

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE  
HELD ON NOVEMBER 1, 2011**

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** 6:05 p.m.
- II. ROLL:** Chairman Curtis, Vice Chair Cahill, Commissioners Der Sarkissian, and Gunter, Director Stanley, Senior Planner Buss, Assistant Planner Parinas, and Deputy City Attorney Guerra were present.
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Former Planning Commissioner Gelhaar led the flag salute.
- IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** No public comments were offered.
- V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA:** The agenda was not reordered.
- VI. CONSENT CALENDAR**
- VII. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**
- VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**A.** The City of La Cañada Flintridge General Plan Update (Case No. GPA 05-01). California state law requires each city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan to guide the physical development of the incorporated city and any land outside of the city boundaries that bears a relationship to its planning activities. The General Plan is the foundation for local land use planning and provides a vision for the City's foreseeable planning period. This General Plan translates the community's long-range vision into goals, objectives, and policies for the future distribution of land uses, both public and private. This General Plan will serve as the blueprint for future growth and development. The plan must contain policies and programs designed to provide decision makers with a solid basis for land use related decisions. The General Plan is the official statement of policies governing all city council, advisory committee, and administrative decisions regarding zoning, subdivisions, and public improvements. The proposed City of La Cañada Flintridge General Plan 2030 update amends the existing General Plan in its entirety. It includes the following elements: Land Use, Open Space and Recreation, Conservation, Safety, Circulation, Noise, Air Quality, and Housing.

Director Stanley stated that the Land Use Element would be discussed tonight. He introduced the General Plan Consultants who are assisting the City with the process. He summarized the General Plan update process; he suggested going through the

presentation, taking public testimony, Planning Commission discussion and continuing the meeting to Wednesday, November 2, 2011 to discuss the Circulation and Housing Elements.

Chairman Curtis asked if the public comment period is still open for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Director Stanley stated that the EIR public comment period was from December to February.

Chairman Curtis clarified that public comments are still welcome for the General Plan Update itself to be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council.

Consultant Patricia Bluman explained the General Plan Update process as it relates to the Planning Commission recommendation and City Council review/approval. She stated that the final EIR would be returning to the Planning Commission at a later date. She delivered a PowerPoint presentation.

Commissioner Cahill asked about the potential for 555 new families. He asked about the amount of families that are currently residing in the City.

Senior Planner Buss stated that there are approximately 6,800 households in the City.

Chairman Curtis opened the public hearing.

William Johnson, 5857 Angeles Crest Hwy, stated that he read the proposed General Plan. He stated that the General Plan mentions that La Canada Flintridge is a Semi-rural community. He discussed his property history of being a working farm: olive trees and 475 persimmon trees. He stated that there has been continuous agriculture in the City. He researched other semi-rural cities and they have agriculture designations. He asked the Planning Commission to recommend to the City Council to include an agriculture designation. His property is currently zoned R-1 and he would like his property to be zoned for agriculture. He stated that farming is a good experience for children and is a benefit to the Community.

Chairman Curtis acknowledged that the Planning Commission received the petition that was submitted by Mr. Johnson. Chairman Curtis asked if the agricultural use was discussed by the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC).

Director Stanley clarified that Mr. Johnson was part of the "scoping meeting." The GPAC discussed the item but it was not included in the draft General Plan.

Chairman Curtis asked what Mr. Johnson's property is zoned.

Director Stanley responded R-1 10 acres.

Commissioner Cahill asked if there are any restrictions that are different between R-1 and agriculture zones.

Director Stanley stated that there are no differences in restrictions regarding fruit trees, but there are restrictions to keeping animals in the R-1. He explained that the issue is Open Space; Mr. Johnson has been keeping animals in the Open Space zone which is not allowed.

Mr. Johnson added that code enforcement could make property owners remove trees because you cannot have an orchard.

Commissioner Cahill asked if areas could have overlay zones.

Director Stanley stated that overlay zones could be allowed. He used the Downtown Village Specific Plan mixed-use zone as an example.

Chairman Curtis asked what the negative environmental impacts are for agriculture use.

Director Stanley explained that manure has the potential to build up and wash into the canyon, which becomes toxic waste. He is not sure about the other aspects of farming. The impacts of agriculture use were not analyzed in the EIR.

Commissioner Gunter asked about possibly requiring a CUP for orchards as a matter of implementation.

Director Stanley stated that the General Plan could create a policy to allow orchards and the zoning code could be revised to allow it.

Senior Planner Buss added that policy changes would have to be made because policy does not currently permit agriculture in the city. The City was not planning on doing this; there was no intent to expand something that the City has not done before. Mr. Johnson is requesting the change. If the City is going to make the change, the best way to do it is to add agriculture as another land use designation. There are impacts that would have to be addressed in the EIR such as agricultural waste and NPDES. Social issues would also have to be addressed such as buffering from the nearby residential uses.

Commissioner Gunter asked if there is a reason why a single issue for a particular property would affect the entire General Plan. He suggested a Conditional Use Permit process instead.

Director Stanley pointed out that the City already has an Animal Keeping Ordinance that allows for animals such as horses, cows, and chicken on residential property. Director Stanley clarified that the issue is in the Open Space zone. The City is saying that agriculture is not allowed within the Open Space zone; Mr. Johnson is requesting that agriculture use be permitted in the Open Space zone near his property.

Senior Planner Buss clarified that the Animal Keeping Ordinance for residential limits the amount of animals on a property.

Chuck Gelhaar, President of Angeles Crest Estates Home Owners Association, explained that this association covers residential property immediately adjacent to the Southern California Edison easement and Mr. Johnson's property. He explained that Mr. Johnson's animals were not placed on his residential property; they were placed on the Edison easement which has an Open Space designation. He is concerned with the manure problem; the smell and flies that it brings. Code enforcement first spoke to Mr. Johnson in 2002. Mr. Johnson put cows in the debris basin; his cows urinated and defecated in that area. Mr. Gelhaar read a section in the Animal Keeping Ordinance. He requested that if the Planning Commission recommends an agriculture zoning designation, it should be made clear that the Animal Keeping Ordinance would also apply to Open Space.

Dave Sivertsen stated that Mr. Johnson's property is not unique. He stated that his property is composed of four parcels (approximately 211 acres) and have been used for bee keeping for three decades. He explained that the location of the fruit trees is not an example of the altering of native landscape because the location was already a disturbed habitat that was graded years ago and not a representative of a chaparral.

Chairman Curtis asked Mr. Sivertsen to point out where his property is.

Mr. Sivertsen pointed out that his property is located on the northern edge of La Canada in the R-1 10 acres zone.

Senior Planner Buss used the aerial photograph to point out Mr. Johnson's and Mr. Sivertsen's properties.

Director Stanley verified that currently the City does not allow bee keeping.

Bob Ford, owner of the property at the corner of El Camino Corto and Foothill Boulevard, asked the Planning Commission to consider changing the zoning of his

property from single-property residential to light commercial. He pointed out that there are other commercial developments along Foothill Boulevard.

Senior Planner Buss pointed out Mr. Ford's property on the aerial photograph. He explained the process that Mr. Ford went through to get the lot subdivided and approved to construct two new homes.

Chairman Curtis closed the public hearing.

Chairman Curtis asked the Planning Commission to identify issues that they would like to discuss.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asked for clarification on the increase of density.

Chairman Curtis asked for an explanation of the mixed-use overlay zone.

Commissioner Gunter asked what recommending lot consolidation is about and why the City is opposed to small lots.

Commissioner Cahill asked for information on creating integrated park, recreation and trail systems in the City.

Commissioner Gunter asked what the A-B development line means.

Consultant Blumen stated that the A-B development line would be identified in the final document.

Chairman Curtis asked about the intention of Section 5.2.6 Forming City Wide Community Improvement Districts (pages 2-31).

Director Stanley explained that part of the "upzoning" has to do with the housing element. The City Council wanted to try to get a certified housing element. Part of obtaining a certification is to "up zone" to allow for an increase in residential density. When the City was first trying with the State to get the certification, the City identified mixed-use in the Downtown Village Specific Plan (DVSP) area as a potential for additional housing, but there were so many drawbacks; part of it being parking (our parking requirements are stringent) and unit sizes (the minimum unit size is larger than some of the single-family homes that the City has). The City looked at the Old Town area because of the access to the freeway, medical uses, and commercial uses. Another location that was suggested was JoAnn's Fabrics because it is already in a high-density area and it is across from commercial uses. The emphasis was to try to get the housing element certified by the State.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asked where the concern of wanting a high-quality housing unit in the City for Senior Citizens is addressed.

Director Stanley explained that high-quality housing could be provided in the mixed-use area of the DVSP but the drawbacks would be finding a developer that would be willing to construct the housing units, the minimum unit size, and parking. The Code requirements are prohibitive of these types of development.

Senior Planner Buss added that the City would have to address the State's issue of affordability and increasing the density would address this issue because land cost is high in the City. Senior housing is related to affordability because most Senior Citizens have fixed income and fit in to the extremely low, low, and moderate income categories.

Consultant Blumen stated that it is not just the affordable housing issue but also the senior housing issue; the GPAC looked at higher quality as well as affordable. She explained that one of the questions that were asked is "where do you put that since the City is built out?" Since the City already has a precedence for mixed-use, other locations that were large enough to fit more than just a couple of residential units and are suitable for mixed-use were considered. Ms. Blumen pointed out the area on the map. The residential units could be a variety of sizes; there are other similar communities with these developments. It is not intrusive to existing neighborhoods but would allow many residential units. The City's existing guidelines would have to be changed; part of follow-up implementation would be to create a zoning designation for mixed-use.

Commissioner Gunter asked if 30 dwelling units per acre would be acceptable.

Senior Planner Buss stated that zoning designation for 30 units per acre already exist; 30 dwelling units per acre is the maximum. He explained that developers probably would not reach 30 units per acre but would probably be able to build 24 units per acre. The state placed a 20 dwelling units per acre minimum. The 30 dwelling units per acre designation would prevent developers from proposing projects with less than 20 dwelling units per acre. The issue will be discussed in detail tomorrow during the Housing Element discussion.

Commissioner Gunter asked why list something that can not be attainable.

Senior Planner Buss stated that it can be obtained depending on the design but it is difficult for the developer.

Director Stanley explained that the GPAC and City Council looked at properties that can have 30 units per acre and they felt like this was appropriate for the area; they did not want more than 30 units per acre.

Chairman Curtis suggested that if the Planning Commissioners see something in the draft General Plan that is of concern it would be best to mark it up and give it to staff.

Chairman Curtis asked what “development that does not meet the requirement of the mixed-use of the corresponding zone will comply with the commercial-office land use designation and applicable zoning classification” means on page 2-5, footnote #4.

Consultant Blumen explained that for properties designated mixed-use, if someone wants to develop something that is not mixed-use, for example a commercial development, the City does not want to preclude the development and also the City does not want to make existing uses legal non-conforming. It means that if the development is not going to be mixed-use then you would have to develop as commercial.

Chairman Curtis asked about lot consolidation.

Senior Planner Buss explained that there are lots within the City that are smaller than the minimum lot size for residential; in the past developers sold smaller lots so that people could assemble the lots to the size they wanted. The City had a policy of forced lot mergers. If the issue is not the forced lot mergers, the issue otherwise would be to make feasible commercial development possible. Lot consolidation has been an issue with the Downtown Village Specific Plan; there are a number of small residential lots within the Downtown Village Specific Plan, if someone wanted to develop a project they would have to purchase a number of residential lots and combine them in order to create a project of sufficient scale.

Commissioner Gunter cautioned against oversized developments. He stated that he likes the fact that the Community has little stores and owners. He would be concerned if the goals are only for large developments. He suggested including cautionary language; he cited 2.1.3, 2.3.2, and 2.2.3.

Director Stanley explained that the entire goal for the Downtown Village Specific Plan was not to create large projects, but also to create parking districts by consolidating lots for the small lot developments. Many of the small lots are constrained and cannot have certain uses such as restaurants.

Chairman Curtis asked if there were any thoughts about contacting the School District regarding changing designation on School District property since many of their properties are not being used for schools (he used the property near Palm Crest Elementary School as an example).

Senior Planner Buss confirmed that the City spoke to the School District. The School District got a Parcel Map approval to divide off Palm Crest Elementary School from the

rest of that property so that it could be sold to developers as residential. The School District got a lot of feedback from the residences and the School District decided that they wanted to hold on to the property because they might use it for the school later on. The FIS site has education-related commercial uses and are being used by the School District to generate revenue. The School District does not have any intentions on changing the use of the site. The City would have to deal with the issue through the General Plan because the School District does not have the right to go in with commercial uses without conforming to the zoning.

Senior Planner Buss answered Commissioner Cahill's question regarding integrated trails. He stated that the City bought property at Palm Drive and Jessen Drive to integrate with the trail system. The City encourages integration of trails. The City has a new trail near Descanso Gardens. The City has shortage of park space and we have a joint use program for sports fields.

Director Stanley stated that there are still properties in the Flintridge area that are designated and dedicated as trails. The Trail Council would like to reactivate some of those.

Chairman Curtis asked about the intent of Policy 5.2.6. (page 2-31).

Consultant Blumen stated that the GPAC recognized that there needed to be an opportunity to provide incentives. Rather than looking at specific types of improvement districts; improvement districts were looked at in general to see what may work to do things such as undergrounding utilities and landscaping in the public right-of-way.

Chairman Curtis stated that this is a great idea and works very well.

Chairman Curtis stated that he is impressed with the General Plan and how it is tailored to this City of La Cañada Flintridge. He suggested going through pages to see if any one has any questions.

The Planning Commission went through each page and asked questions regarding the maps, the process, policy, and land-use designation clarifications.

The Planning Commission went over issues raised by the public.

Commissioner Cahill stated that he does not have a major issue with having an agriculture designation; he would like to see it as an overlay. He would like to see Mr. Johnson's property and the surrounding area. He stated that the City would have to understand what farming means. He does not have any opposition to designating Mr. Ford's property as commercial since Foothill Boulevard is predominately commercial.

Commissioner Gunter stated that he would like to get more information about Mr. Ford's property, but is not opposed to the property being commercial. He is not in favor of an agricultural designation in the City. He is concerned with the unintended consequences. He pointed out that the City has ordinances regarding animal husbandry and development of R-1 10 acre properties. He suggested leaving the General Plan alone and handling the issue on a property basis.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian agreed with Commissioner Gunter. He added that unique parcels also need limitations because it is touching residential areas. He does not find anything wrong with planting trees, but animal keeping should be regulated. He stated that some commercial development fits in scale on Foothill Boulevard and he would not have a problem with Mr. Ford's request.

Chairman Curtis stated that he does not have concerns with Mr. Ford's suggestion. He stated that sustainability encourages farming, he would not want a prohibition. He would like to see a definition of "farming." He would like to visit Mr. Johnson's property as a part of a bus tour.

The Planning Commission is open to a bus tour.

The Planning Commission concluded the discussion

## **IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items offered.

## **XI. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS**

Chairman Curtis asked if the 76 Gas Station will have another business with a different name.

Director Stanley stated that there is a convenience store but the City does not know if there is going to be another name.

Chairman Curtis stated that having two separate businesses is not within the CUP approval.

Director Stanley stated that he spoke to the City Attorney; the Deputy City Attorney will go over why 7-11 cannot be restricted at the next meeting.

Commissioner Cahill asked about 7-11 Liquor.

Director Stanley stated that the liquor license was transferred and the City cannot prevent 7-11 Liquor from opening.

Commissioner Cahill asked what the hours of operation would be.

Director Stanley stated that the hours of operation can only be regulated through the CUP process. The City can implement an ordinance that would restrict the hours of operation on all businesses that sell alcohol.

Commissioner Gunter asked that the 7-11 Liquor process be included in a future agenda.

## **XII. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Director Stanley stated that he is happy with Land Use Element discussion and progress.

## **XIII. ADJOURNMENT: 9:15 p.m.**

Chairman Curtis motioned to continue the hearing to 6:00 p.m. November 2, 2011. Commissioner Gunter seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.