent: Commissioner Douch (excused)
Staff: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 23, 2021

Members of the Commission amended the minutes.

Commissioner Lindenbusch moved to approve the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Oetinger seconded the motion.

VOTE:

AYES: Chair Fernandez, and Commissioners Kelley, Lindenbusch, and Oetinger
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: Vice Chair Fritz

ABSENT: Commissioner Douch

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

Director Svanstrom commented that no written comments from the public had been received by staff.

Darnell Witt, a member of the public

Asked a question about the City's tree permit process.

Director Svanstrom spoke on the City's tree removal permitting process.

5. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

Commissioner Lindenbusch recused himself from Item 6A on the agenda out of an abundance of adherence to the Brown Act as EAH Housing is one of the founding members of his employer, Generation Housing.

Director Svanstrom thanked Commissioner Lindenbusch for his statement and responded that he would not need to recuse himself as this is an informational item and that no decision or direction would be made.

Commissioner Lindenbusch thanked Director Svanstrom for clarifying and commented that he would be happy to stay and participate.

6. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS OR PRESENTATION(S):

- A. EAH PRESENTATION** – EAH is a non-profit affordable housing developer based in Marin County, which has been developing and managing affordable housing for 50 years. Their vision is "creating inclusive neighborhoods with thriving socioeconomic and cultural diversity for generations to come, through well-designed affordable housing and a commitment to stewardship and residents' quality of life through services." Marianne Lim and Scott Johnson, Director of Business Development – www.eahhousing.org will present.

Marianne Lim and Scott Johnson presented.

The Commission asked questions of Ms. Lim and Mr. Johnson.

Chair Fernandez thanked Ms. Lim for their time and presentation this evening and concluded this item.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

Ives Park subcommittee, I have a few things to report and some questions. First, Director Svanstrom was able to get the committee on to the Public Arts Committee meeting agenda on May 5 at 10:30 and I will be presenting the mural concept for the Ives Pool fencing. Ricky Watts, a local muralist will attempt to answer questions. At the last minute, I will check conditions at Ives Park just to make sure that my documents that you have all seen are correct and accurate and up to date, and then get them to Director Svanstrom in time for the Public Arts Committee meeting on May 5 if anyone wants to attend that, if that is interesting.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Is that a proposal of a certain type of artwork, or is it just the concept of doing something?

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I am mostly just presenting the idea of the spaces where murals would be good, and I would leave that up to them. I feel like I will want to make some personal commentary on the fact that parks can be restful, and on the other hand, they can also be exciting, but it is important to try to find some sort of balance there for Ives Park. If you live in town and you are walking to town, it is really a little piece of nature. There could be issues, they might not be interested in doing this at all, but I thought it was worthwhile to present the idea because I think the right good mural could be good for some of the spaces there.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Yes, I think it could add something great to it.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

The second item is that I did speak with Jim Corbett since our last meeting and he thinks that the staircase on the west side of the stage is okay, and the one on the east side needs to be replaced. He would like to put in a ramp so that musicians and performers can roll their equipment right up on to the spot. He has since spoken with Superintendent Del Prete and is going to produce some engineered drawings. He says it will not happen right away, because I do not think he is going to be able to do concerts this summer unless COVID really opens up and people really feel comfortable being in a crowd. I do not think that kind of a crowd can happen that soon so we might not see this right away. It is in the process. If people want to donate to the cause, you can go to www.peacetown.com and make an online donation to help with that. I do not think there will be a problem with that, and I asked him to let me know if there was a problem with funding for that. Thirdly, I was in the park recently, I noticed that the ball field is there, you can see it because a lot of the signs have been taken down. If you are coming in from High Street, you can look right through the third base field. If you are coming from Willow street or Jewell Avenue, you can see home plate. The signs that are there now are mostly at centerfield probably to create a good view for the pitcher and the batter to do their thing. I do not know how long that will last but it was kind of nice to see into the park more than usual.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

It may be good to take some photos while that is the case.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I should, yes, I will do that because I will be taking photos for the mural. To be thorough I thought I should take a picture of the east wall where there is some planting in front just so that they could see that wall because that is another candidate I suppose. Fourthly, I noticed that the damage to the women's bathroom had been repaired. There's new siding, so I am assuming that they repaired the dry rot inside before they put the siding up. There is other dry rot around the edges, but at least it does not look damaged. I assume at some point they will paint that and put trims up. Fifthly, I am working on the graffiti at the taqueria that is near the High Street parking lot. The restaurant manager does not care if I paint, but he cannot give me permission to paint it. The regional manager does not care if I do it, but he cannot give me permission and the general manager to whom they have given my phone number has not called me or contacted me. If I feel like painting, I might just take care of that item.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Would the ordinance regarding graffiti come into play, Director Svanstrom?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We do not have an ordinance. We usually put conditions of approval on projects. The only place it is in our ordinance is related to telecom facilities.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I know we were talking about a hydrology report for the creek in the park, and I was wondering where that is in terms of process?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We are looking for consultants for two studies for Ives Park for the creek naturalization. One is hydrology, and that will be most useful to us if it is done in tandem with what the creek channel design will look like.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Provided an update on the sculpture garden project at Ives Park.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Another update, which we cannot give too much detail on because it is kind of up in the air, but Commissioner Oetinger and I met with a very well-respected individual that has worked on daylighting creeks through different cities. We are hoping to have her present to the Planning Commission at some time in the future. In the meantime, she is gathering information. She not only has ideas and experience on how to do it, but she also has great connections to funding mechanisms as well so this could be something that could realistically help move us forward. As we have more information on that we can bring it forward. The meeting was facilitated by Lynn Deedler so we would like to give him credit for that. She lives in Sebastopol and is very interested in helping us out and working with us. We look forward to bringing you more information on that.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I know you were not with us, Chair Fernandez, but Director Svanstrom, Superintendent Del Prete, former member of the Commission, Kate Haug and I met at the park and I was looking at my idea of moving the children's playground fence back a little bit and Superintendent Del Prete said he wanted to put a tree and a picnic bench there and I thought yes, that would be nice. Thinking about that again, I kept thinking that if we were not going to be working on the creek, that area is pinched and so tight, if the fence could be moved back even 5 or 10 feet there might still be room for a small table and a tree. It would also be great if the asphalt could be moved over too, and the roadway where the utility vehicles need to enter the park could use some of the handicap parking area where nobody parks and nobody is constantly getting in and out of their cars so the occasional vehicle going into the park across that area could work. It would mean changing the engineering for the asphalt. In the long run, that would add so much more space for whatever work will be done in that area in the future. It is unfortunate that we cannot do that right now while we are working on these things to just make the creek have more space. Keep it in mind if you have any power or desire to act on something like that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Thanks, Commissioner Oetinger, I will take another look at that. I know that the parking areas are part of the Art Center so that could be a complexity, but they were easy to work with for the sculpture garden project.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

I would assume that those accessible parking spaces are for Ives Park as they are far away from the Art Center building. I believe the Art Center building has accessible parking on the south side of the building.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That is correct. The City has an agreement with the County to be able to have those parking spaces there.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Any other subcommittee reports, questions?

Luke Lindenbusch, Commissioner

The Climate Action Committee met two weeks ago. Working groups are under way. Last time, we discussed a revision to the Climate Action Plan. Another meeting coming up tomorrow will address several topics, including looking at the banning of gas stations and reviewing an All-Electric REACH Code for the City. More information on those meetings will come as they transpire. Again, just chugging along. The work is accelerating as everybody is in their working groups now.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

This is not a subcommittee report. I think everyone was copied on this. There was a webinar last week that I think the City Clerk sent to everyone about housing that was put together by the Housing Action Coalition. I did watch that, and it was very interesting and apropos of the talk we just had. There was a former City Council member in Sacramento that talked a lot about the things that Sacramento had done to make building housing easier. I can forward the recording of the webinar if anyone is interested, or I can send it to Director Svanstrom, and she can send it out. I enjoyed participating in it.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Okay, yes. Appreciate that. Thank you.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I do have one update for the Climate Action Committee as well. One of the things they asked for was to reopen the vacant positions. There are a couple of vacant positions. I believe one is environmental justice. Commissioner Lindenbusch, do you recall what the other position is for?

Luke Lindenbusch, Commissioner

My understanding is the one is the environmental justice and equity. There may be a second one, but I am not aware of it.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That will be on Council's agenda next Tuesday. The other request is to create a second youth, a sort of youth alternate position, recognizing that oftentimes you are getting juniors, who then leave to college, so they requested a second youth member as well. That will be on next Tuesday's Council agenda. It will be on their consent calendar with no discussion. Assuming approval, we will be advertising for that. If you do know of anyone in the community who might be interested in that, send them to the Planning Department and we will get them the information.

Luke Lindenbusch, Commissioner

One follow-up question on that, Director Svanstrom. Who will be facilitating on the staff end, the Climate Action Committee meetings with Associate Planner Montes leaves the City?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I will be at tomorrow's meeting, there are a couple items that I want to address. I am working closely with Councilmember Rich and Vice Mayor Gurney about that. For the next couple of meetings, I will be in attendance. The City will have some on-call staff assisting the City. We will be meeting that team; we are having a kickoff meeting tomorrow for that. How that might fit into the Climate Action Committee work is yet to be determined.

8. PLANNING COMMISSION STRUCTURE UPDATES

a. ELECTION OF CHAIR, VICE CHAIR

Chair Fernandez spoke on process and asked for nominations for Chair.

Commissioner Lindenbusch nominated Paul Fritz for Chair.

Chair Fernandez asked Vice Chair Fritz if he accepted the nomination.

Vice Chair Fritz responded in the affirmative.

Chair Fernandez seconded the nomination of Vice Chair Fritz for Chair.

The Commission voted as follows:

AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Kelley, Lindenbusch, and Oetinger

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Douch

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I want to thank the commissioners. Those that had opportunity to step up and take on additional duties, I know it is not the ability of all the commissioners, we deal with work and family issues, and I respect that, but to those that could, thank you for stepping up. I tried to make it more of an engaging commission considering everything that is going on. To kind of pitch in and help with that has been appreciated. I appreciate Director Svanstrom for taking a leap of faith and collaborating with me on more of an involvement with the agenda. I appreciate working with you, your professionalism, and your balance of being unbiased with your duties, responsibilities, zoning, but yet with an eye towards benefit of the community. I appreciate that as well. I look forward to continuing to work with the rest of the commission. Thank you. With that, Chair Fritz, the floor is yours.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Thank you very much.

Chair Fritz asked for nominations for Vice Chair.

Linda Kelley, Planning Commissioner

I would like to make a nomination. I hope Commissioner Oetinger is ready this time to move up in the leadership within the Planning Commission. I would like to nominate Commissioner Oetinger for Vice Chair.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

Thank you, Commissioner Kelley. I can do it this time.

Commissioner Fernandez seconded the nomination of Commissioner Oetinger for Vice Chair.

The Commission voted as follows:

AYES: Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Kelley, Lindenbusch, Fernandez
and Oetinger

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Douch

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Congratulations, Vice Chair Oetinger.

b. DISCUSSION OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING STARTING TIME

Director Svanstrom introduced this item.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Just a thought, I do not know if it would help or not. I know we did try it, briefly. We tried a couple six o'clock meeting starts.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I cannot remember if that was for special meetings, or if it was just a regular meeting.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think last year we had one special meeting regarding Ives Park improvements to accommodate Superintendent Del Prete's scheduled as well as a public hearing that was on the regular agenda.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I felt like there was some other time, it may have been before your time, Director Svanstrom, that we tried to do an earlier meeting start and it did not really seem to pan out. I cannot remember why. Personally, I would not mind getting out of meetings earlier. Theoretically, if we start them earlier, we will finish earlier, but I do not know if that would be a better time for the public. When meetings start going past 9 p.m. people start drifting away quickly. It seems like it is something we could try. I am happy to hear other opinions on it.

Chair Fritz opened public comment.

A member of the public

Earlier is better.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Fritz closed public comment.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Asked for Commission deliberation.

Linda Kelley, Planning Commissioner

I want to comment on my experience on Council when we switched to an earlier start time. There was one Council member who would fall asleep or start getting tired very early. It was also thought that an earlier start time would encourage more members of the public to show up and get involved. Especially for folks that need to get home to their kids, or seniors, etc. The experience over time has been that it seems like the meetings still go a long time, but now everyone is used to it. In terms of, did it make it better for the public, did they attend more? I do not think so. I checked in with a Council member to see about her recollection from all those years ago too. I am not saying that we should, or should not, just commenting on my experience with Council. Council agendas are different than the Commission's and go on for much longer. At this point I am fine with it being either time.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

Right now, there is something in our meeting protocols that stated that, if our meetings start at 7 p.m. and goes until 11 p.m., to continue past that time, the Commission needs to be in consensus on continuing. If we started meetings at 6 p.m., would we be able to do that for 10 p.m. instead of 11 p.m.?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think it would be up to the Commission. I do know that City Council takes a vote at 10:30 p.m. The Commission could do that as well. I believe it would be up to the Commission in terms of any modifications to that.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

If we did decide to try this out, when do you think it would be prudent to have it be effective?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think that could also be up to the Commission. I would want to check with the presenters that we have lined up because I know they are all prepped for a seven o'clock meeting. I do anticipate all of those will still be via Zoom, however. In terms of accommodating that, I would like to check that. If they are okay with it, I could certainly see it happening sooner rather than later.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I would be for an earlier start time and I do not really have an opinion as far as whether we wait until these presentations conclude, or not. I could go either way with keeping it at 7 p.m., or changing it to 6 p.m.

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

I agree that it could start at 6 p.m., or 7 p.m. It does not matter to me. I do not know that it matters to the public, as Commissioner Kelley said, either. I am wondering if we knew that we had a long agenda or a big topic with a lot of public attendance likely, could we start earlier so we do not run so late? We might have been in the meeting for five hours, but we would not be getting out at 11 p.m. I wonder whether that can be done on an occasional basis as we have done for certain special meetings that we have had.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes. I will make two quick comments in that. One is yes, we can always do a special meeting time. That is an earlier time, if needed for a specific project, or for a specific reason. Chair Fritz and I, which Commissioner Fernandez can attest to, will work closely together to make sure that we are managing agendas so that they are not overloaded or under packed. I am certainly a proponent of agenda management to make sure that everyone gets a fair hearing, if there are several hearings coming up, and space things out appropriately in terms of the normal flow of things.

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

Yes. It has been very good by the way. Thank you.

Luke Lindenbusch, Commissioner

I will just echo that I do not really see too huge of a problem with our current start time and would be in favor of keeping it at 7 p.m. with the exception of special meetings as previously stated.

Linda Kelley, Planning Commissioner

I would like to make an additional comment. I forgot that our City staff needs to have a little bit of a dinner time so I think our sensitivity should be to that as well. Then of course, there are a lot of members of the public that cannot come to meetings until after they are done with work. Most important for me is to have City staff be able to have that break from their workday. How does that work for you, Director Svanstrom?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Thank you for your consideration for staff, Commissioner Kelley. We start our workdays at 7 a.m. so the earlier time works better, 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. can get to be a long day.

Paul Fritz, Chair

I do not have a super strong opinion. If we were to start at 6 p.m. it would make it consistent with the City Council, at least. I do not know if there is some advantage to that, that people know that regardless of which Tuesday it is, it will either be a City Council or Planning Commission meeting at 6 p.m. That would make it seem to be a more regular think that people can get in their minds, there may be an advantage to that. I do not know; I do not have a strong feeling. It sounds like no one has a super strong feeling about this. Maybe we just leave it the way it is and continue, or we could also try out the earlier start time on a trial basis for say a couple of months and see how it works. If it seems like that is not really increasing participation, I think we can just move it back to the later time.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I would like to support that, and consideration for staff. Let us come up with a plan to start, to try it. I think it is a good idea for City Council and Planning Commission to have the same start time.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

In terms of moving this forward, I would like to check with the presenters before moving the start time. It would probably be best to make sure that the next meeting starts at 7 p.m. and we can make a formal announcement at that time.

Paul Fritz, Chair

That sounds fine.

9. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Svanstrom thanked Commissioner Fernandez for his work as Chair over the past year.

Director Svanstrom provided updates.

10. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Fritz adjourned the meeting at 9:17 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director