

## MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLEApril 5, 20226:04 PM

*In accordance with City policy, all Planning Commission meetings are recorded on audio and video in their entirety and are available for review in the Community Development Department (CDD). These minutes are a brief summary of action taken.*

**1. ROLL CALL**

Chair Jenni Veitch-Olson, Commissioners Ed Acosta, Daniel Dodge, Anna Kammer, and Lucy Rojas were present. Vice-Chair Veronica Dorantes-Pulido was absent.

**Motion to excuse absent Planning Commissioners (If any)**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Kammer, seconded by Commissioner Dodge, and carried by the following vote to excuse Vice-Chair Dorantes-Pulido absence:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Veitch-Olson, Acosta, Dodge, Kammer, Rojas  
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: None

Staff members present were Community Development Director Suzi Merriam, Assistant City Attorney Denise Bazzano, Principal Planner Justin Meek, Public Works & Utilities Assistant Director Maria Esther Rodriguez, Associate Planner Sarah Wikle, Executive Assistant Deborah Muniz, Permit Technician Celia Castro and City Interpreter Angelica Jauregui.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Veitch-Olson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. PRESENTATIONS & ORAL COMMUNICATIONS****A. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Tony Nuñez, member of the Board of Directors of the Pajaro Valley Health Care District, shared the sole intention of the board is buying the Watsonville Community Hospital and reestablish public ownership. If the hospital closes it will negatively affect the Central Coast including Santa Cruz and Monterey County. He invited the public to attend their meetings the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, at 5:00pm at the Watsonville Community Hospital.

**B. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION**

**ADOPTED MINUTES 4.A.**

Commissioner Dodge, congratulated the band Los Lobos for their achievements. He stated he is against the Measure U City Urban Limit line, which will be on the ballot of on November 8. He shared it will stunt the growth of Watsonville and City reports found facts and figures that result in the need to expand outside city limits. He encouraged everyone to stay informed.

Commissioner Kammer shared information on water efficient appliances and rebates. Contact the City's Utility Billing Department at 250 Main Street, (831) 325-3376 for additional water saving resources.

Chair Veitch-Olson announced the annual Day of the Child will be held April 24<sup>th</sup>, for children and families at the City Plaza.

**4. CONSENT AGENDA****A. MOTION APPROVING MINUTES OF MARCH 1, 2022 REGULAR MEETING**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Dodge, seconded by Commissioner Rojas, and carried by the following vote to approve the Consent Agenda:

AYES:	COMMISSIONERS:	Acosta, Dodge, Kammer, Rojas
NOES:	COMMISSIONERS:	None
ABSENT:	COMMISSIONERS:	Dorantes-Pulido
ABSTAIN:	COMMISSIONERS:	Veitch-Olson

**5. NEW BUSINESS****A. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR PERSON AND VICE-CHAIR**

Chair Veitch-Olson made a motion to move Items 5A and 5B to the next meeting on May 3, 2022.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Chair Veitch-Olson, seconded by Commissioner Acosta, and carried by the following vote to approve moving Items 5A and 5B to the next Planning Commission meeting on May 3, 2022:

AYES:	COMMISSIONERS:	Acosta, Dodge, Kammer, Rojas, Veitch-Olson
NOES:	COMMISSIONERS:	None
ABSENT:	COMMISSIONERS:	Dorantes-Pulido

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**ADOPTED MINUTES 4.A.**

**A. SPECIAL USE PERMIT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (PP2022-3163) TO ALLOW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERFORMING ARTS FACILITY IN AN EXISTING 3,486± SQUARE-FOOT COMMERCIAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 375 MAIN STREET (APN 017-111-36)**

**1) Staff Report**

Staff report was given by Community Development Associate Planner Sarah Wikle.

**2) Planning Commission Questions**

In answering Commissioner Dodge, Associate Planner Wikle confirmed that a Special Use Permit, that require specific permits, will need appropriate applications to be submitted 30 days in advance of the event to the Community Development Department. A one-time Special Use Permit is issued per event.

**3) Applicant Presentation**

Applicant report was given by Arts Council of Santa Cruz County Deputy Director Mireya Gomez-Contreras

**4) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions**

In answering Vice-Chair Veitch-Olson, applicant Gomez-Contreras clarified her vision is a 10-year timeline for a State of the Art, Arts & Cultural Center, that is region-wide.

**5) Public Hearing**

Arts member and community member Graciela Vega spoke in support of establishing the Performing Arts Facility.

Community member Fabian Leonor spoke in support of the arts and the need of a local Performing Arts Facility for youth-development.

Property owner representative Ana Petroutsas spoke in support of the Performing Arts Facility for the growth and awareness of the community.

**6) Appropriate Motion**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Dodge, seconded by Commissioner Rojas, to approve the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION NO. 06-22**

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING A SPECIAL USE PERMIT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (PP2022-363)**

**ADOPTED MINUTES 4.A.**

**TO ALLOW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS FACILITY IN AN EXISTING 3,486± SQUARE-FOOT COMMERCIAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 375 MAIN STREET, WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA (APN 017-111-36)**

**7) Deliberation**

Commissioner Dodge thanked everyone in support of this project and spoke in support of establishing the Performing Arts Facility.

Commissioner Kammer shared her support for the arts in this community and supports the project whole-heartedly.

Chair Veitch-Olson shared her excitement and importance of performing arts, including the collaborative spirit for establishment of the Performing Arts Facility.

**8) Chair calls for a Vote in Motion(s)**

**The above motion carried by the following vote:**

AYES:	COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Dodge, Kammer, Rojas, Veitch-Olson
NOES:	COMMISSIONERS: None
ABSENT:	COMMISSIONERS: Dorantes-Pulido

**B. PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL TO ALLOW THE PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT OF A 525-STUDENT CHARTER SCHOOL ON A 2.1± SQUARE-FOOT COMMERCIAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 215 LOCUST STREET (APN 017-161-51)**

**1) Staff Report**

Staff report was given by Community Development Principal Planner Justin Meek.

**2) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions**

In answering Commissioner Kammer, Principal Planner Meek clarified the school is responsible for flood-proofing costs. A Safe Routes to School Plan shall be prepared by the School Administration staff for the conditions of approval.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Principal Planner Meek explained what's needed for obtaining a Special Use Permit. He further explained the errors made in the original approval in 2013.

In answering Commissioner Dodge, Principal Planner Meek replied that the property located at 228-234 Locust Street is not part of this approval and cannot

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be used for school-related activities. To acquire the property, applicant would have to amend their Use Permit to allow for use of off-site premises.

**3) Applicant Presentation**

Applicant report was given by Ceiba College Preparatory Head Josh Ripp.

**4) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions**

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Ceiba College Preparatory Head Ripp replied that they have an architect and the capital to address infrastructure improvements required for the permit, including crosswalks. He added, that they care about the safety of the students.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Ceiba College Preparatory Head Ripp clarified their community-engagement and interactions.

In answering Commissioner Dodge, Ceiba College Preparatory Head Ripp replied the school can complete all the improvements stated within five years. There is a current plan that involves Caltrans and the City to meet the improvements in demand.

In answering Commissioner Acosta, Ceiba College Preparatory Head Ripp explained the thorough effort made, over the course of 8-years, to find another site feasible for Ceiba. In conducting the search all sites were under 2 acres or not appropriately zoned. He added, the school will remain at 525-student size.

In answering Commissioner Dodge, Ceiba College Preparatory Head Ripp confirmed that in the search for vacant and compatible parcels, he has been unsuccessful in finding an accommodating site of 2 acres, inside City limits, for Ceiba School.

Commissioner Acosta clarified that there is no adequate space, for Ceiba College Preparatory at the current time.

Commissioner Kammer shared there is vacant space, but not properly zoned. She added, there is no appropriate zones for school site; the task of the meeting is a rezone that is part of the Planning Commission approval process.

Ceiba Principal thanked Kammer for the clarification. He added, there are a number of considerations that require a charter school to exist, the current site is unique and serves Ceiba's subsistence.

Commissioner Dodge thanked Ceiba College Prep Head Ripp, and addressed how the matter ties to the Urban Limit Line.

**5) Public Hearing**

**ADOPTED MINUTES 4.A.**

Chair Veitch-Olson opened the public hearing.

Students from Ceiba spoke in support of Charter School. Shared the academic and developmental support Ceiba College Prep has offered them.

Student from Ceiba Emily Chavez spoke in support of Charter School.

Fabian Leonor spoke in support to approve permanent establishment of Ceiba at the current location. He shared the positive experience and academic guidance provided to his children.

Community member Daniel Dodge Jr. spoke in support of Ceiba Charter School.

Community member Imelda Hernandez spoke in support of Ceiba Charter School and her experience as a mother. She added, her older son is a Ceiba alumni and now a student at Oregon State University pursuing Civil Engineering.

Resident of Locust Street spoke against the permanent establishment of Charter School. He shared he is not against the merits of the school but the injustice to the neighborhood and traffic issues.

Property owner of 305 Locust Street Ilia Bulaich spoke against the permanent establishment of Charter School. He stated concerns and faults of the project and questioned the mitigations and functionality presented with no evidence of functionality.

**6) Appropriate Motion**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Dodge, seconded by Chair Veitch-Olson, and carried by the following vote recommending that the City Council approve the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION NO. 07-22**

**APPROVE A GENERAL PLAN MAP AMENDMENT AND ZONING MAP AMEMENDMENT.**

**RESOLUTION NO. 08-22**

**APPROVE A SPECIAL USE PERMIT (APP# 1737) TO ALLOW THE PERMAMENT ESTABLISHMENT OF A 525-STUDENT CHARTER SCHOOL FOR GRADES 6-12 IN AN EXISTING 27,000± SF BUILDING WITH AN 8,500± SF MEZZANINE ON A 2.1± ACRE SITE LOCATED AT 215 LOCUST STREET (APN 017-161-51) WITH THE FRIENDLY AMENDMENT CHANGE OF THE TIMEFRAME FOR SUBMITAL OF THE ENCROACHMENT PERMIT WITHIN 12 MONTHS.**

**7) Deliberation**

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Community Development Principal Planner Meek explained the process to track progress related to Condition 31, that reflect improvements of three intersections on Local Street, would be through an encroachment permit. He added, an amendment can be made to existing resolution that includes a time-frame.

Commissioner Rojas requested a friendly amendment to include a time-frame in Condition 31.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Public Works & Utilities Assistant Director Maria Rodriguez further clarified the reasonable time-frame to an encroachment permit would be six to twelve months. Permits are active for 6 months.

Commissioner Rojas made a friendly amendment to require the submittal of an encroachment permit application within twelve months for installing pedestrian crossing upgrades and accessible ramps on nearby streets per Conditions of Approval nos. 31 and 32, motion was second by Chair Veitch-Olson.

Commissioner Acosta commended everyone who came out in support of the Charter School. He also shared what his concerns are over changing the zoning permanently and voice the concerns of residents around the area.

Commissioner Kammer shared her admiration of the goals of Ceiba Charter School. She clarified that the existence of the Charter School is not in question, but the zoning is. She added what her concerns are reflecting a zone change that is not compatible with the surrounding uses, and included supportive evidence.

In answering Commissioner Dodge, Community Development Principal Planner Meek confirmed that the general plan adopted in the early 1990's. He shared this is a recommendation to City Council and invited everyone to attend the future meeting if the motion was successful.

Commissioner Acosta added, this matter is going to City Council and to be mindful that the decision will carry on.

Chair Veitch-Olson stated staff has not prepared findings to deny use permit. As a result, the item will continue to the next meeting.

Commissioner Acosta questioned the continuation of the item if the motion is on the table.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano clarified there is a motion on the table. She clarified that the concerning issue is that the recommendation before the Planning Commission is in a form of a resolution that staff has prepared to support their recommendation, approval of General Plan and Zoning Amendments and Special Use Permit to City Council. If the Planning

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Commission recommends denial, there should be a resolution that supports that recommendation and the bases for that recommendation.

Commissioner Dodge declared that votes are being counted before an action happens.

Commissioner Acosta stated that the action was wrong and shared his concern.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano clarified that votes are unknown, they are trying to figure out if there are finding to support the determination.

Commissioner Dodge stated there is a motion on the table and advocated to vote on it before moving forward.

Commissioner Acosta shared alarming concern of the halted active motion on the table. He questioned transparency.

Commissioner Kammer directed the Planning Commission's attention to staff report page 5 of 16, Special Use Permit findings.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Assistant City Attorney Bazzano clarified that decisions made by Planning Commission need to be based on substantial evidence in a form of a resolution. She continued to explain what the process is if Planning Commission does not support staff recommendation.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Community Development Director Merriam further clarified it is a common practice to prepare findings for and against an item if there is a concern that an item will not pass. She added, the concern is based on community feedback. Community input was received late which did not allow appropriate time for staff to prepare findings against this item.

Commissioner Dodge, shared their concern in delaying the motion on the table.

Commissioner Acosta apologized to the public for the conduct displayed.

Community Development Director Merriam apologized for the misunderstanding and suggested to vote on the motion and move forward.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Chair Veitch-Olson clarified that the Planning Commission will vote tonight, if the motion fails, the item will continue to the next meeting with a resolution to adopt.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Chair Veitch-Olson replied this will impact City Councils schedule.

Commissioner Dodge share his concern on voting with two absent seats. Commissioner Kammer shared the accountability and process of the Planning Commission.



**ADOPTED MINUTES 4.A.**

Commissioner Acosta added that the time allocated to read the entire packet is only a few days.

**8) Chair calls for a Vote on Motion (s)**

**The above motion failed by the following vote:**

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Dodge, Rojas, Veitch-Olson  
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Kammer  
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: Dorantes-Pulido

In answering Commissioner Dodge, Community Development Director Merriam clarified the Planning Commission failed to make a positive recommendation and do not have any findings to support the recommendation. The item will go to City Council with a negative recommendation and no bases on the recommendation.

**7. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

Suzi Merriam, Community Development Director, announced the Downtown Specific Plan Advisory Committee meeting on April 14, 2022 will discuss mobility options and pedestrian improvements.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Veitch-Olson adjourned the meeting at 8:20 PM. The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at 6:00 PM.

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Suzi Merriam, Secretary  
Planning Commission

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Jenni Veitch-Olson, Chair  
Planning Commission