

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, California
City Hall, Large Conference Room
October 7, 2009
2:00 p.m. Study Session

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Cohen called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL:	Present This Meeting:	Present to Date:	FY 2009 / 2010 Absence:
Tracy Conrad		3	2
Doug Donenfeld	X	5	0
Doug Hudson	X	3	0
Leslie Munger		1	2
Bill Scott	X	5	0
Jon Caffery, Vice Chair	X	4	1
Leo Cohen, Chair	X	5	0

REPORT OF POSTING OF AGENDA:

The agenda available for public access at the City Hall exterior bulletin board (west side of Council Chamber) and the Planning Services counter by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 1, 2009.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:

The agenda was accepted, as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Cohen opened public comments; and no appearances coming forward public comments was closed.

1. DISCUSSION:

Director Ewing requested that the Planning Commission take Item 1.B out of order, to be heard prior to Item 1.A.

1.B Discussion of Cell Towers: Installations, Site Planning and City Standards

David Newell, Associate Planner, provided background information as outlined in the staff memorandum and noted that the purpose of this discussion is to update the Commission on the current state of wireless antenna installations, City standards and height variances.

Commissioner Caffery suggested establishing guidelines for cell towers to allow monopoles in the M-1 zone, with stipulations that include height restrictions and co-location availability. If an applicant would like to exceed the height limit or is within the height limit in a commercial location then the applicant must come before the Planning Commission with a Variance. Commissioner Hudson concurred with the height restrictions and right-of-zone, as well as, including certain criteria to restrict the number of towers on any one site.

Commissioner Donenfeld expressed preference in maintaining flexibility on each project. Commissioner Hudson suggested including a requirement pertaining to walls and groundcover, as a give-back to the community.

-Linda Paul, representing T-Mobile, stated that the slimline monopole is not practical because the majority of the pole is taken up by the first carrier and adding another carrier would increase the diameter and significantly increase the height. Ms. Paul explained that most co-locatable structures tend to be the big trees or other architectural features such as a flag pole. Ms. Paul expressed her preference to maintain discretion for each location to be able to assess the most practical application.

-Veronica Arvizu, representing Metro PCS, said they have a different approach than T-Mobile and prefer the slimline pole and allowing monopoles/monopalms in a right-of-zone. Ms. Arvizu explained the technicalities of the antenna separation.

Director Ewing provided an overview on the antenna ordinance and explained that it covers all forms of antennas beyond commercial antennas and is obsolete in many ways with the current technology. Mr. Ewing suggested it may time to bring up-to-date.

A subcommittee consisting of Commissioners Caffery and Hudson was established to meet with staff and discuss updating the antenna ordinance. The Commission suggested that staff invite all the wireless carriers to attend the meeting and requested that the providers submit their requirements for height, co-locators and distance of antenna array.

Commissioner Caffery requested future discussion of the high-rise ordinance.

1.A Planning Commission Orientation: Discussion with City Attorney

Douglas Holland, City Attorney, provided an overview on the role of the Planning Commission including compliance with the Brown Act.

Mr. Holland explained the difference between legislative action (amendments to the general plan, zone text amendments and zone changes) and adjudicatory or quasi judicial (conditional use permits, variances and tentative tract maps). Mr. Holland stated that a decision must be made on the basis of evidence presented at the hearing. Mr. Holland discouraged the Commission from all ex-parte communications and dialogue with applicants and developers.

The Commission discussed and/or commented on their purview relating to the recommended findings for each project. Director Ewing explained his position on upholding the Commission's decision on appealed projects and staff's role regarding legislative matters (recommendations to the City Council).

Further discussion occurred on the responsibilities and functions of the Planning Commission.

1.B Discussion of Sign Ordinance: Orientation to Definitions and Standards

Director Ewing provided an overview of the sign ordinance. Director Ewing explained that with the exception of bus stops, off-site signs including billboards are prohibited. Discussion occurred on commercial signs, main signs, special sign districts, real estates signs, temporary signs and "grand opening signs" (the only provision where banners are allowed in the city).

The Commission discussed options for temporary banners including sign enforcement, "off-season" and school activity banners. Director Ewing explained that special permits are allowed for signs pertaining to upcoming events of general public interest. The Commission commented and/or requested clarification on other issues relating to signs.

The consensus of the Commission was to establish a subcommittee consisting of two Commissioners: Commissioners Donenfeld and Scott volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. The ad-hoc subcommittee and staff will meet to further discuss updating the sign ordinance and return to the Planning Commission.

The subcommittee will meet to discuss and review:

1. Banners
2. Sign Area Definition

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Donenfeld questioned the City policy for forwarding mail to the Commission. Director Ewing stated that the current practice is that all letters/correspondence are forwarded to the Commission without review. Director Ewing said that he would verify with the City Attorney to see if it is the responsibility of staff to review their incoming mail prior to forwarding to the Commission.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Ewing reported that a study session will be scheduled for the month of November.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further comments the Planning Commission adjourned at 4:16 p.m. to a regular meeting on Wednesday, October 14, 2009, at 1:30 p.m., City Hall, Council Chamber, 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way.

