

**City of Antioch**  
**Economic Development Commission**  
**MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 4, 2014**  
**6:00 p.m.**  
**City Council Chamber**

Chair Wright called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, in the City Council Chamber.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Chair Wright, Vice Chair Archuleta, Commissioners Asadoorian, Parhams, Parsons and Thorpe

Absent: Vacancy

Staff Present: Economic Development Director Fitzer and Economic Development Analyst Nunnally

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Item 1 – Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes**

Following a motion by Vice Chair Archuleta, seconded by Commissioner Parhams, the minutes were approved 5-0-1 (Asadoorian absent during vote, 1 vacancy).

**Item 2 – Development, Land Use and Permitting Process**

Community Development Director Tina Wehrmeister conducted a presentation on the Planning process, including the seven elements of a General Plan as compared to a Specific Plan, which Wehrmeister explained is more detailed and relates to a specific area. Commissioner Asadoorian asked about permit costs, and Wehrmeister explained both the Use Permit and Building Permit processes. Vice Chair Archuleta asked if there was a peer review process, to which Wehrmeister replied that there are citywide Design Guidelines (DG) that have been adopted to help guide applicants, and that the Design Review Board has been eliminated in favor of having the plans sent to an architect who reviews the plans in the context of the DG, which makes an Administrative Use Permit possible instead of the matter going to the Planning Commission. Wehrmeister stated that the peer reviewers are paid consultants, and the applicant pays for the cost. Commissioner Parhams asked if there was a stable of peer reviewers, and Wehrmeister responded that the City put out an RFP and retained five firms to serve as peer reviewers, for both residential and commercial, and that they are assigned to projects based on their areas of expertise. Asadoorian asked if there's a one-size-fits-all approach and used Antioch High School's upcoming renovation as an example to ask if that project needed City

approval, and Wehrmeister explained that CA State law supersedes City Planning processes when it comes to schools as school districts govern themselves, but noted that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) still applies and that the project design will be subject to State Architect review.

Commissioner Thorpe asked if, in the event of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) being required, a Land Use Update requirement is triggered as well. Wehrmeister responded no, and used a veterinarian's office as an example where, with a CUP, the vet office can locate in a retail center, but that doesn't change the zoning as the CUP only applies to the specific location address of the vet office. Thorpe then asked about the purpose of a Land Use Update, and Wehrmeister explained that it changes what's conditionally allowed, such as changing from residential low density to residential high density, and added that sometimes property owners object to such a change and sometimes property owners request such a change. Thorpe then followed up by asking about the General Plan (GP) update process, which Wehrmeister explained as a "blueprint" for the community, and said that the general process consisted of public outreach, sub-committees being formed to work on the update, and then approval by the Planning Commission before final adoption by the City Council. Wehrmeister then went on to note that if there's a change in the zoning of a property, CEQA is more likely to be triggered; the example she used is a change from residential to commercial where specific impacts such as trip generation, noise levels, etc. will be considered.

Commissioner Parsons asked if there was a City fee just to start looking at plans, and Wehrmeister responded that the applicant is not charged until Staff begins an official review of the plans, at which time a \$2,000 deposit is required of the applicant. Archuleta asked if the "team" approach to reviewing plans still applied following layoffs, and Wehrmeister said yes. Chair Wright said that the CUP requirement was the biggest complaint he heard during the Chamber's Downtown Walk to talk with business owners, and he asked Wehrmeister what she thought was the biggest complaint. Wehrmeister stated that she thought the City needed to be faster at processing applications, which is a staffing issue, but also stated that it was her opinion that current land use policies need to be revisited (such as the disallowance of first-floor office space in the downtown), and that there was a need for education and outreach for small business owners to help them navigate the process because most small businesses don't expect the costs and don't include the costs in their budgets. Wehrmeister pointed out that, from a processing perspective, large projects like eBART and Slatten Ranch are easier to process because these types of projects have seasoned developers who already know the process and what to expect. Wright then cited an example of a Salon/School that was interested in opening near the "A" and 18<sup>th</sup> Streets Grocery Outlet but they were willing to walk away due to the fee, and recounted that the owner told him that if it was only a salon then no CUP would be needed and that it was the school component that triggered the CUP requirement. Wright called the \$2,000 fee a hindrance, stating his belief that the policy creates vacancy, which leads to loitering and other problems. Wright concluded his remarks by saying that business owners would like certainty and don't want to spend \$2,000 "just to sit at the table". Wehrmeister replied that some cities estimate, and explained that the school component of the proposed Salon/School requires more parking than just the salon component alone, and that the other businesses in the center would likely be adversely affected by the school due to less parking being available to their own clients. Wright then followed up by asking if there could be a lower upfront fee, and Thorpe inquired if the fee structure was

established administratively or by policy, to which Wehrmeister responded that the fee structure is established by a formal Fee Study completed by the Finance Department and approved by City Council. Archuleta asked if the application fee was the same no matter what. Wehrmeister replied yes, and Archuleta asked if it could be scaled to the size of the project. Thorpe then asked if there were incentives for small businesses to recoup some costs, such as tax exemptions, and asked the EDC to look at and recommend them to City Council. Thorpe also recommended mixed use zoning around eBART, and Wehrmeister replied that it has in fact been designated mixed use.

Parhams asked if there were signage standards because someone at one of the Community Cafes commented that they had not been allowed to put up temporary signage and expressed disappointment that they believed there to be different standards applied to different businesses. Wehrmeister replied that there was an existing Sign Code and also Design Guidelines for signage. Wehrmeister said that, “typically, a storefront that is X ft. wide and in a commercial zone is allowed X amount of signage area based on the zoning.” Wehrmeister also pointed out that a Master Sign Program can be adopted through the Design Review (DR) process. Wright asked if the DR process looked at projects in relation to plant types and paint schemes, and Wehrmeister replied no, clarifying that sometimes canopy coverage in terms of size and number is looked at but that paint color is not regulated. Wright replied that K2GC was told they couldn’t paint their building blue, and Wehrmeister explained that the K2GC design went before a DRB that was opinionated, but that is no longer the case.

Asadoorian asked about certain uses that can’t be within a particular distance to schools, and Wehrmeister stated that the City recently adopted a prohibition on new smoke shops, and that it was a temporary ordinance in place now but it will be brought back with the intention of making it permanent. Wehrmeister said now that if a smoke shop is proposed within 500’ of a school the City can’t accept the application, can’t entertain the proposal and that the applicant wouldn’t even be allowed to submit. Wehrmeister did clarify that existing smoke shops are grandfathered in, and Archuleta asked if the owner leaves then does the permit stay? Wehrmeister explained that there was no CUP requirement at the time that existing smoke shops went in so they’re legal non-conforming uses, but the City can say no to a proposed replacement.

### Item 3 – Economic Development Strategic Plan

EDD Fitzer requested that, with Commissioner Donisanu’s resignation, the EDC provide another commissioner to serve on the sub-committee. Asadoorian recommended Thorpe, and Wright acknowledged that Thorpe was put forth and asked if any other commissioner was interested. Archuleta then updated the Commission to let them know that the remaining two sub-committee members met with the City Manager (CM) to ensure both parties were on the same page and that Thorpe had volunteered to attend but that he was not part of the sub-committee. Wright then asked for a motion, to which Asadoorian made a motion to appoint Thorpe that was seconded by Parhams and approved by the Commission. At that point Archuleta stated that since former Commissioner Donisanu had been Chair, the sub-committee needed a new Chair. Wright asked if Parhams was interested in the Chair role and she replied that she wasn’t sure and that she preferred to “just keep working”. Wright then asked Archuleta if he was willing and Archuleta replied

yes. Fitzer then said that since there was general consensus among the Commission that Archuleta be Chair that the matter didn't require an official vote.

Fitzer then informed the Commission that the content of the draft Strategic Plan was not yet ready to be shared because there were still two meetings required, one with just the sub-committee and the other with business owners as participants. Archuleta stated his belief that it was great to have Antioch Chamber of Commerce reps as suggested by the CM, and that the CM was able to digest recommendations and long-term goals and that the CM wants a study session with the City Council. Fitzer elaborated that the CM was envisioning a separate agenda public workshop comprised of the full EDC with public participation and the City Council. Archuleta stated that he believed the EDC expectation was that the full EDC would discuss the work being done, and Fitzer pointed out that the sub-committee was scheduled to meet prior to the next full EDC meeting.

#### Item 4 – Four Focus Areas

Wright asked if there were any updates or comments on the four focus areas, and there were none for a. Quality of Life or b. Human Capital Development.

c. For the Business and Community Outreach focus area, Wright updated the Commission that there had been a Northern Waterfront Development Initiative (NWDI) meeting with East Bay Leadership Council and the County. Wright also reported that he met with Kish Rajan of GOBiz to discuss the region's Ag component, and reported that Rajan is considering an overall East Bay Plan. Wright also discussed his meeting with the City of Brentwood, Harvest Time and Frog Hollow regarding the Brentwood Land Trust and opportunities to develop food manufacturing and processing facilities. Parsons mentioned that Tesla was looking for a battery manufacturing location, and Wright replied that California was competing with states willing to waive all fees and Rajan reported that California just wasn't able to compete with that. Archuleta said that during some meetings he's heard the story of businesses that have left the state but have since begun talks to return due to California's higher quality of life and available workforce in the state.

d. Under the Infrastructure and Capital Development item, Parsons indicated that AB 935 was "still sitting there," but she felt that Alameda County seemed increasingly receptive to a Contra Costa presence on the Water Emergency Transit Authority (WETA) board of directors. Wright added that as people were looking to fill spots on the WETA board that it was important that Contra Costa County be represented.

#### Item 5 – Comments

- a) Public – None
- b) Commission – Parhams announced that Experience Unlimited was co-sponsoring a large job fair with California State University, East Bay at its Concord campus on April 11, and spoke about some of the companies and elected officials who would be represented there. She stated that the event will run from 9:00 – 2:00 and that there will be a BART shuttle. Asadoorian asked why the EDC meeting had been omitted from the Weekly Report and Fitzer replied that it was an unintentional oversight that will be corrected. Asadoorian then informed the EDC that he would be unavailable to attend the April 1 meeting. Thorpe stated that he'd become a "tax incentive evangelist"

- because he thought that California had done a good job creating tools and that it was “incumbent on local government to do the same”. Thorpe then requested that the Incentives issue be agendaized for the next meeting under the Infrastructure and Capital Development focus area and Fitzer asked if it was the will of the Commission to do so, and there was general consensus to place it on the next agenda. Archuleta asked if Thorpe would be bringing info, to which Thorpe replied yes, at which time Fitzer requested that the documents be sent to Staff and then it would be included in their packets. Thorpe then asked for information related to the fees for Delta Diablo Sanitation District’s sewer connection fee and EDA Nunnally committed to providing the info at the next meeting. Wright concluded Commission comments by announcing the March 6 BDCP Forum, the March 13 Suburban Poverty Task Force meeting and the March 14 Inaugural Chamber Gala.
- c) Staff – Nunnally announced that he’d be meeting with the Deputy City Clerk to establish timing for the recruitment and stated that April 1 was too ambitious to fill the partial-term vacancy due to the required application and interview process, and he also discussed the \$500,000 Downtown Specific Plan grant for which the City applied. Asadoorian asked from which fund the money would be spent, and Nunnally replied that the grant money would be granted on a reimbursement basis. Parson asked if the City was going to use any previous studies, and Nunnally replied that the Arcadis Study, although never implemented, was referred to in the grant application and that Arcadis was more of a master planner than a developer, but that the contents of the study had still proven useful over the years.

#### Item 6 – Adjournment

Wright announced that the next regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission would be held Tuesday, April 1, 2014 at 6:00 PM at the City Council Chamber and adjourned the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:37 PM.