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CITY COUNCILOR

**CITY OF BELEN**  
**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**MINUTES**  
**APRIL 27, 2015**

Chairman Tom Greer called the regular meeting of the Belen Planning and Zoning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Chairman Tom Greer  
Vice Chair Steve Ethridge  
Commissioner Claudine Montano  
Commissioner Debbie Thompson

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Gordon Reeves

**CITY STAFF:** Steven Tomita, Planning & Zoning Director  
Lisa R Miller, Planning & Zoning Administrator

**OTHERS** Jose Sanchez, Self  
Luke Sanchez, Self  
Ms. Jose Sanchez, Self  
John Edward, Self

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Claudine Montano moved to approve the Agenda.

Commissioner Debbie Thompson seconded the Motion.

Motion Carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 13, 2015 were reviewed.

Vice-Chair Steve Ethridge moved to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Claudine Montano seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

**ACTION ITEM**

- a. **REQUEST FOR ANNEXATION WITH AN A-R ZONING: JOSE SANCHEZ & LUKE SANCHES. Legal Description:** Township 6 North, Range 1 East, Section 36, Tract 1-3, Tract 53-B-1-A, Tract 53-B-1-B, Tract 53-B-1-C, Tract 53-B-1-D, Containing approximately 36.25 ac.

Steven Tomita informed the Commission that Mr. Sanchez came to him requesting information on an annexation of these properties. Steven explained to him the benefits of being within the City limits. Mr. Sanchez was concerned about the zoning of the property that the City would place on it because he would like it to be annexed into the City with an agricultural zone and not a commercial zone. This gives him a break on his taxes and a chance to decide what is to be done with the land. We were looking at this area being annexed into Belen.

Chairman Tom Greer said that being this is in the county, with an agriculture zoning and the surrounding area is agriculture, it would be appropriate to bring it into the City as agriculture also.

Steven Tomita said that was correct and that a majority of his property was zoned agricultural except for one small piece on Industrial Park Lane.

Chairman Tom Greer asked what was there before.

Mr. Jose Sanchez, one of the property owners, said that he used to have an adobe brick business there at one time but shut it down in 1997 and he now grows gourds. Where the mud bogs are is being leveled. The area was originally a dump. Some of the property on Industrial Ln. was donated to the City of Belen to run their sewer and water lines up to Cavco.

Chairman Tom Greer asked if the area where the mud bogs are was once subdivided at one time.

Mr. Jose Sanchez said no.

Chairman Tom Greer asked if there is any intention to grow anything on it at this time.

Mr. Jose Sanchez said that they could.

Chairman Tom Greer said it would be good to have something growing in there so that when people came into Belen they would at least see something nice instead of just dirt. Growing anything there would make an attractive gateway coming into Belen.

Chairman Tom Greer asked if there were any questions from the Commission.

There were none.

Commissioner Debbie Thompson moved that they send this to the Council with the recommendation of annexation with the zoning designation of A-R.

Commissioner Claudine Montano seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Voting was as follows:

Commissioner Claudine Montano	Yes
Commissioner Debbie Thompson	Yes
Vice-Chair Steve Ethridge	Abstain
Chairman Tom Greer	Yes

Lisa Miller informed Mr. Sanchez that the next step is to go before the City Council and she will let them know when this would be.

Mr. Jose Sanchez said ok and asked Vice Chair Steve Ethridge why he abstained when he thought he was going to recuse himself.

Vice Chair Steve Ethridge said that he could not think of the right word so he abstained.

Mr. Jose Sanchez said that his wife was the Aunt of Steve Ethridge and that we had an honest person on our Commission.

Chairman Tom Greer said that he thought there might be something like that going on and was glad that it did. He feels that the Commission has a whole group of honest people.

### **DISCUSSION/REVIEW**

#### **Belen Boundary/with recommendations for Council**

Steven Tomita informed the Commission that they were provided with a copy of the map that Lisa Miller prepared. On previous discussions the distance was to be 2,000 feet but the railroad lines were also discussed. These railroad lines are on the West side and East side of HWY 314 and on the South Side of I-25 Bypass Rd. Then on the North side of I-25 Bypass Rd we used Wal-Mart as a maker to continue up until it connects to our boundary near Don Louis Trujillo Rd. The railroad tracks are natural barriers and if you do not annex everything within that area you will be creating county islands.

Lisa Miller explained that the area where you see the aerials clearly along HWY 314 and the I-25 Bypass Rd are the ones that are already in the City Limits. The ones that are color clouded are the areas to be considered for annexation.

Steve Tomita said they had looked at the possibility of going all the way to the Freeway but it was not feasible because it consists of a lot of resident homes and vacant properties and would not support itself economically or through the taxes it would provide. We wanted to make sense of what we annexed based upon the potential of commercial and high density residential.

Chairman Tom Greer said that they looked at this because they actually have sewer and water in most of this area already.

Steven Tomita said at least in the proximate area and it would just be a matter of extending the lines and not installing a complete new infrastructure.

Lisa Miller said that the sewer and water lines on HWY 314 stop at Tropical Fish.

Steven Tomita said that this was so that the Commission can provide feedback and ask questions and to make a recommendation to be presented to the City Council.

Mr. John Edward informed the Commission that his family has had property down here since 1986. They also have property on the other side of the I-25 interstate going South from the interchange. He thinks the idea of expanding the City limits makes sense for a lot of different reasons. One is you need to take off the rough edges of the City limits. Historically if you look at different communities around New Mexico, the ones that faltered is because they have not had a bold vision and paying attention to the practical aspect of what the future holds and where the dollars flow. One of the things he feels is important to any property is that 85% of purchase decisions in real estate are made in the first minute outside the property before it is even physically seen. He feels that they need to extend it to the east side of the I-25. He feels that for the City to try and maximize a return on investments to create a nice welcome mat, and the ability to control commerce as it relates to flirting with enticing people from I-25. It squares off your edges and provide a lot of re-assurance to people. He grew up in the South valley and still lives in the home he grew up in, they have done a great job of cutting up the valley in such a way that they are cutting off their nose to spite their face when it comes to re-charge the aquifer and protecting the green space. By extending your City limits up to the highway you are creating opportunities and avenues for certain types of developments to occur there and allow the green belt. All great cities have strong green belt aspects to them. For example, New York City would not be New York City without Central Park, Napa Valley would not be Napa Valley without the vineyards'. You are not going to have that in Belen and Belen wants to be known for a great community. The wealthiest parts of Albuquerque are next to open spaces. Here is the ability to have some control over the rural aspect, giving people their heritage with the green belt and open space. You also create an economic entry and gateway by extending out to I-25. You set forth a nice

planning perspective for people to bank on. Communities who also do well establish roadways, parks, and open spaces way in advance of any kind of development. People want to make investments where they can have a sense of banking for the future. At some point an interchange will need to be done at Aragon Rd. There are at least 20,000 properties in Valencia County who are 10 years behind on their property taxes. If you give people reason to make strong, bold investment they will own those properties and Pay those property taxes for fear of losing them because they know the value in connection with those properties. There are other benefits such as water control and water quality, run off, flood control, relationship and integration with MRCOG and the conservancy district. Another aspect is the commerce of I-25. He applauds the Planning & Zoning Commission for taking the initiative to straighten out the boundaries of the City.

Chairman Tom Greer said that he has made some good points and some of us sitting up front wish that more people in this community understood this.

Mr. John Edward said where people see activity and energy it gets energy and when you give more you get more. This City has great possibilities. There is a lot to be gained in taking bold steps.

Chairman Tom Greer said yes it does.

Steven Tomita said that we have control over the planning and platting of that property from the railroad to I-25, due to the fact it is within the three mile radius of our boundary and we have the ability to do that. He is going after grant funds to update our comprehensive plan and as part of that he will be notifying the County that we will be doing our three mile jurisdiction of planning. We will be designating what the land use will be, transportation, corridors, and everything else. All of this will be part of that Master Plan and the County will have to recognize that. They are not going to be able to approve anything without coming to us first. We are going to exercising that right.

Chairman Tom Greer said that one of the things is that this part of the County does not get much attention. To take control of this, as the City is now doing, rather than expect the County to be bold or aggressive about this, it seems to be the only way to move forward.

Mr. John Edward said that if you have this bold vision and want to dynamically push it is the best way to go about it. By having this annexed and doing this type of planning is critical for outside investors to see that there is a sense of confidence in what is happening here.

Steven Tomita said another aspect is that cities have more powers than counties do and the other aspect is that if we annex a property, we have to be prepared to provide city services within a reasonable time. It would be very expensive to get utilities in the area between the railroad and the freeway and that is why the boundary was placed along the

railroad and would be easier to provide them. If we have planning and platting jurisdiction then we can control this and not face that prospect.

Mr. John Edward said that he thinks that this is a good time to do this. Everything that you can do to make Belen a stronger welcome mat by saying you are open for business is really important. He feels that an on and off ramp on Aragon Rd with a gas station would really help. You do not have any gas stations on any of the on and off ramps within this City. That is something that draws people in and being that the overpass is already there the expense is reduced because all you would have to have done would be the ramps.

Steven Tomita said that there have been some discussions about the possibilities at Aragon Rd. In 30 years it might be possible because we will not get any state support due to the fact that we have three interchanges now and Los Lunas only has one. That one is the top priority now and they are projecting it to occur in 2026. He has requested, on long term, that Aragon will be done. One of the concerns was that when the DOT was in the process of turning over the frontage road to the City of Belen, so that we may use the area on Camino Del Llano for our ponds, DOT was concerned that we would immediately improve the frontage road and they did not want to see that happen. We informed them that we did not have any plans at this time.

Mr. John Edward said that the one thing about human behavior that is interesting is that he sees this region as a family and at times families can be the greatest of allies and at other times they can be the greatest of competitors. They can push things along when they are competitors. Everybody down here will benefit from any interchange that goes on down here along the I-25, whether it be just north of Belen or here. If you put in a request for this at the very least you would have to worry about is the interchange near Los Lunas would be put on the fast track because you would be breathing down their neck because you want another interchange. Sometimes competition can work to your advantage.

Chairman Tom Greer asked if there were any more comments. We are always going to have people debate with us. This solves a lot of the reasoning behind why we are trying to do this.

Steven Tomita said the boundary that shows on the map, the Council will have issues with it, they may say we are getting to aggressive.

Commissioner Debbie Thompson said that we weren't aggressive enough. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done.

Chairman Tom Greer said that they took this area first because it was more or less the easiest one.

Steven Tomita said that we have some nasty stuff to the south. He chose this area because it was the easiest part then we could move that forward and show the Council that we are trying to resolve the boundary.

Chairman Tom Greer said that the north area is the most logical one to start on. That is the most likely area that will be the next place people are going to be interested in developing. We need to get the area as organized as possible in order to have control on how it gets developed.

Steven Tomita said that if we are going to get aggressive that would be the best place for it. This is going to be a challenge.

Chairman Tom Greer said that where it is now between the railroad tracts is ok. If they tweek it any more the Council will change it anyway. It is as aggressive as we can get given who is on the Council.

Steven Tomita said that he agrees with Mr. Edward and take on over to I-25 because that corridor is going to be an incredible corridor. Where it stands on the proposed map, we can plan that area and lock in what we think the land uses, transportation, the utilities and things like that should be.

Mr. John Edward said that you also have access, from an elevation standpoint, from that water tank that is up on the hill. That can service these areas.

Vice Chair Steve Ethridge asked if this was an action item.

Steven Tomita said that it is an action to make a recommendation to the Council as to what you feel the Boundaries should be in this area.

Vice Chair Steve Ethridge moved to send it to the Council as presented along with Mr. Edward's comments.

Commissioner Debbie Thompson seconded the motion.

Motion Carried.

Vote was as follows:

Commissioner Claudine Montano	Yes
Commissioner Debbie Thompson	Yes
Vice Chair Steve Ethridge	Yes
Chairman Tom Greer	Yes

Steven Tomita informed the Commission that they would be moving on to another section to review and make recommendations to the Council.

