

JERAH R CORDOVA
MAYOR
VACANT
CITY MANAGER



CITY OF BELEN
100 SOUTH MAIN STREET
BELEN, NEW MEXICO 87002
(505) 966-2746
www.belen-nm.gov

WAYNE GALLEGOS
CITY COUNCILOR
DAVID CARTER
MAYOR PRO-TEM
DARLEEN ARAGON
CITY COUNCILOR
FRANK ORTEGA
CITY COUNCILOR

CITY OF BELEN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 14, 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 Gordon Reeves

CITY STAFF: Steven Tomita
Lisa R Miller, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Jerah Cordova, Mayor
Wayne Gallegos, City Council
Frank Ortega, City Council
Dan Robb, Police Chief, City of Belen

OTHER: Marcella Melendez
Robert Noblin
Mike Moreno
Rose Gould
Phyllis Taylor
James Foty
Rhona Espinoza
Herman Tabet
John Chavez
Holly Chavez
Noelle Chavez
Jim Rende
Jeff Goebel
Sabrina Botts
David Cordova

PLEDGE OF ALLEGENCE

Commissioner Claudine Montano lead the Pledge.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Claudine Montano moved to approve the Agenda..

Commissioner Gordon Reeves seconded the Motion.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 31, 2015 were reviewed.

Commissioner Gordon Reeves moved to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Claudine Montano seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH POSSIBLE ACTION

Closing of the alley adjacent to City Hall from Sixth Street to Main Street. The purpose is to close off the alley from Sixth Street to the west property line of the City Police Department and converting the remaining part of the alley into a one way thoroughfare going to Main Street.

Chief Dan Robb informed the Commission that they would like to block off the alley on the South side of the Police Department from Sixth Street to the property line between the Police Department and the Health Department. The reason is because there is more and more traffic going down that alley and it is just a matter of time when there is an accident, etc. to happen. It is also for security around the Police Department. The employees at the health center would use the parking lot of City Hall to get to their parking. This issue has been discussed with them and they see no problem with it. The remaining part of the alley , for safety reasons, could be made into a one way alley coming off of Main Street going East. If you go West there is a problem with clear site coming out of the alley onto Main.

Commissioner Steve Ethridge asked if there has been any surveys on this so that the City knows if they own it or not.

Lisa Miller informed the Commission that the alley was platted a long time ago.

Commissioner Steve Ethridge said that we should have a proper description.

Commissioner Gordon Reeves asked if it was an easement for the apartments and do they have easement rights to it.

Lisa Miller informed them that it is a public right of way.

Chairman Tom Greer asked if any kind of traffic study has been done to see how many do come down the alley.

Steven Tomita said that we had not. He uses that alley every day and has run into problems going both directions. If there are two cars on it at the same time, one has to pull over into the parking lots, etc. so one of them can go by. When pulling out onto Main Street, most of the time you can not see traffic coming from S Main Street due to the parking along the front of the Trembly Building. He has done some research with other communities across the US and there is a trend where more and more Cities are turning their alley ways into one way.

Chief Dan Robb said that this alley gets a lot of traffic and it needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Claudine Montano asked if this was also a safety issue for the Police Department.

Chief Dan Robb said that it was and the other issue of the rest of the alley becoming one way would also be a safety issue. It would help with the flow of traffic in the alley and also prevent the possibility of accidents occurring.

Chairman Tom Greer said that he has looked at other communities and feels that it would benefit the Police Department.

Vice Chair Steve Ethridge said that it would be nice to hear directly from the Health Department and the surrounding property owners on this issue.

Herman Tabet said that being the owner of the property on the south side of the alley; he sees no sense in closing it down. It has been there forever. He said that he has had people doing some research at the County Courthouse and they have not been able to find out who the actual owner of the alley is. They have found nothing. As far as he is concerned the City can do whatever it wants to the alley. It is of no use to him.

Ms Holly Chavez said that the City parking lot for a lot of events and if you block off the alley are you not going to put the people at risk who use the parking lot. During special events Becker is blocked off and the alley is the only access for vendors, emergency equipment, etc.

Steven Tomita said that he leaves it up to the Chief of Police to best determine what is needed. They have a better understanding of what they need.

Chairman Tom Greer would like to make this into two issues. One being the blocking off of the alley behind the Police Department and the other one being the remaining use of the rest of the alley.

Ms Sabrina Botts, owner of the property right next to City Hall, was concerned about the availability of access of emergency equipment. If it is blocked off the fire department and the

police department will have to go completely around to get to the property and she asked if the trash services would be affected by this.

Chief Dan Robb said that he has seen the fire department use the alley only for access with their rescue and that was to come to the Police Department. That is the only time he has seen them use the alley.

Mr Jim Rende said from an architectural point of view it is required to have clear access to a structure for the purpose of fire protection, police protection, etc. This needs to be considered. The buildings in this area are old and most are not sprinkled and that might have been a consideration when the alley was placed there to begin with.

Chairman Tom Greer said that it could affect the insurance rates for those buildings. He suggested that the Commission needs to study this a little longer so that we can look into some of these things. Study this more and come up with a plan.

The Commission agreed with this.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Presentation and public input on the Draft Downtown Master Plan and Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan.

Steven Tomita asked for a show of hands on how many in attendance were at the last meeting of the Downtown Master Plan. He explained that the accumulation of that workshop and others is what has gone into the Draft that is being presented. Phyllis Taylor will be presenting the PowerPoint presentation for the public and Commission.

Phyllis Taylor introduced herself and the process that was used in developing the Downtown Master Plan. There was a project team that worked on this. Each member was instrumental in the development and writing of the document. The only thing that needs to be added are the goals. She then went into the presentation. What these plans do is allow the City to participate in projects as a public partner in a private development. She then went into the different projects that the City could become involved with and showed the possible outcomes with PowerPoint examples of these types of projects that have gone on around the state. The area in Belen that the Master Plan and Redevelopment Plan concerns was shown. Some of the suggested projects were presented. The different signage possibilities were presented. The workability prospects were presented. Ideas on how to tame the traffic were presented. Long term projects and short term projects were presented. Design standards ideas were presented. At this point the document has 100 pages to review. Landscaping ideas were presented.

Steven Tomita informed them that the P & Z Commission is working on the Architectural Design Standards for the City of Belen. This will cover many of the issues that Belen would like to see.

Mr. David Cordova said that what Belen needs is to bring some money into Belen. The City is almost ready to die. There is nothing here. The business people in Belen do not want to help Belen. You need to bring new money and new businesses with good ideas into Belen. Belen needs to be more open minded.

Steven Tomita said that what the Master Plan is doing is saying what we want Belen to look like and how do we all come together to accomplish that. That is the key to the next step of this plan. The next steps involve is how do we implement it, how do we move forward and how we say that this is a community that we have pride in. How do we as a community going to accomplish this and that is what we are trying to build on to make this happen. This is the beginning.

Mr Robert Noblin said that the property owners that are holding onto their properties along Main St and Becker Ave do not have an incentive to repair, rejuvenate the area. He thinks this is a big problem and feels that incentives need to be a part of the redevelopment of those areas.

Phyllis Taylor said that there is some of that happening in a few areas already. This needs to be expanded on.

Steven Tomita said that the City does have a Building Maintenance Ordinance. The trick of that Code is that you have to have a balance on how far you push it. You want the building preserved/maintained but you don't want somebody saying the cost would be too much so I am just going to take it down.

Phyllis Taylor said the next step of the process is going to get the goals incorporated into it and then designating the redevelopment area. The final step will be adopting the Plans.

OPEN COMMENTS/REQUESTS

A participant asked if there would be a chance to place banners across HWY 314 for events, etc.

Steven Tomita said he has spoken with DOT and the answer is NO.

Robert Noblin asked about being able to change the downtown speed limits on HWY 314.

Steven Tomita said they also said NO to that.

Councilman Wayne Gallegos said that it does not stop us from putting banners across our own streets or changing the speed limits there also. There are a lot of areas that we can do this in.

James Foty said that the disconnect is between state DOT policy rules and the design directives. The design directives are very singly focused on streets are for moving cars only. That may be fine for I-25 but when you have a state HWY as your Main St, that may not be your goal. The two approaches for this are the mother may I approach or to take over the responsibility for maintenance etc. on that section of the state HWY.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City of Belen Planning & Zoning Commission, Commissioner Claudine Montano moved to adjourn.

Vice Chair Steve Ethridge seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

