



City of Petaluma, California

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*Planning Commission Minutes
November 9, 2004 – 7:00 PM*

Present: Commissioners Asselmeier, Barrett, McAllister, Rose, Dargie

Absent: Councilmember Harris, Commissioner von Raesfeld

PUBLIC COMMENT

Geoff Cartwright, Petaluma – Referred to the County's General Plan suggestion that the Denman Flat area be introduced as park. He said the County had not followed through with this. He was concerned that this leaves the area open for development using County standards and this could affect flooding in the City of Petaluma.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Closed

Chairman Dargie read the remaining subject matters that were to be discussed:

- Surface Water Management
- Mixed-Use Concept
- Parks and Open Space
- Infill Density and Development
- Mobility
- Retail as a Priority
- Economic and Fiscal Sustainability

SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

Director Tuft introduced the proposed methods to address Surface Water Management within the General Plan, particularly along the Petaluma River, with discussion of the River Plan implementation through the designation of a River Corridor Overlay Zone.

Questions:

1. Are the existing standards for Zero Net Fill and Base Floor Elevations to be above the 100 year flood level adequate; and are additional policies in the General Plan necessary to add further protection?

Commissioner Barrett asked if the commercial and mixed-use designation in the Denman Flat area had had been discussed.

Director Tuft said that the specifics had not been discussed in the area beyond the KOA site. She said the General Plan did not propose the retention of any agricultural designated lands within the Urban Growth Boundary. She explained the subject site (corn maze/pumpkin) had been designated as mixed use or commercial development, with the latter preferred. She said the Draft Preferred Land Use map did not show the possible designation of the site as a groundwater recharge and surface water detention overlays. She said the area appears to be suitable for surface water retention and a discussion with the property owner was in progress for the City to purchase the property for this use. She indicated, regardless of its designation as commercial or retention, which would depend on how the City pays for it, it could be a combination of retention with limited development as an option. She said it may be the City's intent to overly this area with both designations if additional studies now underway justify the designation...

Commissioner Barrett clarified this would limit what development could take place on the property, especially in consideration of downstream flow. She asked as projects move along, would they be working at cross purposes.

Director Tuft explained this is being avoided, but as the General Plan continues, development proposals have been applied for and are being analyzed to see if the sites are appropriate before the General Plan is adopted. She indicated these specific developing sites will be identified and incorporated by appropriate land use designations to comply with the proposal. She said it was decided that at some time the amending of the Draft Land Use Plan would have to cease to allow completion of the Plan and Draft EIR.

Commissioner Dargie asked what areas would not be adjacent to the River Corridor.

Director Tuft gave an example of a Floodplain designated area not suggested to be designated as River Corridor overlay would be the west side of North McDowell from Corona Road north to Old Redwood Highway.

Commissioner Asselmeier asked about the Zero Net Fill (ZNF) and referred to public comment that the City should fix prior problems that have been caused by years of development in the floodplain. She requested clarification if the Commission should look at this as over and above ZNF.

Director Tuft said this has been considered, specifically with the potential implementation of the River Plan and the creation of flood terraces to increase the capacity of the River within certain Reaches. She explained another option was detention ponds such as the property at Denman Flat as well as creating flood terraces, as currently proposed along Industrial Avenue, which have shown a small but definite reduction in localized flood elevations.

Commissioner Barrett asked for clarification of the statement “. . . no net run-off increase solutions for those areas.”

WRC Engineering Manager Eckerson explained this meant that once a development is in place, the pre-development run-off and the post-development run-off is computed and no additional run-off is to occur. He said this is not what is currently in place. He stated that some developments have detention basins to prevent additional run-off, but this is not consistently applied. He explained the difference between No Net Fill and No Net Run-Off. He stated that No Net Fill is within a certain area when considering development within the floodplain. This would define that once the development is in place there is no net increase in fill within the floodplain area. He said this distinction would raise the finished floor above the level of the 100 year floodplain and would require excavation or removal of an equivalent amount of material within the floodplain to prevent any net increase in fill.

Commissioner Barrett thought this should be adopted throughout the entire flood area.

Engineer Eckerson continued explaining that No Net Run-Off would be a better way to address the effect of the additional impervious surfaces in the watershed. He said this focuses not only on the quantity of run-off but also the pollutant load of the run-off.

Chairman Dargie cited the Factory Outlets and the Redwood Technology Center developments and the timing of run-off from impervious surfaces allowing it to reach the River before the main storm volume. He asked for clarification of this and how it should be addressed.

Engineering Manager Eckerson said that whenever additional impervious surfaces are introduced anywhere in the watershed it will cause an increase in run-off, specifically increasing peak flow as well as the volume of run-off. He explained that with paving, the timing results in an immediate run-off rather than a delay as on pervious surfaces. He stated this affects where detention basins are located to work in concert with this timing. The relationship to the sub-watershed and the total watershed is very important. He said it was possible to compare the hydrographs that illustrate discharge vs. time. By comparing sub-areas, the total will change the timing of when the peak will and could increase the peak flow further downstream. He said if the water from the impervious areas runs off sooner it could be better, all depending on the timing. He stated that any policy that proposes any type of detention facility the analysis would have to consider not only development-related impacts, but what affect it has on the overall watershed as well.

Chairman Dargie asked if this could be devised as a policy to determine if quicker run-off is desirable in certain areas depending on the analysis of the run-off.

Engineering Manager Eckerson stated yes, and said the XP SWIMM model would be a tool to analyze the effect and verify these types of development submittals.

Commissioner Barrett requested an explanation of terracing and how this differs from retention ponds and how this affects limiting run-off.

Engineering Manager Eckerson said these were described in the River Access & Enhancement Plan. He stated this process requires lowering the top of the river bank, and as the river rises, the flows can spread out over the floodplain terrace resulting in increased conveyance capacity of that particular reach as well as providing in-stream detention. He said this design is meant to help with lower storm flows and would not deter the flood characteristics of a 100-year event.

Commissioner Asselmeier wanted clarification of when a detention basin is not always an appropriate mitigation based on peak flow and discharge. She asked if a detention basin could clean the water and facilitate its conveyance and if policies could be put in place to use basins as a tool to improve water quality while others would allow quick release of water.

Engineering Manager Eckerson explained that if a water-quality-basin is designed it will function much differently than a basin for peak run-off. He suggested a policy that would include water quality basins and noted it was difficult to design a basin that would be effective to meet both requirements. He said XP-SWIMM can model the entire watershed and the effects of any changes within the basin can be modeled.

Commissioner Barrett asked about what other tools such as a water-quality-basin, water detention and terracing were available to control run-off.

Engineering Manager Eckerson stated that there is a wide range of options such as using pervious type paving materials in certain areas; reducing impervious paving materials; and inclusion of grassy swales (allowing pollutants to settle out) to reduce pollutants from getting into the storm drains as a few ideas.

Commissioner Barrett asked if allowing the water to leave rapidly was a plus for development in the floodplain. She asked if any of these ideas countered this by decreasing the impervious layer to keep water on the property and cause a larger volume of water to leave at a later time.

Engineering Manager Eckerson indicated that anything that can be done to reduce impervious surfaces would reduce the ultimate volume of run-off. He said the developers and engineers must meet the policies of the General Plan.

Commissioner Rose referred to the Recharge Map and asked about sites with different soil types identified as recharge areas throughout the City. He said current recharge and run-off could be controlled by soil and geology rather than development. He asked if there were zones in the City that should have special consideration to require specific precautions as far as recharge importance.

Engineering Manager Eckerson indicated that the figure provided was based on geology and topography. He said that there were very few recharge areas identified. He said additional research was needed to identify specific sites for detention and others for recharge.

Commissioner Rose wanted an overlay to illustrate a coincidence for recharge and mitigation of other factors. He felt this would be more important than mitigating flooding and water resource conservation.

Engineering Manager Eckerson indicated that there are problems with infiltration basins because over time they clog up and reduce their intended use.

Commissioner McAllister referred to the 1982 Department of Water Resources map and asked if one of the potential recharge areas was at Corona and Petaluma Boulevard North. She wanted this information taken into account for the overlay that Commissioner Rose mentioned.

Director Tuft answered that this part of the Water Resources element, for groundwater assessment and surface water management, is still underway. She said that as this research is finalized, sites will be identified by overlay designations.

Commissioner McAllister thought a policy should be devised to study as any development occurs, how it contributes to the overall watershed and to require that it create no additional run-off in the entire watershed because it ultimately affects everything downstream.

Engineering Manager Eckerson agreed that the impervious surface issue did not just apply to the floodplain areas.

Director Tuft said that it was important to differentiate between floodplain and floodway. She said it should not be a surprise that homes within the designated floodway are flooded or subject to threatened inundation.

Chairman Dargie mentioned the Paula Lane site with a detention facility planned; he asked if this could be calibrated to delay flooding in the lower reaches resulting in a benefit to the entire basin.

Engineering Manager Eckerson said that any wording regarding a detention basin policy should be written in such a way that the detention is designed to mitigate the effects of any additional run-off generated by the development and not cause any adverse impact to the rest of the watershed.

Commissioner Asselmeier asked about River oriented development that promotes the River Enhancement Plan. She wondered if this type of development needed to be addressed versus other types of development and what incentives to River oriented development could be established to implement the City's development plans.

Director Tuft responded that this had been discussed on a small scale to encourage and add incentives to have appropriate development along the River. She said it would not be necessary to spell out the specific incentives in a policy to support River oriented development.

Commissioner Rose asked, in the context of the River Enhancement Plan, how much of the plan was dependent on the initiative of the City; and how much would have to be done with willing development partners to achieve recreational and other amenities.

Director Tuft replied that, given the very limited amount of land that the City owns and could independently seek grants for, she estimated 90% - 95% of the implementation depends on public/private cooperation between the property owner, the developer, and the City. She pointed to opportunities along the McNear Peninsula, Industrial Avenue, and some sites owned by public agencies such as Sonoma County Water Agency that could be considered for implementation without a cooperative agreement.

Commissioner Rose asked about how common existing easements were like the floodway easement near Lynch Creek.

Director Tuft said this was not common. She stated this was why creating the River Corridor Overlay to define what would be necessary to implement the River Plan would clarify in the General Plan what type of development would be appropriate within the area proximate to the River.

Commissioner Rose agreed there was a need to be very proactive in creating the River Corridor overlay as an assertive plan to delineate the potential development of the River as an amenity and this would require mandates. He wanted to see a creative approach to development near and adjacent to the River and to look at how encroachments and flood terracing could be used to guide the development in creating these amenities.

Commissioner Asselmeier agreed that stating mandates would help River oriented development.

Commissioner Barrett wanted clarification of what the mandates would be and what policies would be sacrificed in this effort.

Commissioner Asselmeier stated she was referring to the River Access and Enhancement Plan and actualizing the greenways, connections, and development that would be consistent with this Plan.

Commissioner Barrett supported strong policies to implement the River Enhancement Plan to improve water quality and reducing run-off throughout the floodplain but she did not favor allowing “wedge” words that could be used to undermine the General Plan.

Commissioner Rose referred to the River Enhancement Plan and said he envisioned some more highly developed urban development along the River that might require violating zero net fill to accomplish. He said this would require a trade off where nothing would be held as an absolute but conditions would be set forth that if the developer complied, encroachment into the floodway and providing direct access to the water’s edge would be desirable as an amenity.

Commissioner McAllister and Barrett said they were hesitant to allow even a hint of this in a policy as it could be detrimental.

Commissioner Asselmeier did not see this as creating “wedge” places but would work toward actualizing the River Enhancement Plan. She thought that with discretion by the City, the Commission, and with the mandates in place, there may be times that variances would be allowed allow creative development.

Director Tuft suggested staff draft some policies for the Commission’s consideration. She mentioned transfer of development rights from the River Corridor and the need to develop development transfer options within the General Plan to facilitate the dedication of the River Corridor when it interacts with the floodplain. She thought scenarios would have to be developed to determine the best method to accomplish this. She gave an example from the Corona Ely Specific Plan that had transfer of development potential from the Urban Separator; she said in very few cases did the developers ask for the transfer.

Commissioner McAllister asked about the transfer of development rights.

Director Tuft answered that if the City purchases the property, a transfer would not be necessary. She said if the City tried to negotiate a below market price, the transfer could be an option.

Commissioner Dargie had questions regarding hardscape in the floodway that is currently permitted under a Conditional Use Permit. He wanted clarification of the proposal in the new General Plan to prohibit this.

Director Tuft referred to water quality issues where a designated floodway is affected by hardscape, particularly parking lots, resulting in a potential for discharge of pollutants

into the River. She said that it was desirable to reduce this practice as was expressed in public comment and will be required by regulatory agencies to reach higher standards of water quality.

Commissioner Barrett referred to the adobe soil and developers' statements that it doesn't absorb water.

Engineering Manager Eckerson answered that this was true to some extent, but early in the season there is percolation and he saw benefits to the idea.

Commissioner Rose added there was a possibility for some hardscape in the floodway when it was considered an amenity. He agreed that walkways and pedestrian areas, where pollution would be minimal, not streets and parking lots, would make the area useful except during inundation periods.

Commissioner Barrett supported eliminating hardscape from areas where requests for additional parking exceeds City zoning allowances; she gave as examples: Lowes and Kohls.

Director Tuft stated that the use of pervious parking at the Science of the Soul at Adobe Road and East Washington Street was working very well and this type of construction could be looked at for low use, overflow parking needs.

Engineering Manager Eckerson talked about storm levels when looking at different components of the system. He said it would be impossible to design an underground pipe network to convey a 100-year storm event. He said the existing inlets and culverts are designed for a 10-year storm event. He said the 100 year floodplain on the FEMA map identifies the portion of the watershed needed to convey floodwaters from this type of storm.

Director Tuft explained that the following would occur following the first of the year:

- Overlays for potential detention pond sites
- Specific parcels
- Economic consultant discussion with Commission
- Full analysis on the Preferred Draft Plan through preparation of the Draft General Plan and Draft EIR
- Mobility consultant discussion with Commission

PUBLIC COMMENT

Geoff Cartwright, Petaluma – Mentioned convergent peak flows and explained how they affected flooding; detention/retention ponds interaction with flows, water recharge areas, and the zero net fill issues. He talked about the effects of past floods in the area of his home. He wanted to have the FEMA flood insurance rate maps (FIRM) updated.

Dianne Reilly Torres, Petaluma – Spoke about groundwater issues and recharge areas in the Petaluma Factory Outlet area. She mentioned Santa Rosa using its wells to augment its water supply; the Grand Jury recommending water sustainability; and establishing a groundwater management plan. She mentioned the amount of commercial water use and the affect of the new retail planned. She said the Kohl's parking lot was excessive and water sitting on streets causing potholes.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED

Chairman Dargie asked the members to state any particular concerns and any specific directions to General Plan staff.

Commissioner Barrett wanted the General Plan team to address park and open space issues. She felt the Commission strongly supported parks not only as open space, but to include fields, and playgrounds for team sports. She also mentioned providing the various definitions of mixed use and to customize these according to the area.

Commissioner Asselmeier also was concerned with parks and mentioned a development that lacked on-site playground recreation. She wanted to address the pocket park and playground concept to require certain developments to be self-sufficient in providing recreational and open space amenities to meet the needs of the community.

Commissioner McAllister stated that she was looking for specific criteria to specify to the developer if it was to be a community park/neighborhood park, etc.

Commissioner Rose wanted to identify major pieces of land, set them aside as parks and establish a policy to do this. He referred to the Gatti Park site as being set aside during the evolution of the eastside as the model to follow.

Chairman Dargie addressed the mixed use issue and the challenges involved to shape this consistently rather than on a case-by-case basis. He agreed with establishing development policies that required development to include a certain amount of park land. He also addressed infill and densities to apply cohesive policies that will produce results that are satisfactory.

Commissioner Barrett referred to the requirement to have one acre of park per 1,000 residents and by using this standard, she wanted to establish a method to provide this ratio. She wanted a park policy integrated throughout the land use element of the General Plan. She also wanted the Bicycle Plan interwoven like the River Plan has been. She suggested integrating a policy of Fair Share by developers to take care of the amenities including bicycle paths. She also mentioned the development at Kenilworth site taking established communities amenities and how these were to be replaced. She suggested using rooftops for tracks and tennis courts and wanted to be creative to provide amenities.

Commissioner Asselmeier stressed the importance of prioritizing new retail and where it should be placed.

Commissioner Rose was concerned about minimum density and he did not want this abandoned as it was needed to provide affordable and workforce housing opportunities. He wanted to establish economic diversity by designating in certain appropriate areas, a certain type of housing should be prescribed. He agreed with the idea of mixed use and viewed it as being parcel specific and transitioning to existing uses was necessary to make the neighborhood function.

Chairman Dargie had a question about using workforce housing as an actual land use designation.

Commissioner Barrett clarified that work force housing can be deeded to restrict the amount that the resale price can increase. She referred to the Preferred Plan build-out projections for 2025 with a population of 73,126 which would amount to about 259 dwelling units per year. She said a mandate and policy would be necessary to limit the number of dwelling units that could be built within a year to prevent using up all the development potential in the first few years.

Commissioner McAllister agreed with pacing the development for retail, commercial and residential and thought that the Town of Windsor plan was working well with the use of incentives and smaller scale projects.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Geoff Cartwright, Petaluma – Commented on the park issue. He stated in the past some floodplain had been identified and how this tied in to the developer trade off policy discussion mentioned earlier.

Public Comment was concluded.

Adjourn: 9:25 p.m.