

**TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
JANUARY 7, 2014**

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Lombardo called the Special Joint Meeting of the Town Council and Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

Council Members Present: Abel, Huntington, Leone, Lombardo, Rowe and Mayor Lombardo
Planning Commissioners Present: Drozd, Lavender and Whitten.
Bridenstine and Humphreville were not present (excused).

Staff Present: Deputy Town Manager Stueckle, Administrative Services Director Yakimow,
Police Lieutenant Wilke, Town Attorney Laymon, and Town Clerk Copeland

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Lombardo

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Member Rowe moved to approve the amended agenda for the Special Joint Meeting of the Town Council and Planning Commission of January 7, 2014. Council Member Abel seconded. Motion carried 5-0 on a voice vote from Town Council, and a 3-2 vote from the Planning Commissioners.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Lombardo opened public comment for items not on the agenda.

Ramon Mendoza, Morongo Valley spoke on the laws of reviewing a General Plan.

With no other members of the public wishing to speak, Mayor Lombardo closed public comment.

1. Planning Commission Resolution No. PC-14-
Town Council Resolution No. 14-, Environmental Impact Report
Town Council Resolution No, 14-, Yucca Valley General Plan
Yucca Valley General Plan Update Project
Yucca Valley General Plan Environmental Impact Report
State Clearing House No. 20122111021

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle introduced the staff report, stating that this public hearing is a continuance of the December 17, 2013 discussion. Wendy Grant from the Planning Center reviewed previous recommendations and provided clarification on pending items from previous review. Nicole Vermilion of the Planning Center continued the presentation and reviewed the

process of establishing wildlife corridors. CEQA requires that the scientific information from recent studies be used to assess the environmental impacts of a project.

Council Member Abel questioned the boundaries that are included in the wildlife corridors.

Vermilion stated that the data given is general in nature. Large studies for the Morongo Basin have been conducted and are included in the EIR for CEQA requirements. The General Plan contains these findings as a comprehensive document.

Council Member Abel stated concern for potential complications for developers who wish to develop within these boundaries.

Planning Commission Drozd commented on the source of the wildlife corridor information.

Council Member Rowe stated concern for the information in Table 2 which provides a list of potential affected species.

Wendy Grant provided additional explanation on the purpose for wildlife corridors and the CEQA requirement of including the information from significant studies of the area.

Town Attorney Laymon clarified that by including the information in the document, it places the public on warning of what might be required for future development.

Planning Commissioner Whitten inquired about the Habitat Conservation Plan and how it assists with the development approval process.

Council Member Leone commented on the night sky ordinance.

Planning Commissioner Lavender suggested the inclusion of a statement explaining the State's requirements for including such information in the General Plan.

Wendy Grant explained that the priority of the Planning Center to find the delicate balance to include the necessary requirements, while giving the property owner the most flexibility.

Mayor Pro Tem Huntington commented on the generality of the studies included in the document.

Council Member Abel inquired about The Planning Center's experience with other cities on this issue.

Wendy Grant explained that the information in the General plan would provide a general area for potential wildlife, but individual studies would provide any detail for the specific parcel.

Council Member Leone commented on wildlife migration patterns.

Mayor Lombardo opened public comments.

Hilary Slotta, Yucca Valley spoke in opposition of the wildlife corridors and how they were determined.

Leonard Malin, Yucca Valley spoke in opposition of the wildlife corridors and the size of area they encompass.

Carlene Malin, Yucca Valley spoke of concern of including such vague maps within the General Plan and the inclusion may unnecessarily affect land values.

Art Miller, Jr., Yucca Valley thanked staff and consultants for their hard work in getting the document to this point. Miller also spoke of concern of the number of parcels included in the wildlife corridor designation and would like to see a Habitat Conservation Plan started soon, so that it can be included in the General Plan.

John Pavelak, Rialto, spoke in opposition of the wildlife corridor designation.

Robert Malin, Joshua Tree, spoke in opposition of the wildlife corridor designation.

Edward Chang, Tustin spoke in opposition to the wildlife corridor maps.

Ramon Mendoza, Morongo Valley inquired if discussions have been previously held regarding wildlife corridors in our area.

Bill Garvin, Yucca Valley spoke in opposition of the wildlife corridor through the business section of the community.

Joe Sullivan, Yucca Valley commented on the possible affect the wildlife corridors will have on property valuation and believes the corridor designation will create unfair restrictions to property owners.

Mark Miller, Yucca Valley spoke in opposition of the additional requirements needed to develop in a wildlife corridor designation area.

Sean Kilpatrick, Yucca Valley spoke in opposition of the wildlife corridor designation, specifically at the corner of State Hwy 247 and Skyline Ranch Road. Kilpatrick commented favorably of beginning the process of creating a Habitat Conservation Plan.

Bill Neeb, Indio Resident, Yucca Valley property owner commented on the State's requirements to include this information in the document, the Town's hands are tied.

Howard Parrett, Yucca Valley spoke on the process he experienced to develop property within a wildlife designated area.

With no other members of the public wishing to speak, Mayor Lombardo closed public comment.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle explained how the corridors were established and the source of the information. Stueckle also explained that the corridor overlays do not change the zoning of the parcels. A wildlife corridor designation indicates further study may be required on a parcel by parcel basis.

Council Member Abel offered his agreement with many of the public comments and would like to see a Habitat Conservation Plan included in the General Plan. Abel inquired on the process to change the General Plan at a later date to include new information. Abel also suggested to include a disclosure statement with the maps questioning the validity of such wildlife corridor designations.

Council Member Leone inquired on the process to conduct our own local study.

Mayor Pro Tem Huntington commented favorably of keeping the wildlife corridor maps in the document for greater transparency.

Council Member Rowe commented in agreement with Council Member Abel's statement regarding a disclosure statement.

Wendy Grant explained that the General Plan process is not adding an additional layer. The Plan reflects a designation that is already there. Because the studies exist, CEQA requires the information from these studies to be included in the document.

Planning Commissioner Drozd commented on the vagueness of the corridor indication, but does see the need to include the corridor maps in the General Plan.

Council Member Leone commented that he is not in favor of including the maps in the General Plan, as it may discourage development.

After listening to the discussion on the item, Deputy Town Manager Stueckle suggested additional language be added on page 5-21, the Open Space and Conservation Element, at the end of the wildlife corridor paragraph, "At the adoption of this General Plan, significant concern of the accuracy of the Joshua Tree / Twentynine Palms connection and the San Bernardino / Little San Bernardino connection wildlife corridors was identified as a future policy issue to be addressed. Long-range, land use planning requires that these corridors be further refined and evaluated as new information becomes available, either through a Habitat Conservation Plan or through additional studies."

Town Council and Planning Commission consensus was made to include the suggested language in the document.

Town Clerk Copeland read a statement prepared by Planning Chair Humphreville to be included

in the minutes.

Planning Commissioner Lavender moved to not include the wildlife corridor maps in the General Plan document and use additional language to reference the wildlife areas and the source of such information. Motion died for lack of a second.

Planning Commissioner Whitten moved that the Planning Commission recommend to the Town Council to adopt Resolution No. 14- , certifying the Environmental Impact Report, State Clearing Housing No. 2012111021, adopting statement of facts and overriding considerations and adopting a mitigation monitoring program. Planning Commissioner Drozd seconded. Motion carried 3-0-2 on a roll call vote of the Planning Commissioners.

Planning Commissioner Drozd moved to include additional language to page 5-21, the Open Space and Conservation Element, at the end of the wildlife corridor paragraph, “At the adoption of this General Plan, significant concern of the accuracy of the Joshua Tree / Twentynine Palms connection and the San Bernardino / Little San Bernardino connection wildlife corridors was identified as a future policy issue to be addressed. Long-range, land use planning requires that these corridors be further refined and evaluated as new information becomes available, either through a Habitat Conservation Plan or through additional studies.” Planning Commissioner Whitten seconded. Motion carried 3-0-2 on a roll call vote of the Planning Commission.

Town Attorney Laymon gave clarification, that in order for the Planning Commission to recommend the adoption of the General Plan to the Town Council, the three attending Planning Commissioners will need to vote affirmatively as a majority of the entire Planning Commission.

Planning Commissioner Whitten moved to include the wildlife corridor maps in the General Plan. Planning Commissioner Drozd seconded. Motion failed 2-1-2 with a roll call vote, Planning Commissioner Lavender voting no.

Council Member Abel moved to adopt Resolution No 14-01, certifying the Yucca Valley General Plan Environmental Impact Report, State Clearing Housing No. 2012111021, adopting statement of facts and overriding considerations and adopting a mitigation monitoring program. Council Member Leone seconded. Motion carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

- AYES:** Council Members Abel, Huntington, Leone, Rowe and Mayor Lombardo
- NOES:** None
- ABSTAIN:** None
- ABSENT:** None

Mayor Lombardo reopened the Public Hearing for continuance until Tuesday, February 4, 2014.

STAFF REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Town Project Engineer Alex Qishta presented a brief update on the senior housing project and the Hwy 62 construction projects.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None Stated

COUNCIL AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND REQUESTS

2. Council Member Abel thanked the public for staying through the long meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None Stated

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Lombardo adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lesley Copeland, CMC
Town Clerk