

City of Larkspur

CENTRAL LARKSPUR SPECIFIC PLAN COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

Meeting #9

May 4, 2000

*Fellowship Hall
Redwoods Presbyterian Church
110 Magnolia Avenue*

Specific Plan Committee

William Broughan
Debora Busse*
Nancy Curley
Monte Deignan
Bruce Dorfman*

Maryjane Dunstan
Susan Gilardi
Helen Heitkamp
Larry Lanctot
Myles O'Dwyer

Cyndi Niven
Maurice Palumbo
Joe Prickett
Neil Reeder*
Judy Saffran

**Alternate member*

Absent

Scott Churchill
Deborah Lundberg

Joan Lundstrom
Shawn Nazari

Joe Stone
Molly White

City of Larkspur

Robin Anderson, Recorder
Thomas Cooke, Planning Consultant
Joan Lamphier, Planning Consultant

Sally Nielsen, Economics Consultant
Robert Pendoley, Planning Consultant
Jan Vazquez, Planning Director

Welcome

Susan Gilardi, Committee Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

Gilardi explained that the Options Assessment Workshop will have two phases. The first phase will take place tonight, and the second is scheduled for May 18.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to decide which of 26 planning options that have been suggested to the Committee should be considered for further study. The planning options are concepts that have been generated by the Committee's planning consultant, **Tom Cooke** (as well as by Citizens for Rational Growth), which in most cases describe possible land uses. Some of the options also relate to possible circulation routes in the project area. Choosing to retain an option for further study does not mean that the Committee is recommending that the concept be put in the Specific Plan. Rather, it means that the concept should be studied further. Some options may be discarded in later phases of the project.

The second phase of the workshop, on May 18, will study where in the planning area each of the retained options might be located.

Gilardi went on to say that after the May 18 meeting the planning consultant will prepare sketch plans for each of the properties in the planning area. We expect that at least three sketch plans will be prepared for each property indicating how the various options the Committee selects in this workshop might be developed on the property.

Gilardi concluded by saying that **Tom Cooke** would explain which options are being recommended to stay on the table for now and why. Next, the Committee would ask questions and discuss the recommendations until the break at 8:30. The rest of the evening will be devoted to taking comments from the audience until everyone has a chance to speak. After the audience comments the Committee on give direction on which options should be retained for further study.

Options Assessment Workshop

Tom Cooke gave a presentation summarizing the options that the consultant team recommended be retained for further study. Cooke stressed that these are the consultants' recommendations, and the Committee should feel free to retain or reject options as it sees fit. Cooke summarized the recommendations in the Assessment Workbook that was distributed to the Committee and made available to the public.

Committee members had questions and comments:

Q: Regarding the proposed rerouting of the bike path currently located in the railroad right-of-way, how can we get people to travel on what seems to be a less direct route?

A: If the recommended path is designed attractively, people will prefer it to the current route, which takes bicyclists through a dangerous intersection.

- We should be careful not to reject community playfields (option #20) because of costs. There are options for fund raising
- Discussions of General Plan policies tend to talk about "up to" specified densities or square footage. "Up to" should not be license to go to the maximum allowed by the General Plan.
- Height must truly reflect our small town character, i.e., 2 stories.

Q: Regarding Option #18, how many affordable units are we talking about? Where would they be and how tall?

A: That would have to be determined in subsequent phases of the process.

Q: How can we retain an option if it is not consistent with our principles?

A: You shouldn't keep an option on the table if you have determined it is not consistent with your principles. However, you do not have to accept the consultant's recommendation about consistency or inconsistency. Also, you may find that consistency is a matter of degree.

- We don't need as large a police station as the Police Department is proposing. Also, the police/fire station should be centrally located.
- There needs to be a stronger correlation between the principles and the options than there appears to be in some cases.
- Rely on surface parking (Options #26 A & B). A parking structure is not consistent with our small town character.
- We should keep as many options as possible for now.

Q: Do we need more office space?

A: The economic studies show there is a market for additional office space. The market is not as strong in downtown Larkspur as in other parts of Marin, and we do not necessarily “need” additional office space. On the other hand, additional office space could provide more customers for downtown businesses and contribute to the area’s vitality.

- A new fire station should not be located near homes because of the noise and traffic conflicts.
- Our principles must be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan. The General Plan is our foundation. This includes the two plazas which are called for by the General Plan and the Downtown Plan and the height limits. The General Plan is the result of extensive citizen participation, and our work must reflect this. Provide an analysis that shows how this options are consistent with the General Plan.
- Keep the gas station where it is. The corner of Magnolia and Doherty is not a good location for offices.
- Let’s not relocate the railroad buildings.
- We need to coordinate and share information with the 2050 Committee.
- When we talk about housing numbers, we must acknowledge that there may be bonus units for providing affordable housing. We have to know the total number of units.
- If the railroad plaza is to be public, it will impact the City’s fiscal condition. It will have to be both purchased and maintained by the City.
- If we want to maintain “small town character” and have an economically viable downtown, there may have to be concessions and compromises. There is not much level land left in town that could support play fields.

After a short break at 8:35 we took questions and comments from the audience. We asked speakers to introduce themselves.

Miles – Consider the young people of the community in your planning. They need a place to hang out.

Malcolm – Don’t convert the gas station to an office. The gas station is the only one left in the area. It is also the only convenient oil recycling center and source of compressed air for tires. The Police Department uses it for refueling.

Paul – Don’t move the historic railroad buildings.

Mary – Maintain the small town scale, especially the 25 foot height limit. Keep the City uses where they are, including the library.

Chuck – Coordinate with the 2050 Committee.

Karen – The 2050 committee is looking for ways to consolidate services. In particular, we need to make better use of existing school facilities. We can use their fields at less cost than if we try to develop play fields on the Niven property.

Chuck – 3 stories is not acceptable. We need development that will bring in new revenue. But we have to maintain our scale.

Karen – Look for development that will bring new revenue.

Dave – Keep the playfields as an option. Maintain the existing small scale of our development pattern. Coordinate with the 2050 Committee. Keep the gas station. Thanks for the good work!

Alice – We need some green space. Keep the railroad buildings where they are, and don’t develop them. Maintain the existing low scale of development, and keep the gas station.

-- We do not need more retail; we already have vacancies and traffic problems. Support the Citizens for Rational Growth proposals.

-- Hotel and office uses belong in Larkspur Landing. Don’t move the library.

James – Don’t reorganize lots for large scale redevelopment.

Lorraine – Build an annex at City Hall to create more space. A public plaza may bring in undesirables. Consider having a police presence on the plaza.

-- A hotel is not consistent with our small town character.

Barbara – There seems to be a preconceived plan to maximize development to bring in as much revenue as possible.

Judy – I am concerned about traffic, excessive speeds and the lack of left turn lanes.

Nancy – Consider how the plan will develop over time. How do we want the area to look? How do we maintain our small town character?

-- Keep the railroad buildings, City Hall and the library as they are.

-- Madrone and Doherty are major roads. Roundabouts are a nightmare and should be dropped from further consideration. Any thing you do must be consistent with the General Plan.

Mike – A police station and a community center should be retained as options. Don't assume that public uses have to be on Magnolia. Don't limit your flexibility for the future. The creek is a key issue and should be designated as a subarea. Is more retail really needed?

Fred – What do you mean by “the City’s fiscal balance?” Doherty Park is small, but it is an important asset that you should be considering. Have you looked at traffic flow on Magnolia?

Alan – Why are you looking at a hotel? Why are you looking at changes to the height standard? Why should we consider more retail? Traffic is a major problem – Magnolia is being used as a bypass from Highway 101.

Mr. Freeman – I am hearing a lot of elitism here tonight: we're here, now pull up the ladder. We need affordable housing, and we need the revenue to maintain what we have. We need to build “community.”

Rick – retain the City parking lot as it is. Three story buildings are unacceptable. Retain our small town character. Emphasize public uses and de-emphasize commercial.

After these comments were received, the Committee deliberated on which options should be retained. The Committee's decisions are recorded in the two right hand columns in the attached chart

Next Steps

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2000. We will take up the second phase of the workshop which will focus on subareas that could be considered as possible locations for the various options the Committee decided to retain for further consideration..

Close

We adjourned at 10:30pm.