

MINUTES

REGULAR & SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLESeptember 5, 20236:04 PM

In accordance with City policy, all Planning Commission meetings are recorded on audio and video in their entirety and are available for review in the Community Development Department (CDD). These minutes are a brief summary of the action taken.

1. ROLL CALL

Chair Daniel Dodge, Commissioners Peter Radin, Brandon Sencion, Martha Vega, and Jenni Veitch-Olson were present. Vice-Chair Ed Acosta arrived at 6:07 p.m. and Commissioner Lucy Rojas arrived at 6:09 p.m.

A. MOTION TO EXCUSE ABSENT PLANNING COMMISSIONERS (IF ANY)

MOTION: It was moved by Chair Dodge, seconded by Commissioner Vega, and carried by the following vote to move item 1.A. to the end of calendar:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Dodge, Radin, Sencion, Vega, Veitch-Olson
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: none
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Rojas

Staff members present were Community Development Director Suzi Merriam, Assistant City Attorney Denise S. Bazzano, Assistant Community Director Justin Meek, Assistant Planner Alvaro Madrigal, Principal Engineer Murray Fontes, Executive Assistant Celia Castro, and City Interpreter Carlos Landaverry.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Radin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PRESENTATIONS & ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**A. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

City resident Luper Ortiz inquired about the status of Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) outreach efforts that took place during Farmers Market event.

Watsonville business owner and resident Judy Gilson shared a poem with the public and provided free coloring books.

B. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION

Community Development Director Merriam addressed the inquiry of the first speaker (Luper Ortiz) and confirmed the DWSP will be addressed during this meeting.

Chair Dodge welcomed everyone back from the Labor Day holiday.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. MOTION APPROVING MINUTES OF JULY 10, 2023, REGULAR MEETING

PUBLIC INPUT

Chair Dodge requested changes to the minutes of July 10, 2023 in Item 5.A.

Commissioner Vega inquired about minutes for August 1, 2023.

MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Vega, seconded by Commissioner Radin, and carried by the following vote to approve the Consent Agenda with requested changes by Chair Dodge:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Dodge, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Vega,
Veitch-Olson

NOES: COMMISSIONERS: None

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: None

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. SPECIAL USE PERMIT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (PP2023-5494) TO EXPAND THE EXISTING 1,425± SQUARE-FOOT BAR WITH LIVE ENTERTAINMENT INTO A 2,850± SQUARE-FOOT RESTAURANT WITH BAR AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT LOCATED AT 118 MAIN STREET, WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA (APN 017-681-08)

1) Staff Report

2) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions

3) Applicant Presentation

4) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions

5) Public Hearing

6) Appropriate Motion(s)

MAIN MOTION: It was moved by _____, seconded by _____, and carried by the following vote approve the following recommendation:

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA,

7) Deliberation

8) Chair Calls for a Vote on Motion(s)

AYES: COMMISSIONERS:

NOES: COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS:

B. PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION OF THE DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN, ADOPTION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, ADOPTION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE WATSONVILLE 2005 GENERAL PLAN, AND ADOPTION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING CODE AND MAP

1) Staff Report

Assistant Community Development Director Meek gave the presentation.

2) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions

Commissioner Rojas inquired about public feedback implemented through the development of Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan, Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified the approach, including existing implementation and public input. Commissioner Rojas further inquired about the timeline of implementation. Assistant CDD Director Meek addressed the different timelines for implementing recommendations in the DWSP by public agencies, such as Caltrans and the City, as well as by developers on private property.

Commissioner Rojas asked about existing businesses that become “non-conforming” with the adoption of the DWSP being allowed to remain in business, Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified that new regulations will be applied to new businesses only and existing business that may be non-conforming will still be allowed to exist.

Commissioner Rojas asked Assistant CDD Director Meek to share what he is most enthusiastic about for this project. Meek shared his personal and professional opinions about the DWSP.

Community Development Director Merriam also shared what was exciting about the DWSP.

Commissioner Vega asked for clarification about the DWSP concerning issues of noise and conditional uses, Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified that the section in question in the DWSP concerns determining the appropriateness of conditional uses with the intent to make the downtown livelier and without creating nuisances. Meek shared the DWSP envisions an 18-hour downtown.

In response to Chair Dodge inquiry about the existing alcohol ordinance, Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified the ordinance remains the same for businesses with alcohol sales.

Commissioner Radin asked for clarification whether the DWSP calls for a 24-7 downtown. Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified the DWSP does not envision a 24-7 hour downtown, but rather an 18-hour downtown.

In response to Commissioner Radin inquiry about Council support for the “road diet” as a Caltrans project, Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified that the City Council adopted a resolution, in 2022, in support of Caltrans moving forward with this recommended roadway improvement in the DWSP as one of their projects (SHOPP project no. 05-1P110).

In response to Chair Dodge’s question about what General Plan the city is operating under, Assistant CDD Director Meek confirmed it is the Watsonville 2005 General Plan. Meek further clarified that the proposed General Plan Amendment would be incorporated into the General Plan 2050 currently under development and, as with any policies in a general plan, they can be changed.

In response to Chair Dodge inquiry about the parking lot off Rodriguez Street (behind Gottschalks building), Assistant CDD Director Meek commended on its development potential.

In response to Chair Dodge inquiry about CEQA findings, Consultant Project Manager George Dix clarified the findings and further explained mitigation measures in the EIR for the DWSP.

Chair Dodge asked for confirmation that the DWSP complies with the 2005 General Plan and is CEQA compliant, Consultant Project Manager George Dix confirmed that is correct and clarified adopting the SWSP involves approving the EIR first.

In response to Commissioner Rojas inquiry about mitigating potential impacts over time, Assistant CDD Director Meek clarified the implementation of mitigative measures and noted that aspects of the DWSP would improve the environment and reduce impacts in time.

3) Public Hearing

Chair Dodge opened the public hearing.

Patricia Guilder, business owner of Watsonville Blueprint, inquired about emergency response time and loud noise along Main Street and Freedom, and passage of vehicles in case of an emergency.

Mauna Loa Morris, with Hope Services, inquired if there was a plan to modify Carr Street and make it a one-way street.

Aurelio Gonzales, Watsonville resident, what impact will the EIR and CEQA have for the City and developers if this is approved by City Council, if the recommendation passes tonight.

Joanna Carman, Development Director for Midpen Housing, spoke in support of the DWSP.

Luper Ortiz, resident of District 2, shared she has engaged in several outreach events over the years and is concerned with poor pavement conditions in Main and Beach Street and Main and Lake Street intersections. She uses a cane and would like to know who to address to fix the crosswalks.

Lowell Hurst spoke in support of the DWSP.

Abe Novin, resident of Watsonville, spoke in support of the positive changes happening downtown and asked to improve the homeless population situation.

Chair Dodge closed the public comment.

Assistant CDD Director Meek addressed emergency response in corridors. He added roadway improvements implement safer roadway passage including parallel roads for vehicles to take around Main Street. Carr Street is currently not recommended to be a one-way street.

Community Development Director Merriam addressed that any developer who would like to develop in the downtown, without DWSP in place, are required to do their own environmental review to comply with CEQA. Projects after the DWSP is adopted and meets the designed standards may be able to qualify for a streamlined environmental review, such as a categorical exemption, which is attractive to developers.

Principal Engineer for Public Works and Utilities Murray addressed current improvements in Caltrans SHOPP Program including roadway and pedestrian improvements. Assistant CDD Director Meek further shared the DWSP also includes pedestrian improvements.

4) Appropriate Motion(s)

MAIN MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Vega, seconded by Commissioner Rojas, and carried by the following vote approve the following recommendation:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT AND CERTIFY A FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN; AND ADOPTING CONCURRENTLY ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS, A MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PROJECT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

MAIN MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Vega, seconded by Commissioner Acosta, and carried by the following vote approve the following recommendation:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT THE TWENTY-NINTH (29TH) AMENDMENT TO THE WATSONVILLE 2005 GENERAL PLAN TO (1) ADD TWO NEW MIXED USE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS TO CHAPTER 4 (LAND USE), (2) AMEND THE LAND USE DIAGRAM TO INCLUDE THESE TWO NEW LAND USE DESIGNATIONS, (3) AMEND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES 4.A.3, 4.C.6, AND 10.C.2, AND (4) ADD A NEW IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE 4.A.7

MAIN MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Vega, seconded by Commissioner Sencion, and carried by the following vote approve the following recommendation:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT THE DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN, A SPECIFIC PLAN PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65460 ET SEQ.

MAIN MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Vega, seconded by Commissioner Sencion, and carried by the following vote approve the following recommendation:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT AN UNCODIFIED ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, AMENDING THE ZONING MAP TO REFLECT THE BOUNDARIES OF THE DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA; AND ADOPT AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, AMENDING THE ZONING CODE (TITLE 14 OF THE WATSONVILLE MUNICIPAL CODE) TO ADD A NEW PART 26 "DWSP DISTRICT" TO CHAPTER 14-16 IN ORDER TO REFER TO THE PERMITTED USES AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS IN CHAPTER 6 OF THE DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN

5) Deliberation

Commissioner Vega inquired if hours of operation for businesses that get Special Use Permits to open later (past midnight), Community Development Director Merriam clarified this is a future possibility.

Chair Dodge shared he recalls issues the City had with night bars on Main Street and shared there is a process in place.

6) Chair Calls for a Vote on Motion(s)

All motions passed unanimously.

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Dodge, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Vega, Veitch-Olson
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: None
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: None

6. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Community Development Director Merriam reminded Planning Commission of their participation for the Joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting of September 12, 2023, and September 26, 2023 in the Community Room at 275 Main Street (fourth floor). This will be a Hybrid meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Dodge adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM. The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for October 3, 2023, at 6:00 PM

Suzi Merriam, Secretary
Planning Commission

Daniel Dodge, Chair
Planning Commission