

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
August 10, 2011
Council Chamber, City Hall
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Caffery called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

	Present This Meeting:	Present to Date:	FY: 2011 / 2012 Absences:
Tracy Conrad	X	3	1
Doug Hudson		2	2
Philip Klatchko	X	1	3
Leslie Munger		3	1
J.R. Roberts	X	4	0
Doug Donenfeld, Vice Chair	X	4	0
Jon Caffery, Chair	X	4	0

REPORT OF POSTING OF AGENDA:

The agenda was 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, August 4, 2011.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:

Director Ewing reported Item, 3A Case SP 11-007 Sign Program Amendment, is pulled from the agenda, at the applicant's request.

Commissioners Conrad and Klatchko noted their abstention on the minutes of July 13, 2011 (Item 2A) due to their absence.

Commissioner Klatchko noted a business-related conflict of interest on Item 4B, Case 5.1091 PD 324 AMND (Port Lawrence), and would not be participating in the discussion and vote.

ACTION: To accept the agenda, as amended.

Motion J.R. Roberts, seconded by Doug Donenfeld and unanimously carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

AYES: Tracy Conrad, Doug Donenfeld, Philip Klatchko, Chair Caffery and J.R. Roberts

NOES:

ABSENT: Leslie Munger and Doug Hudson

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Caffery opened public comments and with no appearances coming forward public comments was closed.

1. SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

1A. Resolution of Commendation - A resolution of commendation recognizing Jon Caffery for his service to the City of Palm Springs, as a member of the Palm Springs Planning Commission.

Vice Chair Donenfeld presented the Resolution of Commendation to Chair Jon Caffery for his many years of service to the City of Palm Springs Planning Commission.

ACTION: To approve the Resolution of Commendation recognizing Jon Caffery for his service to the City of Palm Springs, as a member of the Palm Springs Planning Commission.

Motion Doug Donenfeld, seconded by Tracy Conrad and unanimously carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

AYES: Tracy Conrad, Doug Donenfeld, Philip Klatchko, Chair Caffery and J.R. Roberts

NOES:

ABSENT: Leslie Munger and Doug Hudson

2. CONSENT CALENDAR:

2A. Minutes of July 13, 2011.

The minutes were pulled from the agenda due to a lack of quorum.

3. OTHER BUSINESS:

- 3A. SP 11-007 Sign Program AMEND / 5.1050 PD 312 AMEND - A request by Donahue Schriber Realty Group for an amendment to an approved sign program and a minor amendment to the Final Development Plan to allow rooftop signage and an additional sign for a tenant in Building D within the Smoke Tree Commons shopping center located at 2465 East Palm Canyon Drive, Zone PD-312, Section 25. (Project Planner: David A. Newell, Associate Planner)**

This item was pulled from the agenda.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 4A. Case 5.1266 PDD 359 - A Planned Development District application by Michael's House for a proposed 60-bed substance abuse recovery center/assisted living facility located at 1910 South Camino Real; Zone R-2, Section 26. (Project Planner: Ken Lyon, Associate Planner)**

Ken Lyon, Associate Planner, provided background information as outlined in the staff report dated August 10, 2011.

Chair Caffery opened the public hearing:

-Dr. Krista Gilbert, applicant, spoke about the facility's stringent admittance requirements. She provided an overview of the project and outlined the benefits to the city.

-Jim Cioffi, architect, addressed the calculation of density, parking and the architectural features and heritage of the building.

-Frank Tysen, vice-chairman, Historic Tennis Club Neighborhood Organization, spoke about the request from the HTCNO to initiate an ordinance to establish guidelines for substance abuse recovery centers.

-Roxann Ploss, stated that her concern is not with the facility but with the parking ratio for staff; and expressed concern with labeling the substance abuse recovery home as an assisted care facility.

-Douglas Nagel, stated his support for the project because the property has been vacant for many years and he would prefer to see this type of facility in the neighborhood.

-Krista Gilbert, applicant, stated that Michael's House has been a responsible neighbor in the community.

There being no further appearances the public hearing was closed.

Vice Chair Donenfeld suggested the City Council revisit the public benefit ordinance to reflect the current economic ripple effect to the community especially towards non-profit organizations.

Commissioners Klatchko and Roberts commented that the rehabilitation of this run down hotel could be a public benefit because it may not be economically feasible as a hotel in today's market.

ACTION: To approve Case 5.1266 PDD 359, subject to Conditions of Approval and recommend approval to the City Council.

Motion J.R. Roberts, seconded by Philip Klatchko and unanimously carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

AYES: Tracy Conrad, Doug Donenfeld, Philip Klatchko, Chair Caffery and J.R. Roberts

NOES:

ABSENT: Leslie Munger and Doug Hudson

Commissioner Klatchko recused himself from Item 4B, Case 5.1091 PD 324 AMND, and left the Council Chamber at 2:29 p.m.

A recess was taken at 2:29 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 2:35 p.m.

4B. Case 5.1091 PD 324 AMND (Port Lawrence) - An application by Palm Springs LLC, Lawrence Rael, to amend a previously approved Planned Development District 324 from residential/commercial to a 175-room boutique hotel and approximately 30,000 sq. ft. commercial space development located on the south side of Alejo Road between North Palm Canyon and North Indian Canyon Drives, Zone PD 324, Section 15. (Project Planner: Edward O. Robertson, Principal Planner)

Edward Robertson, Principal Planner Robertson, provided background information as outlined in the staff report dated August 10, 2011. Mr. Robertson noted that the Architectural Advisory Committee reviewed the preliminary plans on August 8, 2011 and voted unanimously for a restudy with their comments in the memo submitted to the Commission.

Chair Caffery opened the public hearing:

-Lawrence Rael, president, Rael Development, spoke about the changes to the project

including the change in use from residential units to a high-end boutique hotel, increase in height, the parking structure and pedestrian walkway connecting Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drives.

-Frank Tysen, expressed concern with the loss of historic buildings, increase in height and incorporation of downtown elements; he encouraged a thorough review of the proposed amendment.

-Roxann Ploss, expressed concern with the setbacks, massing, character of the building and the lack of consistency with Frances Stevens School.

-Charlie Madar, adjacent property manager, spoke in support of the project. He expressed concern with the relocation of the service entrance for trash pick-up that runs along their property line.

-Bob Helbling, spoke in favor of the hotel use. He expressed concern with the corner on the Indian Canyon side-entry and suggested this turnaround be addressed properly by engineering.

-Gary Johns, commented on the original project's three distinctive frontages. He spoke about the downtown parking structures and questioned the need for two high rises in this part of town.

-Joe Garcia, restaurant owner, spoke in favor of density in the downtown area and is looking forward bringing this project to fruition.

-Paul Ortega, expressed concern with the site plan especially along Indian Canyon and suggested this side be revitalized to encourage pedestrian use along Indian Canyon.

-Joan Martin, spoke about the significant changes made to the project and encouraged more character and retail use on the ground level be incorporated into the building.

-Lawrence Rael, applicant, in rebuttal explained that many of the public comments were anticipated. Mr. Rael stated that the last project was not viable and the time to build this project is now.

There being no further appearances the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Conrad recalled the lengthy process for the previous project and sees no attempts were made to address the historic resource across the street as this is the gateway to downtown. She expressed concerns with the project and spoke in favor of further review of the site plans.

Commissioner Roberts stated that he does not have a problem with the change of use and density. He would like move forward with this project and suggested more work be done on the design and the parking structure.

Chair Caffery spoke in favor of further study to the site plan including the reconfiguration of the parking structure.

ACTION: 1. To approve the proposed use from condominiums/retail commercial to a boutique hotel/retail commercial.

2. To Deny the proposed site plans with the following comments:

- Setbacks are not adequate.
- Proposed height of 58.8 feet is too tall.
- Massing should consider surrounding uses and properties.
- Reconfigure parking structure.
- Back of house functions along Indian Canyon are too concentrated.
- Relocate proposed uses along Indian Canyon Drive elsewhere within the project site.
- Lobby space is diminutive in relationship to floor space.
- Address gateway to the downtown.
- Address the historic resource of Frank Stevens park.
- Incorporate elements of downtown in the original plan into the new plans.
- Incorporate comments and recommendations of the Architectural Advisory Committee from the August 10, 2011 meeting.

Motion Tracy Conrad, seconded by Doug Donenfeld and carried 4-0 on a roll call vote.

AYES: Tracy Conrad, Doug Donenfeld, Chair Caffery and J.R. Roberts

NOES:

ABSENT: Leslie Munger, and Doug Hudson

ABSTAIN: Philip Klatchko

Director Ewing reported that the Planning Commission's decision may be appealed to the City Council within 10 working days.

Commissioner Klatchko re-entered the Council Chamber at 3:51 p.m.

4C. Case 5.1271 ZTA - An application by the City of Palm Springs to amend the Palm Springs Zoning Code related to sign regulations pertaining to temporary banners, digital signs and "for lease" signs. (Project Planner: Craig A. Ewing, AICP, Director of Planning Services.)

Director Ewing provided background information as outlined in the staff report dated August 10, 2011.

Chair Caffery opened the public hearing:

-Joe Garcia, stated that the "for lease" signs are highly effective and encouraged more creativity be allowed for the signs.

There being no further appearances the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Conrad suggested the following:

- Decreasing the maximum the size of the "for lease" signs.
- Prohibiting sandwich board signs.

Director Ewing clarified that non-flashing neon lights are only permitted for restaurants

Commissioner Klatchko commented that the 24 and 36 square foot size is too large for the "for lease" signs.

The Commission discussed continuing the items to a study session for further review on establishing guidelines to regulate signs.

ACTION: To continue to an undetermined date and direct staff to schedule a study session for further review.

Motion Tracy Conrad, seconded by Philip Klatchko and unanimously carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

AYES: Tracy Conrad, Doug Donenfeld, Philip Klatchko, Chair Caffery and J.R. Roberts

NOES:

ABSENT: Leslie Munger and Doug Hudson

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Roberts asked about the possibility of receiving full-size plans for major projects. Principal Planner Robertson commented that full-size plans could be provided to the Commission by contacting him in prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Conrad wholeheartedly thanked Chair Caffery for his many years on the Planning Commission and wished him well on his move to Hawaii.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

5A. Election of Chair

ACTION: To appoint Doug Donenfeld as Chair and Doug Hudson as Vice Chair.

Motion Tracy Conrad, seconded by Chair Caffery and unanimously carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

AYES: Tracy Conrad, Doug Donenfeld, Philip Klatchko, Chair Caffery and J.R. Roberts

NOES:

ABSENT: Leslie Munger and Doug Hudson

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Ewing noted that the study session items may be scheduled for the meeting on September 14th.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further comments the Planning Commission adjourned at 4:26 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 14, 2011, at City Hall Council Chamber, 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way.

Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services