

December 1, 2004

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:04 p.m. on Wednesday, December 1, 2004, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Botello.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Botello, Drevno, Fauk, Horwich, LaBouff, Uchima and Chairperson Muratsuchi.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Manager Isomoto, Planning Associate Santana, Building Regulations Administrator Segovia, Fire Marshal Fawcett, Associate Civil Engineer Symons and Deputy City Attorney Whitham.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the approval of the October 6, 2004 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved for the approval of the October 20, 2004 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner LaBouff and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioner Fauk and Chairperson Muratsuchi abstaining.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS

Planning Manager Isomoto noted that Agenda Item 7A, PRE04-00022: Michelle Gainer/Jeffrey and Kristy Smith, has been withdrawn at the request of the applicant, and relayed the applicant's request to continue Agenda Item 9B, CUP04-00039, DVP04-00006, WAV04-00026: Lon Stephenson/Ware Malcomb, to January 19, 2005.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved to continue Agenda Item 9B to January 19, 2005. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Chairperson Muratsuchi announced that the hearing on Agenda Item 9B would not be re-advertised as it was continued to a date certain.

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Chairperson Muratsuchi reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

Items 10A and 12A were considered out of order at this time.

10A. WAV04-00002: HASAN UD-DIN HASHMI

Planning Commission consideration of a Resolution denying a Waiver to allow a reduction of the side yard setback requirement on property located in the M-2 Zone at 1918 Artesia Boulevard.

Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-139.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-139. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Faulk and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

12A. MIS04-000325: HIROSHI YANO

Planning Commission consideration of a Time Extension for a previously approved Division of Lot (DIV01-00022) to allow the subdivision of one (1) 21,658 square-foot lot, PN#4096-009-007, into three (3) lots located in the A1-R1 Zone at 1991 182nd Street.

Planning Associate Santana introduced the request.

Hiroshi Yano, Cetech Engineering, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the approval of MIS04-00325, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-145.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-145. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

7. CONTINUED HEARINGS

7A. PRE04-00022: MICHELLE GAINER (JEFFREY AND KRISTY SMITH)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 2703 Ridgeland Road.

Withdrawn at the request of the applicant.

7B. WAV04-00013: MANUEL ROMERO (JOSE A. GUTIERREZ)

As there was no representative present, this item was delayed until later in the meeting, see page 9.

8. WAIVERS

None.

9. FORMAL HEARINGS

9A. MOD04-00018: PENINSULA PONTIAC / DCA CIVIL ENGINEERING GROUP

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP69-00038) to allow the construction of new service bays, offices and a parking deck for an existing automobile dealership on property located in the C-3 Zone at 2909 Pacific Coast Highway.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Associate Santana introduced the request.

Steve Cummins, DGA Civil Engineering Group, briefly described the proposed project, which includes the renovation of the existing showroom and the addition of service bays, offices, and a parking area for employees. He explained that the dealership is located on leased airport property; that the lease has been expanded to include an undeveloped strip of land along the northerly property line; and that as part of the new lease, the applicant has agreed to improve the property. He noted that the entire site will be improved in Phase 1, including the paving of a new employee parking area and the construction of a retaining wall that will support a future second-level parking deck to be constructed in Phase 2.

Mr. Cummins voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval with the exception of Condition No. 21 (requiring the applicant to install an underground-serviced utility system and marbelite street lighting system along property boundaries)

Responding to questions from the Commission, Mr. Cummins provided information regarding the timeline for the project. He explained that the applicant hopes

to begin the site work as soon as possible, after which the building renovations will take place and Phase 1 of the project should be completed in under two years. He noted that no start date for Phase 2 has been set because of budget concerns. He reported that the new parking area would be for employees only; that he did not foresee any parking shortage for customers or employees; and that the upper deck would simply allow the dealership to keep additional inventory on-site.

Commissioner Botello related his understanding that there is no street parking along Airport Drive. Planning Manager Isomoto advised that Airport Drive was recently re-striped to provide for parking along the south side of the street in response to complaints from residents in the area south of Pacific Coast Highway that employees from dealerships were parking in their neighborhood.

Chairperson Muratsuchi questioned whether staff had concerns about the adequacy of the parking. Planning Manager Isomoto explained that parking requirements for auto dealerships have not been updated in a long time and the City has received complaints from neighbors of various dealerships that employees are parking in their neighborhood. She stated that the project meets parking requirements as proposed, however, if the dealership is very successful, there is a chance parking problems could spill out into the neighborhood, therefore a condition was included allowing employees to park off-site subject to the approval of the Community Development Director should the need arise (Condition No. 5).

Commissioner Faulk questioned whether the applicant would be amenable requiring the parking deck to be constructed within a time certain.

Greg Butterfield, Facilities Director for General Motors, stated that currently the business plan does not support the building of the parking deck but it was included in the application so it could be built in the future if it becomes feasible to do so.

Jenny Good, President of Peninsula Buick, 2909 Pacific Coast Highway, explained that there are a lot of unknowns right now, including many changes in the product line, and it is hoped that the renovations will allow the dealership to operate more efficiently.

Commissioner Botello questioned whether the dealership would be gaining display area, and Ms. Good explained that the display area would remain basically the same until the deck is added.

Commissioner Botello expressed doubts about whether the dealership would really benefit from the improvements if there is no increase in display area.

Mr. Butterfield explained that the majority of the improvements are requirements of the lease renewal and that the dealership hopes to attract more business to allow them to add the parking deck, which is not part of the lease requirements.

Commissioner Botello asked about the feasibility of using the new employee parking area for display and shuttling employees to the site.

Mr. Butterfield explained that the parking area is not viable for display because it is not visible from Pacific Coast Highway. Ms. Good commented on the difficulties

involved in shuttling employees, noting that it is difficult to find a lot to rent at a price that makes sense and there is considerable expense associated with shuttling employees due to the need for additional insurance coverage.

Commissioner Faulk related his observation that the dealership has been in need of improvement for some time. Ms. Good stated that she has been involved with the dealership since 1997; that there have been various plans for improvements over the years; and that the cost of the new lease, which is 3½ times the original lease, has necessitated a downscaling of the plans.

In response to Chairperson Muratsuchi's inquiry, Planning Manager Isomoto provided clarification regarding the number of parking spaces provided.

Commissioner Botello suggested the possibility that General Motors would help with the cost of the deck due to the dealership's prime location.

Mr. Butterfield indicated that he was not involved in financial negotiations; suggested that it would be foolhardy to build the deck before it is known whether the business can afford it; and reported that, currently, the site is appropriately sized based on the volume of business according to the company's national space guidelines.

Referring to Condition No. 21, Commissioner Horwich questioned whether the undergrounding of utilities and street lighting system was a requirement of the new lease, and Mr. Cummins indicated that it was not.

Planning Manager Isomoto advised that this a typical condition placed on projects by the Transportation Planning Division because staff has been directed to require applicants to underground utilities wherever possible.

Mr. Cummins expressed concerns about the expense involved and suggested that the money would be better spent on the parking deck. He stated that he did not know what the exact cost would be for this location, however, the cost for undergrounding a transmission pole is \$100,000. He noted that the project has frontage on three streets, PCH, Robinson Way and Airport Drive, so the cost could be considerable.

Planning Manager Isomoto reported that, according to photographs of the site, there does not appear to be any overhead lines on the Pacific Coast Highway frontage, but there are two utility poles on Robinson Way and possibly one or two more on Airport Drive.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima, seconded by Commissioner Drevno, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Voicing support for the project as proposed, Commissioner Uchima stated that as a businessman, he could empathize with the dealership's concerns about remaining financially viable and understood the need to stay within a budget when making improvements. With regard to the undergrounding of utilities, he commented on the difficulty of making a decision without knowing the costs and indicated that he favored allowing the applicant to work with staff to reach a compromise.

Commissioner Faulk stated that while he was pleased that the dealership was going to be upgraded, he had reservations about delaying the construction of the parking deck. He commended staff for the thorough job done in evaluating the site and for including some very insightful conditions. He emphasized the importance of attractive landscaping on this major thoroughfare.

In response to Commissioner Botello's inquiry, Mr. Butterfield indicated that the applicant would agree to come back for approval of the parking deck if the Commission chose to approve the project without it at this time.

Commissioner Botello noted that the staff report mentions that staff is not in favor of the proposed freestanding "branded image screen" and questioned whether this issue has been addressed in the conditions of approval.

Planning Manager Isomoto advised that staff will work this out with the applicant and a specific condition was not included. She recommended adding a condition requiring that the existing pole sign be eliminated and replaced with a monument sign, which is consistent with what has been required when other dealerships have been remodeled. She also recommended the addition of a condition requiring the elimination of the two parking spaces off Robinson Way designated for deliveries due to concerns discussed in the staff report.

The public hearing was reopened, and photos of the existing signage and renderings of the proposed signage were submitted. Mr. Butterfield expressed his willingness to work with staff on this issue.

Ms. Good explained that the dealership would like to retain the two delivery parking spaces, which are adjacent to the Parts Department, because they allow for easy access and help keep delivery trucks and Parts Department customers out of the way of the rest of the business. She suggested the possibility of camouflaging the spaces with landscaping.

Planning Manager Isomoto stated that Transportation Planning staff was concerned about potential conflicts with traffic. Ms. Good reported on plans to reconfigure the driveway on Robinson Way to direct service customers out the back, which will help eliminate some of the congestion in this area. She noted that these are existing parking spaces and there have been no problems.

Planning Manager Isomoto withdrew her request for the added condition based on Ms. Good's explanation.

Commissioner Horwich asked about staff's position on Condition No. 21. Planning Manager Isomoto suggested adding the phrase "to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director" to the condition in case the cost of undergrounding the utilities turns out to be totally out of the question. She advised that \$100,000 would not necessarily be considered out of the question because this amount has been paid in the past. She noted that it is a Code requirement that any utility service on the property from the pole to the building must be undergrounded.

Mr. Cummins stated that the applicant had no objections to undergrounding on-site utilities, but was concerned about the potential cost involved to underground utilities

around the project's perimeter. He indicated that he was comfortable with the condition with the added phrase.

Chairperson Muratsuchi suggested the possibility of continuing the hearing so an estimate of the cost of undergrounding could be obtained. Mr. Butterworth stated that the applicant would prefer a decision on the project tonight.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Drevno, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Noting the dealership's prime location, Commissioner Botello stated that he saw no reason to make a concession on the undergrounding of utilities. He voiced his opinion that the utility poles detract from the appearance of the dealership and suggested that the new facility should be able to compete visually with surrounding dealers. He indicated that he was inclined to either deny the parking deck and have the applicant return for approval after the improvements have been implemented so the Commission would have a better idea of how things are working and whether additional modifications are needed, or to require that the deck to be built at this time, stating that he believed General Motors would make funding available.

Commissioner Horwich disagreed, relating his understanding that the dealership is an independent franchise and there was no reason to anticipate that they would be able to secure outside funding. He indicated that he favored having the applicant come back for approval of the parking deck if it is needed.

Planning Manager Isomoto explained that when the dealership originally met with staff to discuss the project, the subject of the parking deck came up when they were asked about future plans and staff suggested that the deck be included in this application so they would not have to come back. She stated that she was not convinced that it would serve any purpose to require a second public hearing to allow the construction of additional on-site parking, which is something the City encourages, and indicated that staff would prefer that the parking deck be included in the approval.

Commissioner Horwich voiced support for approving the project with the parking deck with the understanding that the deck will be required if additional parking is needed.

Commissioner Faulk offered the following motion:

MOTION: Commissioner Faulk moved for the approval of MOD04-00018, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, with the following modifications:

Modify:

No. 21 That the applicant shall upgrade the existing overhead-serviced utilities and street lighting system and install underground-serviced utility system and marbelite street lighting system along the property boundaries along PCH, Robinson Way and Airport Drive to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

Add

- That the existing pole sign shall be removed prior to the installation of any new signage on the site.
- That the parking deck shall be added within three years of completion of Phase 1 of the project.

Discussion continued. In response to Commissioner Horwich's inquiry, Planning Manager Isomoto confirmed that if it becomes apparent after three years that the parking deck is not necessary, the dealership could request a modification of the Conditional Use Permit to have this condition removed.

Deputy City Attorney Whitham cautioned the Commission about potential enforcement problems should the dealership be unable to construct the parking deck within the specified time limit. She noted that the remedy for failure to comply with conditions of a Conditional Use Permit is revocation of the CUP, which in this case would not make sense because it would mean taking down all the improvements.

Commissioner Faulk stated that he viewed it as a good faith condition on the part of General Motors and the dealership.

Commissioner Horwich agreed, stating that while he understood that it would be virtually impossible to enforce the condition, he had faith in the integrity and desire of this dealership to do whatever is necessary to make it work.

Commissioner Botello stated that he could not support the motion because he believes there should be no concessions on the undergrounding of utilities and because he has serious reservations about the dealership's ability to remain competitive without the parking deck.

Planning Manager Isomoto clarified that adding the phrase "to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director" to Condition 21 would not relieve the applicant of having to underground utilities, but would allow some flexibility. She noted that there have been a few instances where Edison has not been in favor of taking down only one or two poles on a street due to concerns about the integrity of the system. She reported on Impact Development Fees that are currently in the works, which, in the future, will allow people to pay into a fund when it is not feasible to underground utilities.

Commissioner Faulk restated his motion. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by a 6-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Botello dissenting.

Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-141.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-141 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Faulk and passed by a 6-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Botello dissenting.

9B. CUP04-00039, DVP04-00006, WAV04-00026: LON STEPHENSON

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of an additional automobile dealer on an existing vehicle sales lot, a Development Permit to allow construction of a new building, and a Waiver to allow a reduction of the front landscaped setback requirement on property located in the HBCSP-NT Zone at 18600 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Continued to January 19, 2005.

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The Commission recessed from 8:50 p.m. to 9:07.

Agenda Item 7B was considered out of order at this time.

7B. WAV04-00013: MANUEL ROMERO (JOSE A. GUTIERREZ)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Waiver to allow a reduction of the side yard setback requirement on property located in the R-1 Zone at 4834 Theo Avenue.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Associate Santana introduced the request.

Laura Romero, 4834 Theo Avenue, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the approval of WAV04-00013, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-094.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-094. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

10. RESOLUTIONS

10A. WAV04-00002: HASAN UD-DIN HASHMI

Considered out of order, see page 2.

11. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS

None.

12. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

12A. MIS04-00325: HIROSHI YANO

Considered out of order, see page 2.

13. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Manager Isomoto reviewed recent City Council action on Planning Matters, noting that a consultant has been hired to conduct a citywide traffic study.

14. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Planning Manager Isomoto reviewed the agenda for the Planning Commission meeting of December 15, 2004.

15. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

15A. In response to a memo from Planning Manager Bihn, Commissioners briefly discussed the Planning Commission's participation in the General Plan Update and arrived at a consensus on the following issues:

Community outreach: To encourage more community participation, it was suggested that public workshops be broadcast on CitiNET, CitiCABLE Channel 3, and CitiSounds AM 1620.

Format of the workshops: The Commission favored creating three committees comprised of no more than three Commissioners to address (1) Commercial, (2) Residential and (3) Industrial land use elements of the General Plan. These committees would preside at public workshops, after which a recommendation will be forwarded to the entire Commission.

Time and frequency of workshops: Commissioners preferred not to hold workshops on the same evening as regularly scheduled Commission meetings due to concerns that the meetings could become too lengthy. They expressed a willingness to hold workshops once or twice a month and agreed that evening meetings are best because they allow for more participation by the public.

15B. Commissioner Horwich expressed condolences to the family of Ron Littlefair, noting that Mr. Littlefair was a longtime community activist, who was involved in the founding and continued operation of the Farmer's Market.

16. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:39 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, December 15, 2004 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Written January 19, 2005 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
