

## GENERAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 6, 2003

The General Development Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on November 6, 2003 at 10:56 a.m.

### COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dennis Kavanaugh  
Kyle Jones  
Claudia Walters

### COUNCIL PRESENT

Rex Griswold

### OFFICERS PRESENT

Paul Wenbert

1. Discuss and consider adding posting and notification requirements for Design Review Board meetings.

Chairman Kavanaugh noted that the subject of posting and notification requirements for the Design Review Board was discussed earlier in the morning at the Council Study Session. He added that a staff memo provided to the committee outlines the posting and notification requirements of other cities in the Valley.

Acting Planning Director Dorothy Chimel advised that the purpose of a posting or notification would be to inform property owners that an action was going to take place at a public meeting of the Design Review Board regarding a property or development in their neighborhood. She noted that the information provided in other cities includes a wide range of requirements, from posting and notifications by mail to the fact that other cities, including Mesa, do not require either. Ms. Chimel stated that the "public" part of a public meeting or hearing included input from citizens that often proved valuable. She recalled that a recent public hearing for the Coyote Landings project resulted in a marked change to the original plans, which required that the Planning and Zoning Board review the project for a second time. Ms. Chimel added that as a result of citizen participation, the Coyote Landings project was greatly improved, but the process did require additional time. She indicated that Gilbert's requirements appeared to be similar to the procedures being considered by Mesa. Ms. Chimel reported that Tempe, Glendale, Peoria and Phoenix have no notification requirements for Design Review Board meetings. She added that Mesa has now placed pre-submittal agendas online and staff makes every effort to list the upcoming cases online, so that citizens with computer access know what is being considered.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters as to whether an existing sign could be updated to add notification regarding the Design Review Board, Ms. Chimel stated that implementing a posting or notification would not require a great deal of time, but would require

coordination on the part of the applicant. She noted that cases continued by the Planning and Zoning Board become problematic due to the fact that questions of land use must be considered prior to consideration of the aesthetics.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that requiring additional signs to be posted may overwhelm a small site; that a postcard notification would be economical; that a postcard or letter notification would be the responsibility of the applicant; that staff has developed examples of letters for use by applicants and could provide the same information in a postcard format; that staff could structure the timing for mailing a notification into the process; that complaints are seldom received relative to citizens being notified of meetings, but citizens often complain when a meeting notice was not provided; and that adding a notification requirement would not add additional time to the approval process, but citizen participation in the Design Review process could result in longer meetings.

Committeemember Jones recalled that at the earlier Study Session, members of the Design Review Board expressed concern that citizens would be present to speak on items other than the aesthetic issues that were before the Board. He advised that the chairperson would be responsible for ensuring that citizens spoke only to those issues being considered by the Board.

Chairman Kavanaugh stated that the agendas and speaker cards could detail the purpose of the Design Review Board and the subjects that could properly be addressed at the meeting. He noted that adequate instructions should minimize efforts by the public to discuss topics that are not relevant to the duties of the Design Review Board.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Jones, to recommend to the Council that applicants scheduled to appear before the Design Review Board be required to provide notification to the neighborhood by mail indicating the meeting date, time and location, with the following additional stipulations: that the "neighborhood" is defined as individual homeowners located within 300 feet and registered neighborhoods and homeowners' associations located within 1000 feet of the proposed development; that notification is to be addressed to individual homeowners and to the contact person for registered neighborhoods and homeowners' associations; that the notification can be in the form of a letter or postcard at a time in the process to be determined by the Planning Department; and that the notification process not include a posting element.

Carried unanimously.

2. Discuss and consider improvements to Preliminary Plan Review Team process.

Chairman Kavanaugh advised that staff was present to review the Preliminary Plan Review Team (PPRT) process, and he expressed the opinion that many positive changes have been implemented in the past several years.

Acting Planning Director Dorothy Chimel thanked the Committee for recognizing the efforts of the group. She stated that the PPRT team, comprised of representatives from Fire, Building Construction, Planning, and Development Engineering, provides "upfront" information on development standards that enables customers to make good business decisions. Ms. Chimel recalled the history of incorporating Planning into the Development Services Department and the process used to establish the formalized PPRT team. She stated that the objective of the

PPRT process is to provide applicants with as much information as possible and the Preliminary Plan Review Team pamphlet, entitled "Services and Frequently Asked Questions" (See Attachment 1.) is designed to market these services. Ms. Chimel noted that the number of cases before Planning and Zoning and the Design Review Board has increased dramatically in 2002/2003, but the PPRT has made the process more efficient and has resulted in the City of Mesa receiving much better products.

Building Safety Director Terry Williams reported that the PPRT approach has been in place for two years, and that now was an appropriate time to conduct an internal review to evaluate the effectiveness of the process and to determine ways in which the process can be improved. He noted that a management team is in place to review several processes, including the PPRT. Mr. Williams stated that PPRT solicits customer evaluations through the use of a survey form at the time the process is completed, but the internal review will include an in-person interview with some customers who have participated in the process during the past nine months. He expressed the opinion that the PPRT process could be merged with the function of the development coordinator, a position that provides assistance to certain types of businesses or new businesses in the City of Mesa and guides them through the process.

Mr. Williams noted that successful implementation of the Tidemark software could be expanded to include having the PPRT reports available online, which would reduce the possibility of errors or omissions in the process. He added that this change, which is in the process of being implemented, would insure that both the customer and the core plans examiner receive the same information.

Committeemember Walters expressed her support for the changes that have been implemented and noted that not only have the concerns of the committee been addressed, staff has also exceeded the committee's expectations with the improvements that have been initiated.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Williams said that based on his experience with other municipalities, the Mesa City Council has a higher level of involvement with the various processes. He stated the opinion that the level of involvement was appropriate, and he added that the City does an excellent job in soliciting and utilizing public input. Mr. Williams noted that the downside of public involvement was that the overall time for project approvals could often be lengthened, but he added that staff continues to seek methods to shorten and streamline the approval process.

Committeemember Jones expressed appreciation to staff for the progress to date, but he noted that a continuing effort would be required to improve Mesa's image regarding the project approval process. He stated that a number of changes have been implemented, and he looked forward to future progress reports.

Mr. Williams stated that staff would continue their efforts in this area, and he advised that an update on the survey and proposed improvements would be provided to the committee in approximately three months.

In response to a request from Councilmember Griswold, Ms. Chimel introduced Principal Planner Tom Albright who, in turn, introduced his team consisting of: Senior Building Plans Examiner Ray Thimesch, Senior City Plans Examiner Les Broughton, Planner II Anthony Farier and City Plans Examiner Roxanne Hale.

Chairman Kavanaugh noted that this item was an update and no Committee action was required.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the General Development Committee meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the General Development Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of November 2003. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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Attachment