

# CITY OF ELK GROVE

*Incorporated July 1, 2000*

## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL JOINT CITY COUNCIL PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

February 28, 2001

Robert L. Trigg Education Center

9510 Elk Grove-Florin Road, Elk Grove, CA 95624

Board of Education Hearing Room

### CALL TO ORDER/ROLLCALL

Mayor James Cooper called the February 28, 2001 special joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:19 p.m.

Present: Council Members Briggs, Leary, Scherman, Mayor Pro Tempore Soares, Mayor Cooper  
Planning Commissioners Hume, Lindsay, Whitelock, Winuk and Chair Lotz

Absent: None

### PUBLIC COMMENT

**Mayor Cooper** opened the discussion to public comment. There were no requests to speak and the public comment opportunity was closed.

### AGENDA ACTION ITEM: GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP

**Mayor Cooper** announced that no action is proposed for tonight's meeting. He stated that this is an opportunity to receive information from the staff and community.

**Phil Carter**, Planning Director, noted that the City adopted the County's General Plan after incorporation. He explained that the issue currently under consideration is creating a new General Plan specific to the City of Elk Grove. He noted that the presentation will explain what a general plan is, what the benefits are, and propose options for plan development.

Mr. Carter explained that the process starts by receiving community input and incorporating community issues into the plan. Additionally, there will be Commission discussion and direction.

Regarding the requirements for the General Plan, Mr. Carter stated that the State delegates certain authorities to local agencies regarding land use regulation. He noted that State law requires cities to have a general plan in place within 30 months of incorporation. Elk Grove must have its general plan developed by December 31, 2002.

Mr. Carter described and identified the benefits of the General Plan as follows:

- Responds to local concerns
- Reduces processing time for future projects
- Avoids litigation
- Responds to changing needs
- Protects sensitive environmental areas
- Outlines and centralizes a variety of information
- Ensures that infrastructure and services are available as needed
- Identifies and documents issues and information
- Allows for discussion of local issues
- Establishes a long-term vision

Mr. Carter stated that when his firm proposed to undertake planning services for the City of Elk Grove, the General Plan was included as part of that process. He stated that he feels that an in-house service provider allows for a streamlined process and is an effective approach.

Mr. Carter, by use of an overhead projection, demonstrated the current boundaries of Elk Grove (filed) and a number of projects currently underway. He noted that there is local control over how a development is installed. He also explained that although the City has the ability to address the implementation of projects currently under construction, these projects were not considered or approved by the Planning Commission or City Council, but rather were in place at the time of incorporation.

Regarding the Sphere of Influence, Mr. Carter explained that LAFCo conditioned that the City should propose a plan within 120 days following incorporation. He noted that several meetings were held prior to submitting the application to LAFCo in October 2000. Recently, LAFCo staff provided additional direction to the City. He noted that a meeting is scheduled with LAFCo to be sure that the information provided by the City meets LAFCo guidelines.

Mr. Carter stated that major stakeholders, the public, community groups, Old Town, major property owners and developers, the environmental community, the County of Sacramento, LAFCo and the neighboring Cities of Sacramento and Galt should be involved in the general plan planning process.

He stated that simultaneous development of the General Plan and Sphere of Influence provides an opportunity for comprehensive planning outside of the city boundaries and avoids duplication of environmental documentation efforts and expense. This also allows for the integration of existing special planning areas, such as Old Town. The Master Plans of the various service districts will also be considered.

Mr. Carter also explained that this is the appropriate time to consider policies applicable to infrastructure aspects, financing and implementation. Design standards should be implemented to produce uniformity.

**Eric Norris**, Planning Manager, gave an overview of the issues to be considered when developing the general plan (filed). He also noted that a follow-up to completing the general plan would be to prepare a zoning code unique to the City of Elk Grove. He stated that staff would be approaching the Council in the near future to make interim changes to the existing code, inherited from Sacramento County.

Regarding initiating the general plan process, Mr. Norris explained the importance of receiving public input through meetings, use of the internet, mailings and surveys. Gathering public input and tapping other sources of information is the basis for the general plan. Performing a land-use and housing stock survey is also a good source of information. Mr. Norris suggested, as part of the planning development process, that the City Council direct the Planning Commission to act in a technical advisory capacity.

He noted that the background report is likely to be the first product of the general plan development. The report will provide information on existing and proposed public facilities and infrastructure. He explained that the objective is to make sure that various existing plans mesh. A comprehensive study will look at transportation and circulation, including railroad crossings. The biology aspect will address environmental concerns. In considering the parks and recreations element, the City will work closely with the Community Services District (CSD) to document existing and proposed facilities. Urban Design considerations will include what designs should be incorporated in new developments, such as the Lent Ranch Mall. He noted that a number of studies would be undertaken to address air and noise quality and cultural influences. Base maps and aerial photographs and reports on current projects will utilize in the plan process.

He explained that a number of visioning sessions, or citywide workshops, would be held on a variety of issues with the objective of identifying what the City of Elk Grove would like to be in the future. Mr. Norris explained that to the extent possible, differing views would be resolved. An issues report will also be prepared.

Mr. Norris displayed how a General Plan interactive web site might be used as an information resource and a vehicle for citizens to provide input.

Mr. Norris identified the various elements that may be included in the General Plan: Land-use, circulation, housing safety/seismic safety, noise, facilities and infrastructure, urban design, open space and conservation, parks and recreation and housing. Regarding environmental analysis, Mr. Norris briefly explained that those preparing the general plan and those preparing the environmental analysis communicate as the plan is coming together. He stated that the General Plan is "self-mitigating", and identifies how issues will be resolved and demands will be met.

Mr. Norris stated that drafting the plan could be broken into a number of phases: issue identification and resolution; draft goals and policies/land use concepts; administrative draft general plan; environmental analysis and public comment period; and public hearings.

**Mr. Carter** addressed the options for the general plan preparation: 1) in-house staff, or 2) develop an RFP to receive proposals from outside firms. Mr. Carter stated that in-house staff would be comprised of the Planning and current Public Works Departments staff. Technical assistance will be required of outside sources. Mr. Carter stated that there is enough time to chose either option.

**Mr. Carter** stressed that the chief purpose of having this overview, is to provide an opportunity to receive input from the public, City Council and Planning Commission.

**Mr. Carter** asked that direction be given to staff regarding:

1. preparation of either a work plan and budget or to prepare a request for proposals;
2. preparation of the sphere of influence in conjunction with the general plan; and
3. utilizing the Planning Commission as a technical advisory committee.

**Mayor Cooper** opened the public comment opportunity.

**Janet Toppenberg**, Executive Director of the Elk Grove Chamber of Commerce, stated that the General Plan will provide a blueprint for the community, and policies will also be adopted that impact jobs, housing and services. She noted that the Elk Grove Chamber of Commerce would be an active participant in the general plan process.

**Jeff Chandler**, Co-chair of South County Citizens for Responsible Growth, commended the Council and Commission for initiating the process. Mr. Chandler stated he was pleased that there has been significant improvement from the draft General Plan process, originally drafted in December. He asked that South County Citizens group be allowed to be a part of the advisory committee.

Mr. Chandler stated that a number of issues should be considered including preparation of a technical reporting process on the status of agriculture in and around the Elk Grove and South County area. He stated it is important to separate impacts that are local from those that are national or global. He recommended including the University of California Cooperative Extension resources, the Sacramento County Farm Bureau, and farmers and farm leadership in the process. Also, community garden concerns should be included.

Mr. Chandler stressed the importance of interaction with County and State transportation entities.

Mr. Chandler applauded the solicitation of public input.

He also acknowledged the Council's agreement to engage in dialogue with the City of Galt on the development of a greenbelt area.

**Sharon Lynes** asked whether Council districts would be established in relation to the completion of the General Plan. Ms. Lynes stated that she felt strongly that the neighborhood PACs and senior housing representatives be included in the process.

**Mayor Cooper** responded that the Council districting would be completed before the General Plan.

**Shirley Peters**, President of the Greater Sheldon Road Estates Homeowner's Association, asked that "incompatible growth" be guarded against. She expressed concerns regarding the: groundwater depletion, air quality, school sites designation, establishing an attractive gateway to Elk Grove on the Elk Grove-Florin Road corridor, accommodations for handicapped persons, banning landfills and dumps from within the City limits, traffic congestion, road closures, and wetlands and open-space protection.

**Mayor Cooper** closed the public comment opportunity.

**Commissioner Chair Lotz** questioned how issues will be resolved for specific plans that are currently in the planning process and how that will mesh with an emerging general plan.

**Mr. Carter** responded that plans currently in the planning that a finding must be made that the plan under consideration appear to be reasonably compatible with the general plan development. He noted that in many communities, plans continue to be approved through the development of the general plan. He stated that many areas of the City have been planned but have not had the implementation components approved. Mr. Carter stated that those are open for discussion for making sure that implementation is compatible with the general plan.

Referring to Mr. Carter's recommendation that the Planning Commission act in an advisory capacity and referring to the Government Code, **Commissioner Winuk** clarified that the general plan must come before the Planning Commission for approval. He proposed that an economic development element be added to the proposed general plan. He suggested that the RFP process be used. He emphasized the importance of public input and participation.

**Mr. Carter** concurred that this is an appropriate time to start thinking about what other elements should be included in the general plan.

**Commissioner Hume** questioned whether preparation of the General Plan development by Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC) is covered in the current budget.

Also, would there be additional costs in bringing the outside consultant up to pace.

**Mr. Carter** responded that the original proposal provided for preparation of the general plan. He noted that there were estimated costs at \$150,000 in the current year's budget and \$150,000 projected in the 2001-02 budget. Part of the funds were designated for the zoning code update. He explained that depending upon the direction given by the City Council, the costs of the general plan development would vary. If in-house staff is given direction to proceed, a detailed work program will be put together.

Mr. Carter recommended that should the RFP process be selected, that a subcommittee comprised of two members of each the City Council and Planning Commission be designated as the RFP selection panel. The Planning staff would manage the process and not submit a proposal on the general plan development. PMC would assist in writing and managing the proposal process, but it would not be reasonable for them to submit a proposal.

**Commissioner Hume** stated that it is important that the Sphere of Influence and General Plan be developed at the same time. He also stressed that he would like to see the northeast portion of the city remain zoned as AR-2 or larger. He also stated that he supports the creation of a nature reserve or usable recreational open-space as part of the plan.

**Council Member Scherman** noted her agreement with development of an economic development element. She requested that the Council revisit the economic development department creation. She disclosed an earlier conversation with Mr. Carter regarding the role the planning department staff would play as either the general plan developer or as the RFP manager. She questioned whether going out with an RFP might bring a different perspective to the process. She noted that she would vote with the majority of the Council.

**Commissioner Lindsay** voiced his support of combining the development of the Sphere of Influence and General Plan. Regarding the Planning Commission serving as the Technical Advisory Committee, Mr. Lindsay asked if there would be ad-hoc committees as a sub-component of the advisory committee to consider specific issues.

**Mr. Carter** answered that while technical experts would be brought in to make specific recommendations, consideration had not been given to developing sub-committees. He cautioned the Council/Commission against a prolonged process. The Planning Commission would act as a technical committee to which the public could make presentations.

Returning to discussion regarding the Sphere of Influence, **Mr. Carter** stated that if open space and agricultural lands are designated, it is important to have mechanisms within the Plan that provide for property acquisition. He stated that different approaches would be reviewed to determine their suitability to Elk Grove.

**Commissioner Lindsay** asked Mr. Carter to address the scope of groups and concerns encountered in the community.

**Mr. Carter** explained that there are nuances in each community. He noted familiarity with various groups, such as Elk Grove Water Works, Florin Resources Conservation District, etc. He stated that if the RFP option were chosen, the Planning Department would provide the necessary technical information to the consultant. He stressed the importance of considering community dynamics during the plan development.

**Commissioner Whitelock** encouraged the expeditious selection of a consultant. He also stated he felt the full time span be utilized to develop the plan and that the process not be hurried. He noted the importance of looking at the surrounding cities to benefit from their successes and failures. He concluded by saying that the public comment opportunities should be expanded and meetings held on weeknights and on Saturdays.

**Council Member Briggs** recognized all comments expressed at the meeting as important. He stated that the City of Elk Grove has a capable staff with access to the necessary information. Council Member Briggs expressed concern that the RFP process might delay progress. Commenting about the thorough staff presentation, he supported preparation of the general plan by the Planning staff (PMC).

He suggested the Planning staff prepare a work plan and return the item in 30 days for presentation. Council Member Briggs noted that time is of the essence and additional delay does not play in the City's favor. This option would also economize costs.

**Mayor Cooper** reopened the public comment opportunity.

**Carl Amundson**, of the Florin Resource Conservation District, supported involving key and well-established resources in the process. He spoke in favor of varying the meetings to encourage public participation. He offered a recent study conducted for the Elk Grove Water Works on water conditions and supply in the South County area as a resource in the general plan development.

**Brian Prater** advocated the establishment of neighborhood committees to participate in and represent varying interests during the general plan process.

**Michael Monasky** requested the Council consider the following during the general plan development: In addition to evening and weekend meetings, broadcast the meetings on cable; expedite the general plan process; institute infrastructure financing; mitigation measures for air quality and traffic congestion; place the burden of growth on new development; and protection of Elk Grove's unique environmental characteristics.

**Mayor Pro Tem Soares** echoed comments made by Commissioners and Council Members regarding the need for the economic development issues to be prominently

addressed in the general plan. Mayor Pro Tem Soares recalled that from early on, it was his understanding that PMC would be the provider of general plan development services. He voiced his preference for having PMC provide this service, noting their unique ability to interact with LAFCo. He stated that if the Council elects the RFP process, that PMC be allowed to compete in the process.

Mayor Pro Tem Soares asked that Mr. Jinkens discuss his staff approach and recommendations.

**Mr. Jinkens** supported the in-house process option. He disclosed that Mr. Carter assured him that if PMC were charged with the General Plan development, the additional workload would not impact daily operations and production. Mr. Jinkens also expressed the importance of moving forward prudently and expeditiously.

Mr. Jinkens stated that the Public Works staff is knowledgeable and would be a resource throughout the project. He stated that by using in-house staff and other technical assistance, the project would be achieved within the 30-month requirement.

**Council Member Scherman** expressed her support for the general plan preparation by PMC. She requested Laguna West be included in the meeting notifications.

**Council Member Leary** spoke in support of the general plan preparation by PMC. He indicated that full-day workshops would be necessary to appropriately consider the plan development.

As an alternative to having full day workshops, **Council Member Scherman** suggested the meetings be attended by a smaller representation of one Council Member and one Planning Commission and that the members alternate attendance.

**Commissioner Lotz** asked that the Stonelake and Lakeside areas be included in the notification.

**Mayor Cooper** recognized the importance and significance of the Planning Commission and City Council meeting jointly to set the footprint of the City of Elk Grove's future development. He acknowledged the importance of the audience interest and participation. Mayor Cooper spoke in support of preparation of the general plan by PMC. He cautioned and encouraged Mr. Carter to employ additional staff if necessary to keep up with day-to-day operations and to hold to the general plan timeline.

Motion: Moved by Council Member Briggs and seconded by Council Member Scherman that Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC) prepare a work plan and return it to the Council within 30 days for review and initiate the general plan.

**Council Member Leary** requested that the motion be amended to reflect the addition of an economic development as an additional element.

**Council Member Briggs** clarified that this will be part of the work plan to be returned by PMC.

***Motion: Moved by Council Member Briggs and seconded by Council Member Scherman that Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC) prepare a work plan and return it to the Council within 30 days for review and initiate the general plan. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.***

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no additional business to be considered at the Special Joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting of February 28, 2001, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

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**PEGGY E. JACKSON**  
**CITY CLERK**

**ATTEST:**

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**JAMES A. COOPER, MAYOR of the**  
**CITY OF ELK GROVE**