

The Planning Commission of the City of Fort Bragg met in regular session on the above date at 6:00 p.m., in the Fort Bragg Town Hall, 363 N. Main Street, Fort Bragg, and the following items were discussed in the order presented.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **ROLL CALL**

Present: Chair Mark Hannon, Vice Chair Meg Courtney, Commissioners Georgia Lucas and Don Snyder  
Absent: Commissioner Kathleen Johnson  
Staff Present: Linda Ruffing, City Manager; Sean O'Rourke, Planner II; and Nancy Philips, Administrative Secretary

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Moved by Lucas, seconded by Snyder, to approve the March 8, 2006, minutes as written.**

**VOTE: Ayes: Commissioners Courtney, Hannon, Lucas, and Chair Hannon  
Absent: Commissioner Johnson**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

### **CONDUCT OF BUSINESS**

#### **2. Matters from Chair/Commission/Staff**

**Chair Hannon called for a break at 6:04 p.m. to allow the Commission to join the audience. The meeting resumed in a workshop format at 6:07 p.m.**

#### **1. Community Scoping Session for the White Property Annexation and Specific Plan Application**

Ruffing thanked the public for the large turnout at the meeting and explained that the purpose of the scoping session is to exchange information about the project and process. She indicated that there are many opportunities throughout the process for members of the public to let their feelings be known. A Council workshop is scheduled tomorrow night to have a round table discussion with the consultants. She encouraged those interested in receiving emails about meetings pertaining to the White Property to provide their email addresses on the sign-in sheets provided. Ruffing introduced Planner Sean O'Rourke as the City's project manager for the White Property applications. She also introduced City consultants Colette Meunier, Project Manager; Jennifer Craven, Project Planner; and David Clore, Principal, from LSA Associates.

Colette Meunier said that LSA and their subconsultant team were retained by the City to review the specific plan and other studies that the applicant's consultants submitted. LSA will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the White Property and a Municipal Services Review (MSR) for the City. Crane Transportation Group will perform the traffic analysis. The White Property application is for annexation to the City, a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation, and rezoning the property. It also includes a Specific Plan which is a plan for controlled development for a particular area. She went on to explain the MSR, Sphere of Influence (SOI), and annexation process. There will be many opportunities for the public to participate as the process evolves.

Ruffing stated the City has a water permit, but has not secured a permanent license for its Noyo River diversion. The City Council has determined that the license must be secured prior to engaging in any detailed review of water issues associated with the White Property project. The proposed annexation would require a change in the Place of Use Map which must be approved by the State Water Board. The White Property EIR will not be completed until the water issues are sorted out.

Public comment was received from:

- 1) Sean Hogan, project manager for applicant, stated that they have been working on the design for the White Property since the last public scoping session two years ago. Town Hall is the same distance from the Noyo Bridge as from the White Property. The project is to construct 288 residential units, 48 of which would be subsidized housing for low to moderate income residents, 78 units would be small cluster homes on 3,200 square foot lots, and the rest would be single family homes. Many technical reports have been completed and a traffic study is being finalized.
- 2) Sandy Vance, project designer, reviewed the design process in addressing the opportunities and constraints of the property. Information from technical reports, neighboring land uses, topography, wetlands, etc., were all considered in designing this project. He noted that it is also important to preserve the character of Fort Bragg. John Reynen, applicant for the project, told Vance that the village green was not big enough, so they took out units and added more landscaping.
- 3) Robert Slaughter stated that children's voices from the White Property subdivision would be heard all day at his nearby residence in the Ocean Lake Mobile Home Park. There are two development projects proposed on the south side of town. He calculated that the combined population for these projects would add 2,000 residents to a town of 6,000. He said that he was concerned about water, employment, noise, and traffic.
- 4) David Jensen noted that other major development projects are proposed in Fort Bragg and inquired about how they would dovetail with the White Property project.
- 5) John Warmerdam, whose family owns Ocean Lake Mobile Home Park, said that he had three major concerns. The addition of some 500 cars would make it more difficult for his residents to access the highway. His residents are used to a quiet and stable atmosphere, and he hopes that proposed setbacks adjacent to his property are increased. There is a potential for the lake in the mobile home park to create a nuisance for new families with small children. How will storm water runoff be routed? The culvert adjacent to the mobile home park already overflows during heavy storms, but Caltrans claims that it is of sufficient capacity and operates as designed.
- 6) Eric Bloom stated that he moved to Airport Road to enjoy rural life. In Ukiah and Fort Bragg, the two largest cities in the County, there are an average of three to five persons per household. For the number of units proposed, this would mean 849 – 1,415 people.
- 7) Marilyn Murphy asked that impact of the development to the Fort Bragg airport (a private airstrip) be considered. It is a half mile away from the property. A aviation easement that runs with the land would be the best way to avoid problems with dense development under the flight path
- 8) Mike Helm agreed with comments about traffic and increased population. Before the City considers new development, it needs to plan to replace the sewer collection system. Other cities like Petaluma and Arcata are pursuing state-of-the-art systems.
- 9) Claudia Finnerty said that she enjoys the one to five acre minimums in the vicinity and the neighborhood space around them. This project would result in 20-29% increase in the population in an area where they already cannot get on the highway or through town without numerous stops. High density development should instead be planned near schools and public services. If the proposal were to comply with the General Plan it would be less than 250 units. This lovely coastal town will disappear and look like Windsor.
- 10) Andy Harney noted that the proposed lots are smaller than those allowed in the City and inquired whether this zoning would be allowed in other locations. He was concerned about traffic and pedestrian access on narrow streets and the highway.

- 11) Jack Beer said that the current sewer system does not work after a big holiday weekend. Sewage is not properly treated before being dumped in the ocean. There is not enough water to serve City users now. Taking more water out of streams impacts fishing. We have been talking for years about water reservoirs. Secondary roads have become primary due to heavy traffic. There used to be an auto derby on the property, and cars would kick up Native American artifacts. A price of \$350,000 won't even buy you a trailer in Fort Bragg right now. Beer said that he did not want to say "not in my backyard," but it is in his front yard. Trailers would be better as they can rip them out as they did in the harbor. Rather than building apartments on the property they should build schools and convert existing school property to residential. People who come here need work so this will become a retirement community. Houses should be zoned R1 and priced so locals can work on them instead of prefab houses so the profit goes out of town.
- 12) Pam Hudson said that she was fearful the City would not survive because the hospital and schools are not supported. The tax base of this project would make a huge difference. Where she comes from the average someone lives in a town is three years, but here you have second and third generations of a family. It is the chicken or the egg syndrome - we need businesses where people can work and people to support the businesses. She encourages this forum for community input to be held as much as possible.
- 13) Chuck Greenberg agreed that salaries are not commensurate with housing prices. He usually represents Habitat for Humanity, but tonight represents only himself. There are six properties for sale in Fort Bragg for less than \$500,000. Buyers need to make over \$100,000 a year to afford one. There is an acute shortage of workforce housing. Seniors may want to sell their homes and downsize but need something smaller with an affordable price to allow them to do so and free-up their larger home to a new family. This project has 48 affordable units. There is nowhere else to put it. The Mill Site must undergo remediation, planning, and development. That does not help us now. The City had a fairly modest annual population increase until recently when people began leaving. Even at 1% growth per year, another 15-20 housing units must be generated. This is seven years of build-out demand and seven years of process. Neighbors have legitimate concerns, but there are broader issues to consider.
- 14) Barbara Clark said that economic development is very important for the community to survive. It is hard to draw businesses here when there is no housing. This project would give people a reason to come, and make an investment viable. She encouraged the community to become educated about the project. The only way we have enough land for our needs is to plan for high density. Open space in Mendocino County is extremely limited.
- 15) Michael Verdi noted that there are no community services near the site. What will increase proportionately is crime. Mexican gangs are operating in town, and low cost housing allows them to move here. Affordability is the biggest red herring of the project. The City has no plans for more senior housing. As a phone company employee, he can tell you how many lines are put in one apartment. Service industry workers cannot afford even the smallest apartment by themselves. There is mention of a timeshare being built to the south.
- 16) Bill Maslach said that the project is out of character for Fort Bragg. Industrial and commercial zoning between Cleone and Fort Bragg must be addressed as a whole. Pedestrian access is horrible. There is an opportunity for the City to consider allowing more second units.
- 17) Robert Zetwick questioned the height of houses. The view from his property would be of a tall wall of houses. Story poles would help to show how tall the houses would be.
- 18) Steve Wuoltee stated that he was concerned about the impact of high density on existing farms. Currently there is a buffer between farms and residences. If this property is annexed, it will create new opportunities for development in the northern area. The City should consider services needed in this area and the potential for it to stimulate new development to the north.

- 19) Dan Gjerde, Councilmember, said that several months ago he tried to convince Council to take into account development within the current City boundaries. There are many undeveloped or under-developed acres along the west side of the highway. What is the impact when they are developed? The City should not just look at the percentage of growth in traffic for this site, but the numbers when all of Fort Bragg is developed. A three-lane road can handle 28,000 – 29,000 per day. Some days we have 20,000 now. Removing parking from Main Street to accommodate traffic would be one of the worst things to happen to this town. People would be segregated east or west from the other side of town.
- 20) George Reinhardt introduced himself as being a member of Noyo Headlands Unified Design Group and the Coast Energy Task Force. He asked whether growth is inevitable. In an era of global change, it is no longer safe to make that assumption. This development does not have proper solar orientation. The General Plan addresses transportation and development of renewable energies. What kind of growth do we want? If there is a bike lane it will be a spooky ride to bump on concrete to come to town. This would be a beautiful site for greenhouses, a demonstration farm. Think about public health and safety, walkable communities, solar energy. We can deal with water issues with catch systems and different ways to treat water. The proposal calls for a few low income homes and incredibly expensive homes. That does not work for everyone. He would like to see local self reliance and local power.
- 21) Tina Fabula supported Reinhardt's comments, adding that new housing should not rely on power sources that might go away. She attended the Smart Growth workshop held recently by the City and remembers that presenters cautioned about Smart Growth projects in disguise. This is not a Smart Growth development unless it is redesigned to address the pinch point of the Pudding Creek Bridge. High density housing is important, but it is also important where it is built.
- 22) Ryan Perkins reflected that people were complaining about outsiders coming to buy houses in Fort Bragg. It is already happening. Over the last 15 years increasing housing prices have driven people out of the area. The White Property would help in that if someone buys there at top dollar they will not buy elsewhere in Fort Bragg. Police and teachers would be able to afford a place in town. Traffic concerns can be addressed in the project. With the Georgia-Pacific location, the community cannot even agree on removing foundations. Oak Street needs improvement before development could occur east of town. There is no property south of town.
- 23) Robert Hartland encouraged the developer to consider long term development and how it would sustain itself. How should runoff be captured and stored? The developer should work with Reinhardt to come up with an acceptable development proposal and garner more support.
- 24) Jeff Warner said that he compared the 1990 and 2000 census figures, and the City lost 300 people. During the same period of time 250 housing units were built. The demographics of Fort Bragg do not support this project. This development would cause an additional 2,500 trips per day which is a high impact on a narrow road. Signalization is needed at both Airport and Pudding Creek Roads. The school population has decreased by 400 students since 2000. There was a movie that said "If you build it, they will come." He does not think that is going to happen. There is no way to mitigate the traffic impact for this section of the highway. EIRs have a tendency to bend over backwards to try to mitigate all the problems. The outcome should be that the project does not move forward.
- 25) Amy Wynn remarked that she was continuously surprised by the savvy of the community and its environmental concerns. She said that she would prefer to see a Smart Growth project outside of the City's pinch points with pedestrian-oriented development and close to schools. The project is a nice combination of density and open space. The City should look at alternatives for sewage treatment. She stated that she knows of three young professionals in their 20's and 30's that are able to live in Fort Bragg because they live in illegal second units.

- 26) Dan Neil asked about the boundaries of the SOI. His prime concern is the circulation pattern. There may be 650 cars with this development, how many more in the future? There will be 70 homes with premium views for \$300,000 to \$350,000 minimum. Instead of cul-de-sacs there could be one-way roads. He said that he endorses what Gjerde said. His third concern is water. Will the developer be allowed to put in landscaping wells that could draw down the water table?
- 27) Meg Courtney, Coast Energy Task Force, said that she would like to see mention of conservation or alternative energy. Council recently agreed to participate in the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. The City must consider greenhouse gas emissions for everything in its sphere and not degrading the environment. This project, in terms of traffic emissions, could have an enormous impact. The Surf and Sand is setting a precedent by converting the entire motel to solar. Lots of things can be done that we need to be thinking about.
- 28) Nancy Smith stated the number of rooms for each hotel in the area and relayed her concerns about traffic impacts for this project. City Council should have looked at traffic when hotels were built and enlarged. She does not have confidence in them now. A signal light will not solve traffic problems.

Ruffing called for a show of hands to see who else wanted to speak.

**Break at 9:02 p.m. Meeting resumed at 9:10 p.m.**

- 29) Playalina Nelson said that she just turned 26 and has a job as a professional. There are not too many 20-something people in the Fort Bragg area. There are also not many professional jobs. She has lived in other areas where she could not afford to raise her kids. Money comes into a town and pushes those people out. She asked the community to consider how they envision Fort Bragg. Who would you like to live here? It will be someone with a lot of money, with a decent-paying job in town, or someone moving from the bay area who has a lot of money to invest. She has a decent job but cannot afford to pay \$350,000 to \$400,000 for a home in that subdivision. The reason people are leaving is because people like her cannot afford to live here.
- 30) Cynthia Bloom started by saying that she was a fisheries biologist but does not represent her employer. Her concern is endangered species at the Noyo River and the lack of water at certain times of year. Where will people ride horses if the White Property is developed? New development should match the rural area. Where do you plan to stop annexation? She requested a full disclosure on who will make money on this development – realtors, mortgagers.
- 31) Angela Harney expressed concern about the loss of rural character of the neighborhood. Caltrans referenced in the County's General Plan that traffic is already at Level of Service E during peak hours. It is treacherous to cross in front of the White Property. Pedestrian and equestrian access need to be addressed. The cattle, horses, and gardens in the field in recent years contrasts with the proposed development. Keep it zoned agriculture and grow local food and livestock. Another alternative would be to keep the eastern half of the property zoned as is and the west zoned R2 and R5 to the City line. The project is inconsistent with the Housing Element in the General Plan which requires 41% low income housing versus the 17% proposed. Other concerns include light pollution, endangered species, water, traffic, and sewer.

Meunier noted that the public is welcome to contact Planner O'Rourke if they have other comments or questions. Tomorrow night there will be a special City Council meeting on the White Property. Ruffing thanked the public for the great turnout and useful comments. She noted that the meetings will be taped, and minutes will be posted on the City's website.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Chair Hannon adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.**