

**TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY
JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION/PARKS, RECREATION
AND CULTURAL COMMISSION MINUTES
May 12, 2015**

Chair Bridenstine called the regular meeting of the Yucca Valley Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners present were:

Jeff Drozd, Commissioner, Planning Commission
Jeff Evans, Commissioner, Planning Commission
Charles McHenry, Commissioner, Planning Commission
Steve Whitten, Vice Chair, Planning Commission
Vickie Bridenstine, Chair, Planning Commission

Gregory Hill, Commissioner, Parks Recreation and Cultural Commission
Eric Quander, Commissioner, Parks Recreation and Cultural Commission
Laurine Silver, Commissioner, Parks Recreation and Cultural Commission
Ed Keesling, Vice Chair, Parks Recreation and Cultural Commission
Randy Eigner, Chair, Parks Recreation and Cultural Commission

Town of Yucca Valley Staff present were:

Shane Stueckle, Deputy Town Manager
Alex Qishta, Project Engineer
Sue Earnest, Community Services Manager
Diane Olsen, Planning Technician
Allison Brucker, Planning Secretary

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Bridenstine

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION

That the Commission approve the agenda.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Steven Whitten, Vice Chairman
SECONDER: Jeff Evans, Commissioner
AYES: Drozd, Evans, McHenry, Whitten, Bridenstine, Eigner, Hill, Keeling, Quander, Silver

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON CONSENT AGENDA**PUBLIC HEARINGS****1. ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (ATP)**

An overview of the Town's adopted plans, policies and implementation actions and available funding for the Active Transportation Program.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle and Project Engineer Qishta provided the staff report. The intent of this item was to discuss potential projects which could be submitted to the Active Transportation Program, ATP, a competitive grant program offered by the State of California. Staff presented potential projects which staff thought had the best potential to score well and requested the Commission's input and direction. Staff had also actively advertised the meeting to solicit input from the community.

Staff identified four potentially high scoring projects which would encourage students walking to and from school. Those project included two projects near the Yucca Valley High School, one consisting of the installation of curb, gutter, handicap ramps and sidewalks on Onaga Trail from Palm Avenue West to Acoma Avenue, and the other consisting of the installation of curb, gutter, handicap ramps and sidewalks on Sage Avenue for Onaga Trail to Joshua Drive; one project near the Yucca Valley Elementary School consisting of the installation of curb, gutter, handicap ramps and sidewalk on Pueblo Trail from Hopi East to Deer Trail; and one near La Contenta Middle School consisting of the installation of curb, gutter, handicap ramps and sidewalks on and possible road widening on Yucca Trail from Palomar/Avalon East to La Contenta Road. Staff also provided an overview of how proposed projects would be scored.

Staff identified a potential recreational trail project, but they felt that it would be a low scoring project for the purposes of this grant. The specific trail project identified was along Yucca Creek, a major flood control channel from approximately Sage Avenue to the Boys and Girls club. The issues which would potential make this a low scoring project included the length of time required to reach an agreement with the San Bernardino Flood Control District, who own that portion of Yucca Creek, and the difficulty finding a trail head location. There is currently no pedestrian crossing for the creek at Sage Avenue. The Town will have to look into establishing a parking area near the Coyote BMX site, a pedestrian crossing across Sage Avenue and maintenance road access. Staff is working on this project, and while the lack of right of way and other issues make this a potentially low scoring project, long term this is the first multi-use trail project which can be implemented. Secondly and other potential Safe Routes to School project down Sage would allow the currently SRTS projects to link into the potential recreation trail project. Staff recommended keeping these projects as a high priority even if they are not successful with the grant.

Staff spoke about the potential for dedicated bike lanes. Dedicated bike lanes required a certain amount of road width, and most of the streets in Town developed under County jurisdiction do not have the necessary width. Also many of our road would need to be paved or repaired to make the suitable for bicycle use.

Chair Bridenstine opened the meeting to public comment on item 1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEM 1

Gary Benedict, Joshua Tree, spoke in support of the potential projects. He was a long time Yucca Valley resident, and his son and daughter are current residents. He said that when his children were growing up in Yucca Valley, he didn't allow them to walk to school. He said that many of the Towns roads are unsafe to let your kids walk on. He spoke in support of the proposed Safe Routes to School projects and noted that Busses are not available for students living within two miles of the school. He noted that visibility on Yucca Trail in the early mornings is poor and that makes walking to La Contenta Middle School dangerous. He also spoke in support of connecting Safe Routes to School routes between schools.

END PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Quander asked staff how many students would be using the proposed routes. Staff said that the current number of students walking varied from 3 students walking to La Contenta to about 40 walking to the High School. Staff said that if the Yucca Trail improvements were put in, they would expect the number of students walking to La Contenta to increase from 3 to 15.

Commissioner Quander also asked how these improvements would affect the disadvantaged in the community. Staff said that the grant application provides specific standards to established disadvantage communities and that some grant money was set aside specifically for disadvantaged communities. Staff will be going through the criteria for disadvantaged communities, including the percentage of students receiving free meals, to see if we meet them.

Commissioner Hill asked staff about the grant process and asked when staff was first made aware of the grant opportunity. Staff said that they were made aware of the grant during the first week of April.

Chair Bridenstine asked staff if the four projects identified were able to stand alone. Staff said that there was no maximum number of applications, and that the projects were able to stand alone.

Commissioner Evans said that the Safe Route to School improvements from Sage to the High School have been used by students and made traveling that area easier, but there are still issues on Onaga moving toward Yucca L, as there are some students walking in that area. Commissioner Evans asked staff if we have any numbers on pedestrian fatalities to support the grants question about how the proposed projects will reduce pedestrian fatalities. Staff said that they are currently working on gather information on pedestrian fatalities, but they were currently not aware of any happening in those areas.

Commissioner Whitten asked if the grant process varied from year to year or if it stayed the same. Staff said that this was cycle 2 of this this grant and that the process is more involved than previously application. Commissioner Whitten about having these kind of project ready to go in advance. Staff said that in recent experience additional criteria and added or modified in each grant cycle to make them more competitive. Additionally while keeping these kind of projects shelf ready will be preferable, it takes staffing resources and special studies that we don't currently have the resources to do.

Commissioner Whitten spoke about the emails which were submitted to the Commission provided community input on potential project, and said that Safe Routes to School projects were the most popular, with bike routes, trails and improved bus stops following. He also noted that there should be some consideration of the gaps in the sidewalks along Highway 62, and that to his knowledge the highways are the only locations with pedestrian fatalities. He said that Safe Routes to School should be the first priority with the sidewalks on Hwy 62 as the second, and that moving forward the Town should be careful about giving up space which might be needed later. Commissioner Whitten also said that the Town should look into trails which connect to our outer communities or merge with trails belonging to our neighboring communities. He also said that he would like to see more pedestrian improvements in the Paradise area.

Commissioner Quander said that it would wonderful to see safe walking routes to the identified bus stops in the Paradise area.

Commissioner Drozd also suggested that a lot of grants referred to free or reduced lunches. Staff said that they would check with the school district to get the correct numbers for free or reduce cost meals.

Commissioner McHenry asked staff about the possibility of putting in a cross walk across Yucca Trail heading South near La Contenta or a School Zone on Yucca Trail to reduce speeds while school is in session. Staff said that there are a number of issues on Yucca Trail. It has the highest traffic volume in town other than Hwy 62, and recent changes in traffic patterns have effected certain intersections. Staff is discussing evaluating Yucca Trail in both the short and long term. School zones can only be established adjacent to school property, so a school zone is not possible for that section of Yucca Trail, and that the installation of a cross walk requires traffic control

measure and ADA access. Currently the County has said that the Yucca Trail/La Contenta intersection does not meet the requirements for a four way stop. That intersection will continue to be monitored as part of the effort to bring safety measure in Town.

Commissioner Evans said that he had appreciation for off road routes, and noted that the grant talked about enhancing health. He asked what the current and future plans were for that kind of project.

Staff said that outdoor recreational activities is commonly tied into health. Staff provided an overview of potential trail projects as shown in the Master Trail Plan. Staff noted that many communities implement these kind of trail master plans along with development. Yucca Valley hasn't had the kind of development which would allow us to do that, and prior to incorporation the County did not lay out a trail plan for this area.

Chair Bridenstine spoke in support of a multi-use trail along Yucca Creek, and if the Town was able to connect it up Sage it would allow us to connect the recreational facilities such as the pool, the Community Center, Brehm Park, Tri-Valley Little League and the Girls and Boys Club. She would encourage us to do the work ahead of time for this project to make it ready for the next grant opportunity.

Chair Bridenstine opened the meeting to public comment on item 1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEM 1

Gary Benedict, Joshua Tree, spoke in support of trails and bike routes. He said that he was a member of a cycling clubs, and offered to provide letters of support. He spoke in support of a multi-use trail by Yucca Creek, and said that any trails or walking areas you can tie together helps children, adults and visitors. He also suggested North Park as an off road riding and hiking area.

Sheela Hendrix, Yucca Valley, spoke in support of bike lanes. She said she is an avid cyclist and wants to leave Yucca Valley because of the lack of safe areas to ride bicycles. She said the area has a lot of potential, but bike lanes are required.

CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Whitten asked staff to explain the difference between bike routes and bike lanes. Staff said that routes are a limited option, which just marks out a bike route with signs, while bike lanes require enough road width to mark a dedicated lane. Yucca Valley does not have any significant lengths of connecting road way wide enough to create dedicated bike lanes.

MOTION

That the Commissions receive the presentation, and provide input to staff as deemed necessary based upon the presentation, available information and public participation.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]

MOVER: Jeff Evans, Commissioner

SECONDER: Eric Quander, Commissioner

AYES: Drozd, Evans, McHenry, Whitten, Bridenstine, Eigner, Hill, Keeling, Quander, Silver

2. PARADISE PARK PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

A request for authorization to prepare plans and specifications for the Paradise Park playground improvements.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commissions approve the conceptual plans as presented and forwards that recommendation to the Town Council

Project Engineer Qishta and Deputy Town Manager Stueckle provided the staff report. \$260,160 in funds had been allocated for the improvement of Paradise Park. Recreation staff held a Paradise Park Fun Day event on February 7, 2015, and as part of that process surveyed participants in order to obtain feedback on desired improvements at the Park. Staff provided an overview of proposed improvements. Staff also said that while the addition of grass had been a desired improvement in the survey, and that the Town would like to have some portion of turf or sod in all of our parks in the future, the timing for the addition of turf with this improvement project was not ideal. The cost of adding turf and irrigation is high, and the issue of water conservation has to be taken into account given the current drought conditions. Staff had also had some conversations with Commissioners about the possibility of artificial turf, but there were technical issues that made it problematic. Staff’s proposal included a walking trail, park benches, basketball courts, a shade structure by the playground, low intensity lighting and a ball wall.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEM 2

- Susan Simmons, Yucca Valley, spoke in support of shade sails as an alternative to trees.

END PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commissioner Quander, said that this project provides an opportunity to make this park more beautiful and valuable for the community. He approved of Ms. Simmons suggestion of shade sails, and spoke in support of making the space environmentally sustainable. I said that he would like to see some of the funds go to community programs at Paradise Park. Commissioner Quander noted that the proposed walking path might not be long enough for bicycles.

Commissioner Keesling asked staff to clarify the design for the shade structure. He spoke in support of expanding the shaded seating available at the park. He also spoke in support of shade sails rather than trees, and potentially getting artists to design the sails.

Commissioner Eigner, asked if there was any shade over the playground equipment, and if providing that had been discussed. Staff said that providing shade over the playground had not been considered for this project because of the size of the area. Commissioner Eigner clarified that he was referring to shade over the equipment only. Staff said that there had been internal discussion about playground equipment and the usability during the summer, and one of the issues discussed was orienting equipment so that the surfaces most commonly touched are not oriented to the west. Staff said that the issue of shade does need to be taken into consideration on future projects. Commissioner Eigner said that shade over playground equipment is a major issue, and expressed concern over the lack of shade over the equipment for this project.

Commissioner Whitten asked if there had been any consideration of making the walking trail a continuous loop. He said he thought having a continuous walking trail would be a valuable addition and thought that would be more valuable than having two basketball courts rather than one. He also expressed concern over the wall ball, and felt it would cause graffiti issues, and said that an area for chalk art might be a good idea. Commissioner Whitten also spoke in support of Xeriscaping to allow for landscaping that didn't require irrigation. He also said that a hard cover for the shade structure was preferable, as soft covers have to be replaced frequently. He also asked staff if there had been any analysis on the type of surface for the walking trail, and staff said that they had determined that concrete was the most appropriate. Commissioner Whitten also asked about adding additional shade or seating near the building in the south east corner of the property.

Community Services Manager Earnest provided some additional information. She stated that the most popular items requested in the survey were shade and grass, but that they understood the challenges associated with that. She also stated that the Recreation department held special events and community outreach at this location to help build a sense of community in the neighborhood. Community Services would like to have some turf at the park at some point in the future, and turf and soft surfaces can help facilitate these kinds of events. Community Services Manager Earnest said that currently, special events are held in the parking lot of the park, and the addition of the two basketball courts would provide a large flat surface, which they could be used for events. She spoke in support of creating a continuous loop trail, and stated that forgoing the ball wall and potentially adding some additional shade would be an option.

Commissioner Whitten also commented on soft surfaces, and said that recycled rubber might be an option.

Community Services Manager Earnest also spoke about the building on the site which serves as a neighborhood center and sheriff's substation. She said that they some small community events at that building, but the building is oriented to the street, not to the park, and if you have an event there it is effectively limited to just that building and the neighboring small parking lot.

Because of this, events are more often held over near the playground area and the large parking lot.

Commissioner Evans spoke in support of the outreach programs at Paradise Park. He said that the efficient use of funds is vital. He said that the current water issues meant that adding turf, although it would be great to have. He spoke in support of adding shade sails and benches. He asked how many people use the two basketball courts at the Community Center, and how many would be expected to use the proposed courts at Paradise Park. He also asked if the wall ball was something which had been asked for by the residents, or if it had been staff's suggestion.

Community Services Manager Earnest said that the wall ball had not been one of the primary suggestions, but had been one of a number of suggestions which did not receive a large number of votes. She also said that basketball courts at the Community Center see a lot of use every night, and that many of the players are from near Paradise Park and walk to the Community Center to use the courts. The basketball courts would also provide a multi-use surface for events.

Commissioner Drozd spoke in support of the creation of a continuous loop trail, and said that the elimination of the ball wall would be the most obvious way to facilitate that.

Commissioner McHenry spoke in support of a continuous loop trail and eliminating the ball wall, and looking into shade sails. He spoke in support of the two basketball courts and said that he would like to see Community Care after school programs again.

Chair Bridenstine spoke in support of a continuous loop trail, and agreed that the ball wall was problematic. She would prefer the addition of shade sails by the benches.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEM 2

- Susan Simmons, Yucca Valley, spoke in support of shade sails as an alternative to trees.

END PUBLIC COMMENTS

MOTION

That the Commission forward the conceptual plan to the Town Council and include the comments from the Commission on the continuously loop pathway, elimination of the ball wall, and shade on the playground equipment, park bench area, and shade sails as an alternative to trees, and the cost effectiveness of two basketball courts.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Jeff Evans, Commissioner

SECONDER: Eric Quander, Commissioner

AYES: Drozd, Evans, McHenry, Whitten, Bridenstine, Eigner, Hill, Keeling, Quander, Silver

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bridenstine adjourned the joint meeting between the Planning Commission and the Parks Recreation and Cultural Commission at 7:38.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bridenstine reconvened the meeting as the Planning Commission’s regular meeting.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

3. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT, CUP 03-95 YUCCA VALLEY RV PARK AMENDMENT 1

A request to add an additional four spaces to an existing recreational vehicle park.

RECOMMENDATION:

Environmental Assessment, EA 02-15: That the Planning Commission finds the project to be exempt from CEQA under Section 15301 class 1 Existing Facilities and:

Conditional Use Permit, CUP 03-95 amendment 1: That the Planning Commission approves Conditional Use Permit, CUP 03-95 amendment #1, approving a total of 16 RV spaces, including spaces 1A through 15, based upon the findings contained within the staff report and the recommended conditions of approval.

STAFF REPORT

Staff stated that they had received a written request that the Public Hearing be continued to a later meeting. Staff’s recommendation was to open the item and continue IT to the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEM 3

- None

END PUBLIC COMMENTS

MOTION

Commissioner Whitten moved that the Planning Commission continue the Public Hearing to their next meeting.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Steve Whitten, Commissioner
SECONDER: Jeff Drozd, Commissioner
AYES: Drozd, Evans, McHenry, Whitten, Bridenstine

4. DEVELOPMENT CODE INTERPRETATION

A Director referral to the Planning Commission for a Development Code interpretation of specific accessory structures.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission adopts the Resolution, finding large animal shade structures, as defined and illustrated in the Resolution, are not buildings, and therefore not included in Accessory Building inventories on residential properties.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle provided the staff report. He provided an overview of the item, which was a Director referral to the Planning Commission for a Development Code interpretation of specific accessory structures. During the recent update of the Development Code the section addressing accessory structures, was an area where the Commission received a lot of comments regarding overly restrictive standards. The current issue is that some structures may technically meet the definition of building, in that they have a roof structures supported by columns, but when examined should be considered structures.

Staff requested that the Planning Commission determine if large animal shade structures would be considered buildings or structures. The structures are specifically large animal shade structures that contain less than 200 square feet, are portable and may be relocated on the property, are relatively easily dismantled and removed, contain less area than a single car carport which must contain 190 square feet, and contain no electrical or HVAC systems. Staff recommended that the Planning Commission adopt the Resolution, finding structures identified by staff are defined as “structures” as defined by the development code and are not included in the in the maximum number of accessory buildings.

Staff said that they wrote the resolution narrowly so that the Planning Commission would retain the ability to make the determination on a case by case basis with structures that are similar, but not the same. The type of lots in this community allows for a large variety of structure types, and in the future, Planning Commission will have to make determinations on those structure types on a case by case basis.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEM 4

- None

END PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commissioner McHenry asked staff about the limits on the number of structures. Staff said that the current Development Code has no limit on the number of structures which can be located on a lot. Attempting to identify a maximum number of structure could be problematic.

Commissioner Drozd asked staff if the support poles were set in concrete. Staff said that the photos indicated that there may have been a small amount of concrete used to set the poles, but it should still be relatively easy to remove or move the structure. Staff said that the used of concrete wasn't addressed in the findings.

Commissioner Evans asked in the structures identified where limited to a dirt floor, or were concrete slabs included. Staff said that the Resolution did not included the concrete slab, and that the photos did not show a concrete slab. Commissioner Evans said that a covering for large animals shouldn't have a concrete slab, but the issues may come up in the future.

Commissioner Whitten spoke against allowing concrete slabs for structures of this type. He said he supported the Resolution. He said that the Commission had had multiple discussion on the definition of buildings verses structures, and they had attempted to keep the definition as simply as possible.

Chair Bridenstine said that concrete slabs should not be included in this type of structure, as it is not movable.

MOTION

Commissioner Whitten moved that the Planning Commission adopts the Resolution, finding large animal shade structures, as defined and illustrated in the Resolution, are not buildings, and therefore not included in Accessory Building inventories on residential properties.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Steve Whitten, Commissioner
SECONDER: Jeff Evans, Commissioner
AYES: Drozd, Evans, McHenry, Whitten, Bridenstine

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- None

CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENTS

STAFF REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Staff provided an overview of the status of current and upcoming development projects.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND REQUEST:

Commissioner Drozd thanked everyone for their hard work, and said he was happy to see input from the audience.

Commissioner Evans said it was nice to have two Commissions working together, and the information they provided will be valuable.

Commissioner McHenry thanked staff for their work, and spoke in support of the joint meeting. He spoke in support of current local development

Commissioner Whitten requested staff not overload agendas. He stated that his schedule has changed and that making a 6:00 pm meeting time will be difficult. He asked that the Commission consider changing the meeting time to 6:30 pm.

Chair Bridenstine said that the joint meeting was rewarding and productive. She spoke in support of current local development.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for May 26, 2015 at 6:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Brucker
Secretary

Approved by the Planning Commission on June 9, 2015.