

CARSON CITY HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION

Minutes of the August 10, 2006 Meeting

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A regular meeting of the Carson City Historic Resources Commission was scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 10, 2006 in the Community Center Sierra Room, 851 East William Street, Carson City, Nevada.

PRESENT: Chairperson Michael Drews
Vice Chairperson Mark Lopiccolo
Richard Baker
Rebecca Ossa
Peter Smith

STAFF: Lee Plemel, Principal Planner
Joe McCarthy, Economic Development / Redevelopment Manager
Vern Krahn, Park Planner
Kathleen King, Recording Secretary

NOTE: A recording of these proceedings, the commission's agenda materials, and any written comments or documentation provided to the recording secretary during the meeting are public record, on file in the Clerk-Recorder's Office. These materials are available for review during regular business hours.

A. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM (5:33:14) - Chairperson Drews called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. Roll was called; a quorum was present. Commissioners Darney and Speulda were absent.

B. ACTION ON APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None.

C. MODIFICATION OF AGENDA (5:33:42) - None.

D. DISCLOSURES (5:34:00) - None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS (5:34:09) - None.

F. PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ITEMS:

F-1. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ONLY ON PROPOSED FUTURE STREET IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF CARSON CITY (5:34:30) - Mr. Plemel introduced Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Krahn, and provided background information on the presentation. Mr. McCarthy provided historic information on the evolution of Carson Street, and discussed the importance of creating a balance between pedestrians and automobiles. He provided background information on the comprehensive master plan and the video presentation. He commended Public Works Director Andrew Burnham and Mr. Krahn on development of the video presentation. He noted that elements included in the video were created based on input from the community. Mr. Plemel reviewed possible changes to Carson Street, as depicted in the video. Mr. Krahn provided an overview of the downtown charette held in September 2005, and narrated the video presentation.

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Mr. Plemel advised that a downtown ordinance will be presented to the commission for review in the near future. He narrated a portion of the video presentation which demonstrated the addition of height to existing buildings on Carson Street. He advised that parking for new development will be encouraged to be located behind buildings, and not on Carson Street. With regard to traffic issues, he advised that once the freeway bypass is complete, ownership of Carson Street will revert to the City. He discussed the goal of making the downtown portion of Carson Street a destination rather than a thoroughfare. He acknowledged that traffic is "the big question." He advised that the most recent transportation master plan element was done in 2004. The recently-adopted land use map was submitted to the transportation master plan consultants to redo the City-wide traffic model, incorporating new development in the downtown area. Mr. Plemel advised that the analysis indicates the need for six lanes between Carson Street, Stewart Street, and Roop Street, north and south through Carson City to accommodate expected volumes of traffic. More analysis is needed to determine how to reduce the number of traffic lanes in the downtown area, and to route the traffic to Stewart and Roop Streets. Public Works staff developed a cost analysis of the conceptual improvements which indicates an estimate of just under \$11 million. Mr. Plemel advised that NDOT is committed to redoing Carson Street prior to turning ownership back to the City. The funding for that project would cover approximately one-third the cost.

Mr. Krahn advised of questions regarding landscape, the types of irrigation systems, the amount of maintenance required, etc. He explained that the landscape would be on a drip irrigation system. A variety of trees would provide diversity within the urban forest, and would have a more open, branching pattern so as not to obscure businesses and signage. Perennials and annuals would be used in the flower planters and hanging baskets. Accent and flowering trees would also be used in addition to some sort of riparian species and plant material in the proposed urban stream environment zone. The landscape would be maintained by City personnel.

Mr. McCarthy advised that more than 1,000 people participated in helping to craft the visual narrative of conceptual improvements to the downtown. Since that time, only a handful of comments has been received. The nature of the comments indicates the people did not participate in the charette and have not seen the conceptual video. Concerns have been expressed over inaccurate estimates of future traffic. Mr. McCarthy emphasized that the project will not be initiated until evidence is presented that reducing the number of traffic lanes on Carson Street is feasible.

Chairperson Drews inquired as to potential impacts to Curry Street and the areas east and further west of Carson Street. Mr. McCarthy anticipates an increase in traffic on Stewart and Roop Streets. He noted that over 50 percent of the people who work in Carson City don't live here. Chairperson Drews expressed concern over retaining historic structures while accomplishing the downtown vision. Mr. Plemel advised of not much discussion with regard to the improvements extending into Curry Street. He advised there is a lot of redevelopment potential between Carson and Stewart Streets. Mr. Krahn advised that the new development standards will apply throughout the downtown area. As development moves forward, the new design concepts, ordinances, and codes will be applied. "That's where you'll get the wrap around effect." Mr. McCarthy reiterated that the first draft of the urban code will be submitted for review by the commission in the near future. The hope is to move away from use based design to form based design. Essentially, the market place will decide building uses. Chairperson Drews commended the plan and noted its great potential.

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Vice Chairperson Lopiccolo inquired as to the possibility of parking garages. Mr. McCarthy noted the “park once and walk” concept. Downtown business owners believe there is not enough foot traffic in the downtown area. Mr. McCarthy advised that parking is the most important concept in downtown revitalization. It will be addressed through the downtown code, to allow for complimentary parking, to encourage investment in parking by new development. Mr. McCarthy advised of approximately 1,700 parking spaces in the downtown area. With full development of the downtown, he anticipates the need for 3,000 parking spaces and the need for structured parking. Structured parking will have to be designed as mixed-use. Density and height will also be encouraged as part of a flexible urban code.

Commissioner Smith expressed doubt that the level of traffic reduction indicated by the video presentation would ever take place. He advised of no “decent north / south arteries anywhere on the west side of town.” In response to a comment, Mr. McCarthy reviewed demographics in Carson City. He noted the purpose of the video to stimulate interest. Mr. Plemel advised that the Washington Street concept will not be analyzed initially. In terms of the prior traffic modeling, he explained that Carson Street backs up now because that’s where everyone is directed. The street wouldn’t just be reduced to two lanes without an investment in other street improvements so that four lanes of traffic still flow continuously north and south. In terms of the traffic model, Mr. Plemel advised that the 2004 master plan was based on 2002 numbers. Just four years ago, build out was based on the demographer’s estimate of 80,000 people in Carson City by the year 2025. The estimate has since been reduced to 66,000 in 2025. Mr. Plemel advised that the model indicates “lots of capacity” on Roop and Stewart Streets at build out. He acknowledged that the possibility “still remains to be seen” but advised there is some rationale to the concept working in conjunction with other improvements.

Chairperson Drews called for public comment. (6:21:09) Debbie Barham, owner of DeBug Computers, expressed concern over parking on Washington Street. In response to a question, Mr. Plemel advised there is no plan for the City to purchase properties. The video presentation is conceptual. Mr. Plemel advised that gas stations are a use that rely on pure traffic volumes. Once the freeway is complete, he anticipates gas stations will tend to relocate. Ms. Barham commended the video presentation. In response to a question, Mr. McCarthy emphasized that the video presentation is only conceptual. Parking will be built into the overall, long-term design. Opportunistic parking will be strategically located and people will have to be guided to parking.

Chairperson Drews inquired as to the rezoning of services off Carson Street. Mr. Plemel suggested this would be something to consider in the downtown area generally. Chairperson Drews discussed the importance of ensuring such uses as service stations for “local traffic.” He called for additional comments and, when none were forthcoming, thanked the gentlemen for their presentation. Mr. McCarthy advised that the commission would be kept informed of any future iterations of the conceptual presentation. In response to a question, he anticipates that the improvements could reach all the way to Fifth Street. In response to a further question, he anticipates that the City will be responsible for capital improvements. There will be additional costs and funding will have to be identified. Mr. McCarthy didn’t anticipate the burden falling on the property owner at this time.

G. FUTURE COMMISSION ITEMS (6:27:07) - Discussion took place regarding the tentative September agenda. In response to a question, Commissioner Ossa advised that CLG grant applications are due December 1st.

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H. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

H-1. COMMENTS AND STATUS REPORTS FROM STAFF (6:28:00) - None.

H-2. COMMENTS AND STATUS REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS (6:28:09) -
Chairperson Drews reported on a telephone conversation, which took place earlier in the day, with Gary Sheerin in regard to the plaques at Silver Oak.

I. ACTION ON ADJOURNMENT (6:29:05) - Commissioner Baker moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 p.m. Commissioner Ossa seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

The Minutes of the August 10, 2006 Carson City Historic Resources Commission meeting are so approved this 14th day of September, 2006.

MICHAEL DREWS, Chair