



**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
ACTION SUMMARY MINUTES
February 24, 2015 6:00 PM
Civic Auditorium
400 N. Douty Street**

SPECIAL MEETING - 6:00 PM

Town Hall Meeting

ROLL CALL BY THE CITY CLERK:

Mayor Russ Curry called the town hall meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Justin Mendes, Francisco Ramirez, Gary Pannett, David Ayers, Russ Curry

/./ . 0-0.

FLAG SALUTE:

Mayor Curry led the flag salute.

/./ . 0-0.

1. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:

- A.** Staff report regarding potential changes to City Ordinances including ancillary uses and where hotels, furniture stores, large medical offices, theaters and banks are allowed.

City Manager Darrel Pyle briefly discussed the purpose of this meeting stems from requests from developers to operate in zones that are currently not permitted pursuant to city ordinances. Community Development Director Darlene Mata provided a Power Point presentation outlining the current issues pertaining to secondary/ancillary uses, hotels, furniture stores, large medical offices, theaters, and banks.

/./ . 0-0.

- B.** Public comment and Council discussion regarding potential changes to City Ordinances including ancillary uses and where hotels, furniture stores, large medical offices, theaters and banks are allowed. A maximum of five minutes is allowed for each speaker.

Dave Jones would like the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Hanford to take more active roles in improving and strengthening the businesses rather than change the ordinances.

Michael Semas was on the committee that originally established the zoning ordinances and stated their goal was to direct traffic in to the downtown area and to control the growth of Hanford.

Bob Ramos commented on the general plan update committee, and he believes there is more for them to discuss. He agrees that larger medical facilities should be a permitted use downtown, and the theater in the mall should be allowed to stay even if it is vacant past six months.

Bill Raven stated that competition is healthy for businesses. Hanford needs more full service hotels and motels like other areas. If a bank can support a second location, then they should be allowed to have satellite locations. The City needs to draw people in to the community with better signage.

Glenda Dwyer believes these issues are going to the Council too fast and thought there would be more discussions with the citizens advisory committee. She supports downtown and would like requests to be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Chris White supports the current zoning restrictions to protect downtown.

Shaka Sudds stated that there is no culture downtown and disagrees that the community supports the historical structures. She also commented that parking is a big problem downtown and too many businesses come and go. The area could improve by allowing other businesses downtown. Everything needs to be looked over, but not everything necessarily needs to change.

Claudia Cordeiro, a representative of Best Western Inn, expressed her concern about additional hotels when there is low occupancy. There should be more research before allowing another hotel.

Wendy Raygoza, President of Main Street Hanford expressed her goal to work as a team to revitalize downtown.

Jan Gray reported on Main Street Hanford's meeting. They support changing the ordinance to allow larger medical facilities downtown. They want furniture stores to remain downtown, but support a compromise on allowing more square footage for businesses that carry a small section of furniture in other zones. They want the ordinance regarding movie theaters to remain the same and would like a stadium style theater downtown. She stated that full service hotels are needed due to more events in Hanford. Full service banks should stay downtown but be allowed to have satellite locations. They would like to see the city more involved in recruiting and attracting downtown businesses and look at incentives to entice businesses to locate downtown.

Shelly Talbert from Main Street Hanford commented on the difficulty of small business owners to operate downtown. The proposed changes will impact downtown and should be reviewed thoughtfully. She is on the citizen advisory committee and would like these issues to go back to them for additional discussions.

Ray Mitchell is concerned about a hotel that could have a convention center and would allow whatever events they want.

Michael Mayer, an optometrist, commented on the ancillary uses, specifically Costco wanting an optometry use. He believes professionals have kept downtown alive and they need to be kept downtown.

Geary Galusha, a Board member of the Chamber of Commerce stated they represent businesses all over Hanford and the ordinances impact all of them.

Darrell Kirby, an optometrist, stated that they are a key part of drawing people in to shop downtown.

Jeff Garcia commented on the poor economy as a reason why downtown has struggled, but the economy is changing so modifying the ordinances now could negatively impact downtown.

Craig Johnson, owner of Salmon's Furniture, stated that he had to rebuild his store downtown after it burned down. He stated that there should possibly be some changes, but they should be made by the committee and that there is no hurry.

Paula Lehn of FAST Credit Union supports competition but states that they did not have a fair playing field on where they were allowed to locate. The zoning kept them at their location even though they wanted to go elsewhere, but this has helped them make downtown better. The zoning has kept downtown beautiful.

John Lehn would like the committee to discuss these issues further before any revisions are made.

Rob Welch stated that downtown is not as viable as it should be and that changes to zoning would make it worse.

John Zumwalt stated that after 20 years we need to look at what works and what can be made better and what doesn't work at all. This should not be done by piecemeal, but as a comprehensive change. He believes full service hotels are needed but will likely not go downtown without assistance in a public/private partnership. A theater downtown would also need a public/private partnership to develop there, and if that is not possible then the restriction should be lifted. Ancillary uses need to be fixed in the ordinances due to conflicting language and outdated information.

Shelly Barker commented on MTV filming in Hanford and featuring downtown businesses.

Jessica Staley, downtown business owner, expressed her concern as a parent and wants a lively downtown and doesn't want to go to Visalia for shopping. The ordinances have worked and enjoys the quality of downtown. She wants signs to help promote downtown businesses.

A representative from the Comfort Inn said that they chose downtown because of its' location and has concerns about the impact on businesses downtown if the ordinances are changed.

Dan Chin stated that a previous City Council determined policies needed to be made to protect downtown. If the current Council believes in that same vision then they need to reinforce that goal and have a viable downtown.

Joann Doerter, General Manager for the Hanford Mall, noted the large investment in that mall when it was built and continues to do so but they do struggle. She favors competition because it is good for businesses. Downtown is beautiful but businesses are closed in evenings or weekends, so people will shop elsewhere for what is convenient. The Council represents all of Hanford and not just downtown and those businesses need help too, so the Council needs to consider zoning amendments.

City Manager Darrel Pyle commented on the same pressures as 25 years ago from new development, so staff is trying to address those concerns by bringing these issues to the Council for direction. We are operating under the premise of "red carpet" and not "red tape", but the ordinances are filled with "red tape" preventing developers from bringing new businesses to Hanford. The City Council directed these issues to a citizens advisory committee for their review and recommendations, then the City Council directed staff to hold this town hall meeting to receive input from the community. Mr. Pyle requested direction from the Council on how to move forward with the six areas of concern regarding ancillary uses, hotels, furniture stores, large medical offices, theaters, and banks.

Staff responded to questions and comments by the City Council.

Council Member Mendes supports an incentive program to support downtown growth. He stated that the current ordinances served their purpose but now in order to have a viable downtown we need to change our strategy. His direction was to remove the restrictions on medical offices and full service hotels to improve development and revenue. The other issues are not as urgent and could be discussed further with the committee. He praised the efforts of downtown Visalia and anyone affiliated with the improvements made there, and appreciates those individuals that are now looking to make improvements in Hanford.

Council Member Ramirez stated that we are stagnant and are trying to move Hanford in the right direction. He is tired of vacant stores and there needs to be coordination with the downtown organizations to work together on how to make improvements and to also look at the big picture which is the entire community.

Council Member Pannett expressed that yes, employees live somewhere other than Hanford, but we seek the best. He stated that full service hotels require large parcels and those facilities would bring in extra business that benefits everyone. Mr. Pannett supports in fill development but the restrictions limit development, and we need to get more creative. A large multiscreen theater cannot fit downtown and requires a huge investment and a lot of land. He expressed concern about out of town property owners that do not improve their properties which causes vacancies and blight. The ordinances were a good decision 25 years ago, but need to see what works now and look at opportunities to enhance all of Hanford.

Vice Mayor Ayers stated that the zoning ordinances have been and continue to be successful as seen by substantial investments made by downtown businesses. He agrees that some tweaks need to be made to make the ordinances for ancillary uses more consistent, but does not want changes regarding professional businesses or furniture stores. He believes there is an opportunity for amendments for medical offices and is also willing to increase the square footage allowed for big box stores to sell furniture. The theater in the mall should be allowed to stay if it stays in the same footprint. If the Council is wanting a theater downtown then they are going to need to be willing to make a financial commitment and partnership to make that happen. He would like the motels to be allowed to provide more amenities, and a full service hotel will need a private/public partnership in order to draw a developer downtown, otherwise the Council will need to allow a full service hotel to operate somewhere else. Full service banks should remain downtown, but allow ATM's to be spread throughout town. Mr. Ayers would like the committee to review these issues further.

Mayor Curry thanked the public for their comments. He stated that the downtown is vibrant because of specific businesses, and he only wants to tweak minor parts of the ordinance. He supports incentives to draw businesses downtown.

Mr. Pyle summarized the Council's direction for staff to move forward and draft zoning amendments regarding medical offices and full service hotels. The remaining issues will go back to the citizen advisory committee for further review and be brought back along with the overall zoning update.

./ . 0-0.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Curry adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Gomez
City Clerk

./..0-0.