

**PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SONORA
APRIL 14, 2014
5:30 P.M.**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Sonora was scheduled on this date at 5:30 p.m. in the Sonora City Hall Council Chambers.

The following members were present: Chairman Chris Garnin, and Commissioners Ron Jensen, and John Richardson. Absent were Commissioners John Andersen and George Segarini.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES – Sharon Marovich, Chair of the Tuolumne Heritage Committee, informed Commissioners about the upcoming Keeping Time Historic Preservation Conference, to be held at Columbia State Park on June 20, 2014.

MINUTES –

MOTION: Approve the minutes of the March 10, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting, as mailed.

MOTION: Richardson **SECOND:** Jensen

VOTE: **AYES:** Richardson, Jensen, Garnin (3)
 NOES: (0)
 ABSTAIN: (0)
 ABSENT: Andersen, Segarini (2)

DESIGN REVIEW/SIGN EXCEPTION

1. Continued public hearing for an application by RJ Murdoch, Inc. for First Sonora Shopping Center, LLC/Dunres Group, for design review to include the addition of a parapet along the frontage of the buildings to create space for new signage and approval of a master sign program, including a sign exception for the existing shopping center freestanding sign; located at 130 W. Stockton Street, in a C, Commercial zone; APN: 001-280-08.

Planner, Paula Daneluk, presented the staff report for the proposed Old Sonora Plaza design review and Master Sign Program. The project included three separate approvals; 1) Design Review of a parapet; 2) Approval of a Master Sign Program; 3) Sign exception for a freestanding sign. She informed the Commissioners that the Tuolumne Heritage Committee

comments, stated that the height of the freestanding sign should be lowered, that illuminated signs should be prohibited and the proposed center name “Old Sonora Plaza” should be changed. She also informed Commissioners that Caltrans will not permit the freestanding sign to be placed within their right-of-way so property lines will need to be verified prior to its installation.

Project applicant, Rich Murdock, stated that the owner of the center, Dunres Group and First Sonora Shopping Center, LLC, had recently purchased the property and desires to improve the building facades and signage. The proposal would give the center a more unified look by providing a standard location and design for individual business signs. He stated that he would be in agreement with restricting the signs to “gooseneck lighting” but would also like the option of using “halo” lighting with warm gloves/soft light.

Commissioner Richardson asked if the colors shown on the renderings were the colors that will be used for the project. Rich Murdock verified that they would be.

Commissioner Jensen questioned the height of the proposed parapet. Rich Murdock stated that the height would be 3 feet with a 5 foot peak.

Commissioner Garnin stated that he felt that the proposed freestanding sign needs to be lowered and asked the applicant if he would agree to this. Rich Murdock stated that they would.

Commissioners Richardson and Garnin stated that they felt the signs should not be illuminated and they preferred front lit signs. They also commended the applicant for making much needed improvements to the shopping center.

Chairman Garnin opened the public hearing at 6:15 p.m.

Sharon Marovich, Chair of the Tuolumne Heritage Committee, reiterated their concerns with the proposal. She stressed that the City’s Vision Sonora project highlights the importance of this corridor as a gateway into the historic downtown core. She stated that the proposed freestanding sign should be denied and the applicant should consider a monument sign. She also expressed concerns over the lack of landscaping within the shopping center and encouraged Commissioners to postpone approval of the application.

There being no further public comment, the public hearing was closed at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner Garnin asked the applicant if postponing the project approvals to the May 20, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting would be an issue. Rich Murdock stated that they would like to start construction of the parapets within two weeks and he needs to get the signs ordered.

He also stated that delaying the freestanding sign would not be an issue as they might decide to not install a freestanding sign.

Commissioners discussed the application further.

Commissioner Jensen stated that he did not have a concern with the design of the parapet and he also would approve the “Halo” or “Gooseneck” lighting on the signs with soft light, but he was not ready to make a decision on the proposed freestanding sign.

MOTION: To approve the parapet and the Master Sign Program, based on the findings and conditions within the staff report, with the additional conditions requiring “Halo” or “Gooseneck” Lighting for all signs except for the business logos which can be backlit, allowing the existing Save mart signage to remain and postponing consideration of the freestanding sign, to the May 20, 2014 meeting.

MOTION: Jensen

SECOND: Richardson

VOTE: **AYES:** Jensen, Richardson, Garnin (3)
 NOES: None (0)
 ABSTAIN: None (0)
 ABSENT: Andersen, Segarini (2)

In taking this action, the following findings were made:

1. Does not constitute a special privilege inconsistent with other properties in the vicinity and the same zone; and
2. Is not injurious to the neighborhood and is consistent with the intent of Chapter 15.28 of the Sonora Municipal Code (Signs).

Conditions of Approval Design Review Permit and Master Sign Program

General:

1. The Master Sign Program shall be revised to require “Halo” or “Gooseneck Lighting” of signs with only the logos of businesses to be backlit.
2. Prior to issuance of any new sign permit for the shopping center:

- a. All signs, except the Save mart wall sign, shall be removed or brought into compliance with the provisions of this master sign plan.
 - b. The name of the center shall be changed to a name approved by the Director of Community Development.
3. All penetrations made to interior assemblies during the installation process shall be sealed in such a fashion as to maintain the structural stability and/or flame resistance qualities equal to or greater than the original assemblies which were installed at the time the structures were built.
4. The property owner or authorized applicant, their successors and assigns, will defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the city and its agents, officers, attorneys and employees from any claim, action, or proceedings brought against the city or its agents, officers, attorneys or employees within the applicable statute of limitations to:
 - a. Attack, set aside, void, or annul any action approving an application (including any action to provide environmental clearance in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), by city staff any city planning or advisory agency, any city appeal board, or the city council; or
 - b. Seek damages for property damage or personal injuries resulting from development authorized by the city pursuant to the application. {SMC Section 17.69.010 (Ordinance 776)}

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Community Development Director's Report

Community Development Director, Rachelle Kellogg, provided an update on the Housing Element process and informed the Commissioners that the deadline for the Planning Commission appointment for Commissioner Jensen's position is April 25th. Staff was hopeful that Commissioner Jensen would submit a letter of interest to the Mayor.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m., to the next regular meeting on Monday, May 12, 2014, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachelle Kellogg
Community Development Director