

ATTACHMENT 1

General Plan Issues Committee

Meeting Summary (*amended at 12-17-09 meeting*)

November 19, 2009

City Hall Mitchell Room

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: David Ferguson, Chairman, Linda Bailey, Maria Bowman, Elmer Cameron, Jon Hudson, Terry Jackson, Steve Kildoo, John Masson, Rick Paul, Lisa Prazeau, Pam Stahl, Joyce Wells

Committee Members Absent: Thora Guthrie, Lucas Ross, Alfredo Velasco

Staff Present: Charlie Grimm, Assistant City Manager; Jonathan Brindle, Director of Community Development; Barbara Redlitz, Assistant Planning Director; Lori Vereker, Utilities Director; Ed Domingue, Director of Public Works; Laura Mitchell, City Librarian; Gil Rojas, Finance Director; Jerry VanLeeuwen, Community Services Director; Michael Lowry, Fire Chief; Pete Montgomery, Fire Battalion Chief; Roni Keiser, Housing Manager; Robin Bettin, Community Services Assistant Director; Jay Petrek, Principal Planner.

Chairman Ferguson opened the meeting and provided an overview of the committee meeting held on November 5, 2009.

Member Stahl commented on the previous meeting minutes and expressed a concern that comments from the public did not appear to be adequately recorded; also that when action was taken by the committee it was evident that not all members voted.

Jon Brindle gave an introduction to the topics being discussed and provided a format regarding how staff would present the information.

I. Presentation on Quality of Life Standards

Jay Petrek gave a presentation on the topic of Escondido's Quality of Life Standards and how an initial analysis performed by Hughes, Heiss & Associates focused on "core municipal services" (Police, Fire, Public Works Maintenance, Libraries, Parks & Recreation) provided by 20+ other jurisdictions comparable to Escondido. The analysis identified what constituted "above average" levels of services, determined where Escondido ranked in its provision of services, and determined the steps and costs for adjusting its service levels to be considered "above average." The presentation discussed the steps involved in implementing the Quality of Life Standards including preparing master plans, budgeting improvements, and monitoring compliance. It was noted that it is not common for cities to contain the type of detailed standards found in Escondido's General Plan.

It was confirmed that Quality of Life Standards are not subject to Proposition "S" and refinements to the standards have been made since their original adoption. Due to varying household size over the years, the Standards were modified to be based on dwelling units rather than population. Based on phasing, sizing of infrastructure, and budgeting factors it was noted that facilities will *may contain excess capacity or* lag behind population growth, and that the City's limited control over certain standards (i.e. air quality, schools, circulation, economic prosperity, etc.) affected the ability to control compliance (*corrected at 12-17-09 meeting*). It was also noted that increasing any standard's service level will have implications on the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and Maintenance and Operations budgets.

It was discussed how Quality of Life Standards may need to be tailored to accommodate Smart Growth principles. Specifically, 1) development in Smart Growth Areas around transit stations may lead to congestion necessitating a more flexible circulation Quality of Life Standard in urbanized areas; 2) response times for safety personnel may be impacted by calls for service in mid- and high-rise structures; 3) park development in Smart Growth Areas may differ from suburban areas through the implementation of plazas, pocket parks, and streets converted to pedestrian malls; 4) technology and on-line information may warrant changing how library needs are calculated; 5) drafting a separate Economic Element may necessitate re-classifying the current Economic Prosperity Standard as a goal. It was noted that no changes were anticipated for the sewer, water and school Quality of Life Standards.

II. Presentation on Municipal Services and Growth Management Policies

Jay Petrek provided background on the growth management primary objective that is to ensure that population growth is in sync with the provision of facilities and services. Growth Management's implementation techniques include zoning, area plans, capital improvement programs, impact fees, design guidelines, and Master Plans. Escondido's Tier Delineations were discussed and details regarding the timing of development in Tier 1, 2, and 3 were outlined. It was noted that Development Agreements are encouraged by the General Plan and were discussed as a tool for providing additional flexibility from normal "nexus" requirements in attaining community benefits.

Lori Vereker, Utilities Director discussed the implication of long-term water needs on Growth Management and the challenges facing our water supply involving pumping restrictions that limit the ability to import water from Northern California, and the current drought that has dropped water quantities at major reservoirs to low levels. Water supply challenges will likely be faced for years to come; fixing the San Francisco Bay / Delta Region, and diversifying our water supplies are keys to ensuring reliability. A "new water ethic" was described as a requirement for ensuring that long-term needs are met, and that the price of water will continue to increase as a result of shortages, environmental requirements, and new facility development. Escondido's local challenges include addressing a 40-year-old Indian Settlement Agreement, directives to divert water in the San Luis Rey River to protect Steelhead Trout, and improvement needs for Wohlford Dam.

Committee Discussion:

Comments regarding the water standard came from several members concerned that the City could still be meeting the General Plan standard but not provide enough water for the community. There was discussion that the General Plan should be structured around the long-term vision and policies that need to be in place to meet those standards.

Member Praelzeau expressed concern regarding how the community will be able to afford the cost of installing water and sewer infrastructure improvements.

Member Stahl felt that the standards must be retained to protect existing residents and not be degraded to facilitate developers' plans.

Member Cameron expressed concern regarding development occurring when ~~non-critical~~ deficiencies exist (*corrected at 12-17-09 meeting*).

Chairman Ferguson requested clarification from staff regarding the level of detail expected from the committee. A general discussion ensued regarding the Council's direction to focus on broad policy issues and the interest of the Committee members to consider detailed Quality of Life standards for potential revision. The Committee adjourned for a 15-minute break.

Ed Domingue, Public Works Director, addressed the Committee regarding the Traffic and Circulation Standard.

Member Stahl asked whether there were any state mandates requiring the city to address air quality issues associated with vehicle emissions in congested areas. Staff responded that the General Plan EIR will evaluate traffic level-of-service and correlate air quality impacts in areas where streets are impacted by higher volumes and traffic delays.

Member Paul commented that Smart Growth shouldn't dictate lower Quality of Life Standards.

Member Jackson discussed the relationship between congestion and transit; specifically that some congestion will be necessary to get people out of their cars and into transit facilities.

Chairman Ferguson asked about the biggest transportation challenges facing the community in the next 50 years. Staff responded that the freeways bisecting the city and how CalTrans addresses ramp metering, which overflows traffic to city streets and doesn't sync with our traffic signal coordination, are challenges. Another challenge is the current policy to widen streets in certain developed areas which significantly impact adjacent properties and structures.

ACTION:

Chairman asked for consensus that the Traffic and Circulation Quality of Life alternatives in Smart Growth Areas should be further evaluated to assess their status – Unanimous.

Laura Mitchell, City Librarian, addressed the Committee on the Library Quality of Life Standard. She indicated that refining the standard is recommended by staff and welcomed volunteers to assist a committee to develop modified language. Although the printed word will still be a popular medium for accessing information, she indicated that the reason for refining the standard was based on a technological transition that has occurred since the original standard was adopted. Other factors include reference sources that are now available on-line, a need to provide space for computer terminals, Group Study Space for students using the library, as well as computer wait-time to access library computers for personal use.

Member PrazEAU asked about the American Library Association Standards and if those should influence the city's Quality of Life Standard. Staff responded that due to conflicts between more well-funded libraries in the Midwest and those in other areas of the nation, the Association has not sought to further evaluate its own standards.

Michael Lowry, Fire Chief, addressed the Committee on the Fire Quality of Life Standard. He noted that there are two facets to the standard: flash-over suppression during fire emergencies, and paramedic response to medical emergencies. Flash-over suppression can be handled through the installation of sprinklers, which allow for containing the fire until staff can arrive. During medical emergencies paramedic crews must arrive within 5 minutes in order to minimize long-term health issues when trying to revive victims. Automatic aid was discussed as a way to improve coverage whereby agencies provide assistance outside their response areas.

Member Stahl commented that she could not support development in areas beyond the paramedic's five minute response time.

Member Prazeau asked questions regarding Station #6 that has not attained minimum staffing levels.

Member Jackson commented that the General Plan needs to consider the Quality of Life Standards as it applies to calls for service to higher structures in urban areas.

Chairman Ferguson asked about other factors related to fire fighting that might be considered. Staff responded that Wildland Urban Interface Codes affects how the fire department responds to fires.

The Committee had general questions and clarifications regarding the standards and continued further discussion to the next meeting. It was discussed that all the Quality of Life Standards should be presented, even those not proposed for amendment, and include staff recommendations.

Chairman Ferguson noted that the next Committee Meeting is scheduled on December 17, 2009.

III. Public Comments

Deloris McQuiston: Ms. McQuiston expressed concern about unfinished residential projects in the community and felt that development bonds to ensure their completion should have been included. She stated that Proposition "S" does not address decreasing intensities when commercial land uses are changed to residential land uses, which is a flaw in the policy.

Jason Everett: Mr. Everett expressed a concern regarding the current General Plan standard that allows fire response times to be averaged. He felt that requiring fire sprinklers in outlying areas creates an unfair situation in fire fighting, and that Fire Department staffing should be linked to facility construction.

Michael Ann Merrick: Ms. Merrick had questions regarding the laws that applied when providing water service. She had questions regarding the Paramount Fire and whether fire crews were restricted access based on the construction practice at the site. She expressed concern about a residential development on Centre City Parkway and the minimum levels of open space provided to residents of the project.

The meeting concluded at 9:18 p.m.