

CLOVIS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
January 23, 2020

A regular meeting of the Clovis Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Hatcher in the Clovis Council Chamber.

Flag salute led by Chair Hatcher

Present: Commissioners Antuna, Bedsted, Cunningham, Chair Hatcher

Absent: Commissioner Hinkle

Staff: Dave Merchen, City Planner
Orlando Ramirez, Deputy City Planner
Ricky Caperton, Senior Planner
Ryder Dilley, Planning Intern
Sean Smith, Supervising Civil Engineer
David Wolfe, City Attorney

MINUTES

1. The Commission approved the November 21, 2019, minutes by a vote of 4-0.

COMMISSION SECRETARY

None.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS COMMENTS

None.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REFERRALS

Item of correspondence related to Agenda Item X-2.

BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

None.

CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. Consider approval Res. 20-___, **GPA2019-007**, A request to amend the circulation element of the General Plan and the Herndon-Shepherd Specific Plan for placement of a Shepherd Avenue access point on the south side of Shepherd Avenue, between Clovis and Sunnyside Avenues. John and Kristen Sobaje, owners; Lennar Homes of California, Inc., applicant; Dirk Poeschel, Land Development Services, Inc., representative.

Senior Planner Ricky Caperton presented the staff report.

Commissioner Cunningham noted that the expressway under discussion was created as part of a beltway street project in the 1993 General Plan that appears to have been initiated by the City of Fresno and the beltway loop street was dropped in the 2014 General Plan Update, yet the expressway designation remained. He inquired as to the reasoning behind such. Supervising Civil Engineer Sean Smith expressed uncertainty over all of the reasons, providing what reasons he could.

Commissioner Cunningham inquired as to whether it could perhaps be a remnant from the beltway, wondering why the designation is being held onto. He followed up with an inquiry as to the 'temporary' designation assigned to the Preuss Avenue access point when it has been there for a long time. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith explained the reason for it existing.

Commissioner Antuna followed up by inquiring as to whether the 'temporary' designation indicated that the access point would be removed when the development occurs. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith confirmed that the plan before this application was to have Shepherd Avenue access removed, and that the tract map already approved for this site replaces that area with the back of lots. Should the access be approved, Preuss Avenue would be shifted to the east.

Commissioner Antuna requested an explanation of how the streets would develop with access to Shepherd Avenue closed off, as it appeared that many future residents of this tract would use Riordan Avenue. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith confirmed that the future residents would have access to both Riordan and Prescott Avenues from Clovis Avenue.

Commissioner Antuna sought and received confirmation that the traffic study indicated there would not be a significant impact to the current or future residents.

Commissioner Bedsted inquired as to whether the currently allowed left-turn from Riordan Avenue onto Clovis Avenue was planned to eventually be removed. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith explained that the conditions of the approved tract include the possibility of closing off that turn, should staff find such is needed.

Commissioner Bedsted stated that the traffic study indicated the traffic would be negligible, and that the City's perspective appeared to be that though there are no safety concerns, it would be preferable to maintain the 'expressway' designation and prevent intermediary streets from

accessing Shepherd Avenue. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith confirmed that there are no safety concerns, and staff's recommendation is to adhere to the City Council-approved plan.

Commissioner Bedsted inquired as to whether staff is concerned regarding changes to traffic circulation should the left-turn onto Clovis Avenue be removed from Riordan Avenue, particularly the effect such would have on Sunnyside Avenue, as both neighbors and Fresno County do not want an increase on traffic on that street. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith explained that those are some of the questions that were explored with the traffic study, which confirmed that the changes would be minor either way.

Commissioner Bedsted informed that he wanted to hone in on the matter under consideration, which is whether to maintain the 'expressway' designation of Shepherd Avenue in terms of this access point.

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to the applicant.

Dirk Poeschel of 923 Van Ness Avenue, Fresno, provided background on the project, requested approval of the applicant's proposal, and offered to answer questions.

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to those in favor.

Steven Jacobson of 812 Beauregard Lane informed that though he did and still does harbor reservations towards the overall project, he is in favor of Shepherd Avenue access as otherwise he will have to go south and perform a u-turn at Riordan Avenue. He views this as less safe than Preuss Avenue access, especially as proposed with a wider street and a deceleration lane.

Mike Elrod of 1299 Everglade Avenue, the author of the correspondence mentioned earlier, wished to go on record as being in favor of Shepherd Avenue access. He expressed confusion over the 'expressway' designation, when it was applied, and whether it is appropriate. He concluded by remarking that, as a runner, he is aware of several existing accesses to Shepherd Avenue east of Clovis Avenue.

Joe Smith of 1208 Everglade Avenue echoed Mr. Elrod's comments. He also complimented Mr. Poeschel and expressed appreciation for Lennar listening to the neighbors. Removing some traffic from Riordan Avenue would feel like a 'win' to him.

Todd Ying of 1860 N. Duke Avenue expressed concern that, should there be no access from Preuss Avenue, a vehicular accident could potentially block the intersection of Riordan and Clovis Avenues, cutting off access to or from not only the proposed development but also from his, which is east of the project site. He feels that such would not be safe, while Preuss Avenue access to Shaw Avenue will not only benefit the neighborhood but will also not impede the expressway.

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to those in opposition.

There being none, the Chair closed the public portion.

Commissioner Antuna inquired as to the distance between Clovis Avenue and the proposed access point. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith estimated it to be approximately four hundred feet.

Chair Hatcher inquired as to the other currently designated expressways in Clovis, then sought and received confirmation these expressways are designed to have a smoother flow of traffic, inquiring as to whether there are higher speed limits on those street sections. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith provided the locations, confirmed the purpose, and then informed he would need to find the information on the speed limits.

Chair Hatcher sought and received confirmation that, being there are no safety issues for or against, the reason staff recommended against this proposal is that this section of Shepherd Avenue has been designated an expressway. Senior Planner Caperton confirmed then provided a more detailed explanation behind the staff's reasoning for recommending denial.

Chair Hatcher sought clarification behind the City Council's direction to the applicant to bring the project back before the Planning Commission. Senior Planner Caperton confirmed that the Shepherd Avenue access was not part of the original proposal, and therefore its feasibility was uncertain, and indicated that the Council decided on this course due to neighbor support for the access.

Supervising Civil Engineer Smith returned to the speed limit question, informing that the speed limit is consistent on Shepherd Avenue between Willow Avenue and CA168.

Commissioner Bedsted expressed appreciation for the neighbors attending a public hearing again for this project. It is encouraging to see neighbors and the developer working together on a project that had some level of contention. He informed that he is listening to the concerns and desires of the neighbors while the Commission wrestles with setting precedence on an issue that can turn into a slippery slope. However, the traffic study indicating negligible impact now and in the future provides him with an encouraging outlook.

Commissioner Cunningham echoed many of Commissioner Bedsted's comment, expressing his appreciation for the developer reaching out to the neighborhood when an issue is polarized and commended both sides for attempting a dialogue that will lead to either consensus or acquiescence. He expressed concern with the origin of the 'expressway' designation, as well as his belief that the term should have been removed in the 2014 General Plan Update when the proposed beltway from the City of Fresno went away. Due to that change and the number of accesses on Shepherd Avenue between Willow and Clovis Avenues, he struggled with the staff recommendation and is instead inclined to approve GPA2019-007.

Chair Hatcher expressed a level of disagreement with Commissioner Cunningham. She expressed understanding of the reasoning behind the concept of a designated expressway, such as Temperance Avenue. With the knowledge that the traffic study does not have much in favor for or against the Shepherd Avenue access, she is reluctant to see the Planning Commission

making exceptions, as they have done so in the past and regretted it later. Therefore, she will not vote against staff's recommendation.

Commissioner Antuna, as a follow-up to Chair Hatcher's comments, stated that she herself drives the expressway section of Temperance Avenue and more access points would make travel through that section more difficult. Though there isn't as much traffic on Shepherd Avenue, there is development coming to the Willow-International area, and fewer traffic lights and access points will make travel in that area easier. She concluded by expressing agreement with Chair Hatcher; there is no substantial benefit to having the proposed access, and so she will side with staff.

Commissioner Bedsted, in light of traffic flow concerns and possible compounding factors, commented that there are places where the Enterprise Canal trail system crosses streets using illuminated crosswalks which serve to impede the flow of traffic when pedestrians use them. He inquired as to whether the trail on the north side of Shepherd Avenue is planned to cross over and follow the Enterprise Canal, thus creating the same sort of impediment. Supervising Civil Engineer Smith responded that such a midblock crossing is not planned, but rather that staff will do everything possible to direct trail traffic to use the lighted intersection of Sunnyside and Shepherd Avenues.

At this point, a motion was made by Commissioner Antuna and seconded by Chair Hatcher to approve resolution denying GPA2019-007. The motion was tied by a vote of 2-2-1. City Attorney David Wolfe clarified that as a legislative action, rather than a judicial action, the Commission could either try for another motion or simply push the item forward to the City Council with no recommendation. As the members were not inclined to change any of their votes, the matter was continued to the City Council with no recommendation from the Planning Commission.

3. Consider approval Res. 20-___, **SPR2019-020**, A request to approve a site plan review for a proposed Fresno County Regional Library Branch in the Clovis Landmark Square Development, located on the north side of Third Street at its intersection with Veterans Parkway (755 Third Street). City of Clovis, owner; County of Fresno, applicant.

City Planner Dave Merchen presented the staff report.

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to those in favor.

Ramon Bath of 2420 Mariposa Avenue, Fresno, identified himself as the County Librarian for the Clovis Branch of the Fresno County Library and commended both City of Clovis and County of Fresno staff. He provided background on the current Clovis Branch library and its inadequacy for the current level of use. In addition, he listed programs and services that would benefit from the proposed new building, and concluded by offering to answer questions on those programs and services and deferring questions regarding engineering, architecture, or timelines to his attending colleagues from Fresno County Public Works.

Deborah Ikeda of 8812 N. Colfax Avenue, Fresno, informed that she serves on the Citizens Review Panel for Measure B and that the City of Clovis is now of a size to qualify for two county

library branches, equivalent in size to the Woodward Park Branch Library. This project would provide one of those libraries, and it is long past time for the citizens of Clovis to benefit from that tax measure. In addition, she stated support for public libraries as a trustee for the State Center Community College District representing the Clovis and Clovis Community College. She is in support of this project.

Judith Preuss of 1752 Houston Avenue identified herself as Secretary of the Friends of the Clovis Library and a ten-year appointed member of the Measure B Review Committee. She has been hoping for a new library for all ten of those years, and so is asking the Commission to support this site plan review. In addition, on behalf of the Friends of the Clovis Library, she invited all present to view displays and attend a reception at the Clovis Library during the month of February. She concluded by providing some historical background information on Preuss Avenue (referring back to Project Item X-2).

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to those in opposition.

There being none, the Chair closed the public portion.

At this point, a motion was made by Commissioner Cunningham and seconded by Commissioner Bedsted to approve SPR2019-020 with a modification to Condition #10. The motion was approved by a vote of 4-0-1.

4. Consider approval Res. 20-___, **AUP2019-023**, A request for the approval of an administrative use permit to allow for a detached accessory structure to be greater than 12 ft. in overall height within the rear yard setback for the property located at 2742 Everglade Avenue. Jessica Huber, owner/applicant.

Planning Intern Ryder Dilley presented the staff report.

Chair Hatcher sought and received confirmation that the rear fence is a standard six-foot high fence.

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to the applicant.

Jessica Huber of 2742 Everglade Avenue provided background regarding the project.

Chair Hatcher inquired as to whether there would be any plumbing running to the proposed structure. Mrs. Huber responded in the negative, explaining that there would be electricity for fans and lights, but that the structure would only include a closet on the inside and one on the outside, no more.

At this point, the Chair opened the floor to those in favor.

There being none, the Chair opened the floor to those in opposition.

There being none, the Chair closed the public portion.

Commissioner Antuna stated that the proposal has a good design. The letter of concern had indicated that the proposed structure would be 2-story but it is not. In addition, the privacy concern is not an issue either, as the window would be below the fence line. In conclusion, she understands wanting some extra space for children and finds the proposal to be a good product.

At this point, a motion was made by Commissioner Cunningham and seconded by Commissioner Antuna to approve AUP2019-023. The motion was approved by a vote of 4-0-1.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 7:12 P.M. UNTIL the Planning Commission meeting on February 27, 2020.



Amy Hatcher, Chair

COMMUNITY
MAY 10 2020