

**CITY OF EL MIRAGE
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 13, 2011**

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Doug Doede called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and led the Pledge.

II. ROLL CALL

Members present were Doug Doede, Brandon Forrey, Frank Carnal, and Justin McCarty. Mary Koestner was absent. Staff members present were Senior Planner Mark Smith and Technician Jose Macias plus Deputy City Manager Bill Pupo. Mayor Lana Mook was also present.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8, 2011

Forrey commended staff on accurate & succinct minutes and made a motion for approval of the minutes of November 8, 2011. McCarty seconded, and the motion passed 3 to 0 with Frank Carnal abstaining.

IV. CONTINUANCES [None]

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Hearing & Action on Amendments to General Plan Planning Areas

Smith said the Commission discussed these last month. No one was present to comment on the proposed plan amendments. Forrey suggested amending the map to include the south side of Thunderbird Road in the Mixed Use District. Carnal then made the motion to recommend the amendments to City Council with that correction. McCarty seconded the recommendation and motion passed 4 to 0.

2. Discussion on Recommended Architectural Design Standards

Smith referred to samples given to the Commission last month and to a one-page synopsis of recommended specific standards by planning areas and asked for feedback from the Commission. He then made a power point presentation outlining the Living Streets Design Manual from Los Angeles County, California, which was recommended by City Engineer Lance Calvert since it includes the design principles found in Complete Streets & like the SmartCode that the staff recently used as a basis for the new City zoning code, the City can revise and adopt it.

Carnal asked if the state was looking at it. Smith said they are looking at Complete Streets. Carnal referred to the Grand Avenue Frontage plan presented to Council which included street closures. Smith said staff recommended to the City Manager that they not close the streets.

Doede said the idea was to route traffic away from the intersection down the frontage road. Carnal said he understood the reason behind it but it would close off the neighborhood from conversion to business. Pupo noted the widening of intersections also. Forrey noted that widening Thunderbird was contrary to Living Streets but the real problem was not the lanes but intersections. He thought that a roundabout would help. Widening makes it harder on the pedestrian. Pupo did not disagree but in this part of the Valley they had to take advantage of the roads that go through. Thunderbird is viable for specialty retail when the economy improves and financing is available.

Doede suggested pedestrian overpasses. Forrey said they were possible but difficult to use. The Thunderbird intersection improvement was touted as a safety enhancement, but he warned them then that it would not be. Smith said that Casa Grande where he lives had actually narrowed collectors and made them safer and faster and had even used roundabouts, but the West Valley is trying to accommodate the traffic that the East Valley was used to and sometimes that means widening arterials, but the City Engineer was working with ADOT to narrow El Mirage Road where access was limited and to add wider sidewalks and bike lanes on the new Thunderbird Road design.

Regarding exceptions, Forrey said engineers have found no costs excessive or unfeasible but thought that every proposal might claim improvements too costly or unfeasible to get improvements waived. Smith noted that the City staff or Council decides, not the developer. Forrey noted that roundabouts were recommended in Living Streets and had huge safety benefits. Smith said that size and design matter. He had seen them work well on collectors with no development but not always on bigger streets. Doede said they eliminate pedestrian traffic. Forrey said he used to think that but he has been converted. Motorists slow down to 15 to 20 mph so they are inclined to slow down or stop.

Forrey noted performance measures for pedestrians and bikes. MAG is working on a bike count. Forrey also suggested the term 'Complete Streets' may become a federal mandate for grants. He also referred to more connections, bikes, and pedestrians and increased bike and pedestrian connections over street connections. Smith said the reverse is true; the more access, the more people are on the streets and the safer they are. McCarty did not think that roads like El Mirage would work with higher speeds and traffic except in downtown areas. Smith said the mixed-use area lent itself to these standards since the rights-of-way are 80 feet wide. Added parking and walks are possible. Doug Doede said it was the intent to make Thunderbird a mini-Bell since it goes through and others do not. Surprise plans on relieving Bell Road.

3. 2012 Commission Regular Meeting Schedule

Staff prepared a meeting schedule based on Third Tuesdays as the Commission discussed last month to accommodate City Council changing to the Second and Fourth Tuesdays, but Council will be meeting on the First and Third Tuesdays, so staff will redo the schedule for the Commission on the Second Tuesday of each month.

VI. STAFF'S REPORT

Smith said Valero planned to take out permits soon and there were a few other requests pending but they had not submitted their applications yet.

VII. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Forrey stated Maricopa Association of Governments had transportation enhancement funds available for projects. Pupo said the City may use them to improve Grand Avenue frontage road to encourage businesses.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Mark L. Smith, Senior Planner

Doug Doede, Commission Chair