

**CITY OF BELMONT**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**SUMMARY MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2010, 7:00 PM**

Chair Frautschi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, City Hall Council Chambers.

**1. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Frautschi, Reed, Parsons, Mathewson, Mayer, Horton  
Commissioners Absent: Mercer

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), City Attorney Zafferano (CA), Recording Secretary Turning (RS), Parks and Recreation Director Gervais (PRD)

**2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None**

**3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) - None**

**4. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**4A. Minutes of April 6, 2010**

**MOTION: By Commissioner Mathewson, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to accept the Minutes of April 6, 2010 as presented.**

**Ayes: Mathewson, Horton, Parsons, Mayer, Frautschi**  
**Abstain: Reed**  
**Absent: Mercer**

**Motion passed 5/0/1/1**

**4B. Minutes of April 20, 2010**

Commissioner Mayer thanked RS Turning for including his comments pertaining to the issue of Carlmont Drive townhomes, and hoped that it will also be reflected in the Minutes of the meeting in May.

**MOTION: By Commissioner Mathewson, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to accept the Minutes of April 20, 2010 as presented. Motion passed 6/0/1 with Commissioner Mercer absent.**

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**5A. Discussion/Direction: Alternatives for Addressing Four Sidewalk Locations on or Near Ralston Avenue.**

PRD/Interim Acting Public Works Co-Director Gervais explained that staff was seeking Commission input prior to moving ahead with the sidewalk issues, and summarized the Staff Report utilizing a Power Point presentation showing sidewalks that are lifting and the various types of trees and styles of sidewalks currently in place. Staff recommended replacing the street trees in three locations and repair of the sidewalk in front of Divino's restaurant (without tree replacement), as well as development of a larger project to improve the streetscape in the entire area.

Responding to Vice Chair Reed, PRD Gervais confirmed that it would be a band-aid effort to pull up the sidewalk, trim the roots and lay down new sidewalk; the sidewalk would likely buckle again. Staff did not recommend replacing the tree in front of Divino's because of the tight space, and suggested that an alternative would be to remove the planter boxes that do not serve any structural purpose. He also concurred that the long-term cost of root trimming and repeated sidewalk replacement is probably more expensive than putting in a new species of tree that would not lift the sidewalk.

Commissioner Parsons questioned the advisability of putting in new trees without sprinkler systems. DPR Gervais responded that they would look for a species that would work but that survivability could be an issue. Commissioner Parsons stated that he had expected to see alternatives that addressed a larger area around the trees that is not sidewalk and that perhaps a few of the trees could be saved.

Chair Frautschi also noted that the current plan does not include larger areas around the trees, but that Alternative 3 could include that. DPR Gervais responded that they could widen the area around the trees with decomposed granite (dg) to try to reduce the risk of the trees lifting the sidewalk.

Commissioner Mayer recalled that when he first came on the Commission there had been a long-term single plan for the entire area and asked if funds are available for a larger-scale project. CDD de Melo responded that a capital improvement project would probably be required and that RDA funding is questionable over the next few years, but that there are funds available to address the four spots referred to in the staff report.

Discussion ensued regarding the desirability of a long-term comprehensive plan that could be implemented in phases. PRD Gervais reiterated that the City has an obligation to deal with the trip hazards now, and then perhaps a time frame for a longer-term plan could be developed for the new Public Works Director.

Commissioner Mathewson suggested the possibility of planting a tree 5-10' away from tree 2, if Divino's is not willing to remove the planter boxes, so that there is no net loss of trees.

Responding to Chair Frautschi, CDD de Melo stated that façade improvement funds are available to entice Divino's to do something.

Mary Morrissey-Parden, representing the Belmont Chamber of Commerce, encouraged the Commission to collaborate with business owners because window spaces could be problematic as to where trees and planters are located. PRD Gervais responded that he had talked to the owners of Ralston Florist, Divino's and the Hong Kong Restaurant, who expressed concern about people tracking berries into the shops from the Privet trees, and that Divino's wanted to work with staff to see what was possible.

Commissioners' recommendations to staff were as follows:

Commissioner Parsons:

- The sidewalks definitely need to be fixed.
- There is a bad spot on El Camino near Chez Saigon.
- Save the trees, if possible, by widening the bed.
- Add a few new trees, so that when the older trees need to be removed there will be established trees to take their place.
- Concurred with Commissioner Mathewson that removing the boxes around the posts could mean they would not necessarily have to remove the tree if the roots were not totally invasive.

Commissioner Horton:

- Concurred that the sidewalks need to be fixed, the tree rings need to be removed because they are girdling the trees, and dg should be added.
- Tree number 1 should be removed and not replaced because the sidewalk is too narrow
- The planter boxes at tree number 2 in front of Divino's should be removed and the concrete around the tree should be removed and replaced with dg. If it is still a problem, then the tree should be removed.
- The suckers on the privets should be cleaned up.
- Put dg around trees number 3 and 4 to see if it works.
- Belmont's sidewalks are too narrow and need to be widened or Ralston Avenue needs to be narrowed before the problem can be solved.
- Concurred that if they plant trees in places where there is no water they might be sorry.
- If the dg doesn't work, then she would put planter boxes around them similar to the planter boxes on the south side of Ralston.
- Public Works should contact the utility company to get them to take care of the boxes that are on the sidewalks and causing problems.

Commissioner Mayer:

- Would like to see a long-term plan that addresses the entire area, with possible solutions that include narrowing Ralston Avenue to accommodate better pedestrian traffic.
- In the short-term, he concurred that the trees should be kept as much as possible, and that the rings and concrete around them should be removed as a sort-term solution.
- The soffits and concrete in front of Divino's should be removed in an attempt to save that tree.
- Do whatever possible to save the trees and still be looking toward the long-term concepts and plans that are in place.

Commissioner Mathewson:

- Asked CDD de Melo if he had a sense for how the Council would react to spending money to do a long-term plan. CDD de Melo believed they would consider it because the kinds of things that should be done in the economic development area in the current economy are infrastructure improvements such as streets, sidewalks and trees.
- If the roots of the trees under discussion are going to come up every 2-3 years he was not sure they are worth saving; it might be worth replacing them with a species that doesn't have that problem.

- Indifferent to tree 1.
- Trees 3 and 4 need serious help.
- See his earlier comment regarding the tree in front of Divino's.
- Need to look at a longer-term plan and consider alternatives.

Vice Chair Reed:

- If he thought that the City is serious about a long-term plan and was to get moving with that he would recommend taking the cheapest possible approach that still looks good and improves the safety.
- If a monumental sidewalk replacement plan is 10 years away, he would recommend removing the trees and replacing them with a species that would not lift the concrete.

Chair Frautschi:

- Agreed with Commissioner Horton on tree 1; the sidewalk is low, however, they do have parking spaces so that perhaps a tree could go in there by incorporating some sort of a bulb-out.
- Along 6<sup>th</sup> there are already two holes where the trees died and were never replaced; replacement should be part of this project.
- Staff should entice Divino's with façade improvement funds. Get them to eliminate the planter boxes around the support posts but encourage them to incorporate planter boxes directly in front of their windows. They could find shade flowers that would work there.
- Try to save tree 2 but it all depends on the arborist's final report. If the arborist says it can't be saved because anything that is done will re-lift the sidewalks.
- City is obligated to repair the sidewalks.
- Concluded that a majority of Commissioners are recommending option 3, the long-term study; the sooner the better.
- Shortsighted by not trying to irrigate that section right now if new trees are to be planted.

Commissioner Parsons added that the reason trees put surface roots out for the most part is because they're looking for water, so that without sprinklers the roots of new trees the roots will be on the surface.

DPR Gervais suggested that if they do plant new trees, perhaps staff could talk with the local business owners about assuming responsibility for watering them.

Commissioner Mathewson reiterated that safety is most important – it's the law and must be their first concern.

Commissioner Mayer added that he hopes that the City Council is listening and hears Commissioners' thoughts about the importance of investing now in a long-term plan.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

### **6A. Belmont Sign Ordinance Amendments – Continued Discussion – Outstanding Questions/Issues/Policies.**

CDD de Melo summarized the staff memorandum, noting that they had discussed 5 of the 16 original policy issues at the May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, and 5 items were added at that meeting. To take advantage of the

fact that PRD Gervais was present, he suggested that they discuss the signage related to the Sports Complex first.

Commissioner Mathewson asked that staff inform the Commission which signs are grandfathered in and which are not as they are going through the items. CA Zafferano interjected that, in general, existing permanent signs would be grandfathered in subject to any grandfathering provisions in the new ordinance but that temporary signs would not be.

Responding to Commissioner Horton regarding signs on a public right-of-way, DPR Gervais stated that it was his understanding that any new sidewalks should be 4' wide.

In order to put the discussion about fence signs at the Sports Complex into context, CA Zafferano explained that they fall into several distinct categories that need to be separated:

- Fence signs on private property will be covered by the maximum signage amount on private property, unless the Commission chooses to have a different rule about them.
- Signs on public property on public fences at the Sports Complex as distinguished from other fences that are owned by the City.
- Banners on private fences that are temporary signs.

He wanted it to be clear that a sign at the Sports Complex is not a sign on a private fence – the Sports Complex signs are signs on fences owned by the City, adding that the City need not treat all of its fences the same way.

For clarification, Commissioner Parsons asked if the Commission decided to ban a general sign on the City right-of-way, could they make an exception to that for signs on fences in City parks. CA Zafferano responded that they could do that, or it could be fences in just one park. It does not compromise the banning of signs on other public rights-of-way. They could say they ban signs on all fences owned by the City of Belmont except particular fences and specify what they want on those fences.

DPR Gervais asked that the Commission consider the Sports Complex in a different light due to its nature and because of the activities that go on there, and because of possible future need for resources for improvements at the site. He asked the Commission to consider maintaining some flexibility for options related to signage at the site in order to generate income for improvements (such as synthetic turf), maintenance and water. He believed there is perhaps an opportunity in the future for things like naming rights for the facility or wording on the back of the score board to garner resources. Messages would have to meet community standards and convey appropriate messages for youth athletic teams.

Responding to Commissioner Mathewson, CA Zafferano confirmed that the 4-acre site could be restricted from certain types of advertisements; these kinds of sites are not traditional public forums, which mean they would not have to allow any non-commercial speech. They could prohibit all non-commercial speech and could control what kind of commercial speech is displayed.

Discussion ensued between the Commission, Staff and City Attorney. Due to the late hour, The Planning Commission decided to continue this item to the following meeting for further clarification and discussion.

## **7. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES:**

CDD de Melo reported as follows:

**7A. Ralston/US-101 Landscape Project**

There are some funding shortfalls on Redwood City's end to complete this project. One of the caveats towards the City of Belmont contributing funds to the project is that there will be no trees and landscaping removed. This project most likely will not be completed this year because of Bike Bridge construction activity.

**7B. San Mateo Development – North Road/43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue**

No update at this time.

**7C. Parking Study – Downtown Village Areas**

No update at this time.

**7D. High Speed Train (HST) Project – San Francisco to San Jose**

A community outreach meeting will be held May 26<sup>th</sup> 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The agenda will include a presentation from the HSR Authority on the Alternatives Analysis and small group discussions. Over 1,000 postcards have been sent out for this meeting, as well as a press release, web posting and the Police Department's mobile billboard will be utilized. The meeting will not be televised due to cost. He encouraged anybody interested to come by his office to look at the binders on this project.

**7E. Emmett House**

The Commission's subcommittee had met that evening with City staff at which time they made progress relative to cabinets, flooring, carpet and countertops. The building is painted on the outside and the Public Works Project Manager advises that the project could be completed by August. Commissioner Parsons asked CDD de Melo to update City Council on the progress that has been made and to show Council some of the materials chosen and why. He suggested that Council might want to designate a representative to look at what they are doing. CDD de Melo stated that Council received a detailed report at their May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting but he could ask if they want to assign a rep. He added that Council had approved a Professional Services Agreement for engineering and design of the roads, crosswalks, sidewalks and landscaping around Emmett House.

**7F. 1000 South Road**

Continues to be hopeful that the owners will pick up the building permit for rehab of the building, but they have not done that so far. Staff continues to get phone calls from other developers who want to buy the property so he believes that the current ownership group is leveraging whether to do the rehab.

**7G. US 101 Pedestrian/Bike Bridge Project**

Groundbreaking was held on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Weather conditions have not made things ideal to go forward.

**Other Items**

Commissioner Parsons urged all to look at the **draft document on the High Speed Rail Alternatives Analysis** with the specifics of Belmont in it. He stated that it is full of errors and he was not able to determine which alternatives they are aiming at for Belmont.

CDD de Melo stated that the Commission's **June 1<sup>st</sup> agenda** will include the **Conditional Use Permit for Semeria Park as well as the Public Hearing on the Draft Housing Element.**

CDD de Melo stated that at their May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, City Council adopted the **Green Building Ordinance**. 2<sup>nd</sup> reading will be at their next meeting.

Chair Frautschi reminded all that the **State of the City Address** will be held Thursday May 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 in the Taube Room of the Belmont Library.

Chair Frautschi referred all to the **Sustainable San Mateo County publication** that was included in the Commission's packets. He asked staff to obtain the list on page 21 of contaminated sites that are reported to be in Belmont.

He and Commissioner Mayer will meet May 19<sup>th</sup> regarding the **Tree Ordinance**.

**7. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2010**

Liaison: Vice Chair Reed  
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Mercer

**8. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, June 1, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

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Carlos de Melo  
Planning Commission Secretary

*CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the  
Community Development Department.  
Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.*

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