

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
December 03, 2008
Council Chamber, City Hall
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL:	Present This Meeting:	Present to Date:	Year: FY 2008/2009 Excused Absences:
Larry Hochanadel, Chair	X	16	0
Leo Cohen, Vice Chair	X	15	1
Toni Ringlein	X	13	3
Jon Caffery	X	14	2
Bill Scott	X	13	3
Tracy Conrad	X	12	4
Doug Donenfeld	X	16	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 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 26, 2008.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:

Commissioner Scott requested Item 1B pulled from the Consent Calendar for further discussion.

Commissioner Donenfeld requested review of the minutes of November 12, 2008.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Hochanadel opened Public Comments:

-Stacy Hochanadel, Palm Springs, expressed appreciation to the Commission and staff for consideration of Item 1B and requested the use allowed by right in the C-M zone.

- Joy Meredith, Palm Springs, stated her support for Item 1B.
- Jay Frank, Palm Springs, stated that the Specific Plan map is incorrect and should not include certain parcels, as part of the project for Item 2A.

There being no further appearances, Public Comments was closed.

1. CONSENT CALENDAR:

1A. Minutes of November 12, 2008 and November 19, 2008.

M/S/C (Conrad/Vice Chair Cohen, 7-0) Approved, as part of the Consent Calendar.
(The minutes of November 12, 2008, as amended.)

1B. Case 5.1218 ZTA - Draft resolution and ordinance for the City of Palm Springs recommending an amendment to the Palm Springs Zoning Code relating to medical cannabis cooperatives and collectives as permitted uses in the M-1, M-2 and P zones and by conditional use permit in all other non-residential zones.

Chair Hochanadel noted his abstention on Item 1B and would not be participating in the discussion and vote. Chair Hochanadel left the Council Chamber at 1:45 p.m.

The Commission discussed and/or commented on staff's alternate recommendation to the City Council and the use allowed in the CM zone.

M/S/C (Conrad/Vice Chair Cohen, 6-0, 1 abstained/ Chair Hochanadel) To recommend approval to the City Council; staff to convey to the City Council the Commission's interest of use allowed in the C-M zone.

Chair Hochanadel re-entered the Council Chamber at 1:55 p.m.

2. PUBLIC HEARING:

2A. Case 5.1204 GPA / ZTA - Proposed Draft Specific Plan to allow up to 955 high-density residential units, up to 400,000 square feet of commercial retail and office space, and up to 620 hotel rooms located at the northwest corner of North Palm Canyon Drive and Tahquitz Canyon Way, and other nearby properties. (Project Planner: Craig A. Ewing, Director of Planning)

Commissioner Conrad noted a property-related conflict of interest would not be participating in the discussion and vote. Commissioner Conrad left the Council Chamber at 1:56 p.m.

Director Ewing provided background information as outlined in the staff report dated December 3, 2008.

Commissioner Donenfeld disclosed that he toured the Desert Fashion Plaza on November 14th and attended a business roundtable meeting presented by Wessman Development.

Commissioner Scott disclosed that he received and reviewed an email from Sheryl Hamlin in reference to an economic comparison chart; and also spoke to Mr. Peter Moruzzi in regards to the preparation of the environmental impact report and the specific plan by the same organization.

Commissioner Caffery disclosed that he received the same e-mail from Ms. Hamlin, spoke to councilmember Hutcheson with respect to the items discussed at the previous meeting and attended the presentation by Wessman Development at a business roundtable meeting.

Commissioner Ringlein disclosed that she attended a presentation by Wessman Development for the alternative plan at a Palm Springs Hospitality Association meeting and received the e-mail from Ms. Hamlin, as well.

Vice Chair Cohen disclosed that he received the e-mail from Ms. Hamlin, toured the Desert Fashion Plaza and attended the presentation by Wessman Development at a business roundtable meeting, earlier this year.

Chair Hochanadel opened the Public Hearing:

-Emily Hemphill, legal counsel representing Wessman Development, provided details on their intent to withdraw the Specific Plan and move forward with the renovation of the Desert Fashion Plaza, as a result of the dramatic changes in the economy.

-Joy Meredith, Palm Springs, expressed concern with the time the city has spent with plans that will not come to fruition; and spoke highly of the developer.

-Sheryl Hamlin, Palm Springs, commented that the Museum Market Plaza project was projected for a much larger town and encouraged the Commission to support the adaptive re-use for this facility.

-Paula Auburn, Palm Springs, requested a continuance of the public hearing to the meeting December 17, 2008, for the opportunity to review the staff report.

-Jay Frank, Palm Springs, requested parcels 134, 136 and 140 North Palm Canyon deleted from the project because it is not a part of the developer's property.

-Marshall Roath, Palm Springs, stated his support for the Downtown Guidelines and noted that the abandonment of Museum Drive will have major traffic problems.

-Frank Tysen, Palm Springs, spoke in support of the Desert Fashion Plaza renovation and commented that the proposed project is out of scale.

-Joe Wertheimer, suggested a village-like atmosphere for the Desert Fashion Plaza; noting that this is not the time to build but to create ideas and plans.

- Jane Cowles Smith, spoke about the creating a healthy environment while restoring the historic downtown.
- G.P. Gerber, Palm Springs, spoke about moving forward with the Desert Fashion Plaza's renovation.
- Bob Thomas, Palm Springs, spoke in support of moving forward with Wessman's alternate plan.
- Steve Kaunal, Palm Springs, stated his support for the Downtown Guidelines and the re-adaptive use of the building.
- Craig Blau, Palm Springs, spoke in opposition of the height and density for the Museum Market Plaza; and in favor of renovation of the Desert Fashion property.
- Tamara Stevens, PSEDC, stated that they have not reviewed the specific plan or the alternate plan but are in support of the renovation project they have seen.
- Ron Marshall, Palm Springs, requested designation of the Town and Country center as a Class I property.
- Emily Hemphill, responding to public testimony, noted that the dramatic change in the financial market has occurred within the last two months and the unreasonable expectations of the city to redesign the site and submit an application within 60 days. Ms. Hemphill commented that changes to the specific plan would be expensive and cumbersome.

No further speakers coming forward the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Caffery stated that he served as a member of the Board of Directors of PSEDC and recused himself from the meetings and actions of the board regarding this project.

The Commission discussed and/or commented on a continuance of the project, the merits of reviewing the specific plan or recommending denial and the existing downtown guidelines.

M/S/C (Scott/-1,) To forward the Specific Plan to the City Council with no recommendation. **(MOTION FAILED)**

M/S/C (Caffery/Scott, 4-2/Vice Chair Cohen/ Donenfeld), 1 abstained/ Conrad) To recommend denial of the Specific Plan to the City Council.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS:

No comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Ewing provided details of the upcoming planning items for the City Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Planning Commission adjourned at 3:31 p.m. to Wednesday, December 10, 2008.

Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services

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