

CALL TO ORDER - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Lara DeLaney, Councilmember, Mark Ross, Councilmember, Janet Kennedy, Vice Mayor, and Rob Schroder, Mayor.
EXCUSED: Michael Menesini, Councilmember.
ABSENT: None.

PLANNING COMMISSION:

PRESENT: Donna Allen, Commissioner; Harriett Burt, Commissioner; Kimberley Glover, Commissioner; Sigrid Waggener, Commissioner; Jim Blair Commissioner; Jeffrey Keller, Vice Chair.
EXCUSED: Paul Kelly, Commissioner; Rachael Ford, Chair.
ABSENT: None.

DISCUSSION Downtown Matters: Presentation and discussion of the results of the Downtown Matters workshops and tours.

Mayor Schroder opened the meeting and welcomed all those present. He indicated that the presentation and discussion of tonight's meeting is on a process that started several months ago called Downtown Matters. Mayor Schroder depicted his involvement in the process, and turned the meeting over to City Manager Philip Vince.

City Manager Philip Vince began his presentation with "how did we get here," including a review of the early stages of the General Plan process. He stated that Planning Manager Terry Blount was able to receive a grant for \$10,000 to initiate the process. Mr. Vince discussed inquiries he made to find someone to assist with the General Plan Task Force. He also reviewed funding issues for state and local government, and he indicated that Susan Moeller was highly qualified and highly recommended.

Susan Moeller provided more information on herself, her background and her experience. Ms. Moeller and Contractor Planner Dina Tasini gave a PowerPoint presentation, providing an overview of the Downtown Matters process, how it differed from the Specific Plan process, and what the intent was. She also summarized the content of the four workshops: 1) Transforming Suburban Downtowns, 2) New Realities in the 21st Century, 3) the Art and Science of Placemaking, and 4) Making It Happen: New Opportunities for Downtown Martinez.

Ms. Moeller concluded the presentation with action steps and strategies for the future. Mayor Schroder said he was impressed with Livermore's process and the results, as well as the idea of refreshing the Specific Plan and the discussion of public places, especially flex space.

Councilmember Ross said he was encouraged by the participation in the process. He also was appreciative of the concept of becoming intelligently more urban. He commented on the Main Street Plaza in Redwood City and asked how the funding was acquired and whether

redevelopment played a part. Ms. Moeller said yes, redevelopment was a part for some cities, which she acknowledged was probably not an option at this point; but she discussed other sources and leveraging funds for maximum benefit. Councilmember Ross asked, and Ms. Moeller confirmed that in Redwood City there was a definite concern about preserving historic buildings.

Vice Mayor Kennedy expressed concern about the need to connect the downtown and the Marina, and she asked if there had been a discussion about how the businesses operate, types of businesses and merchandising. Ms. Moeller said it had not been a specific topic, and she acknowledged there might be challenges in attracting new businesses. Vice Mayor Kennedy expressed appreciation for the efforts of Main Street Martinez in events such as Halloween activities, New Years, etc. She commented on the decrease in county agencies/employees and how that could affect the downtown. Ms. Moeller discussed similarities with Redwood City and ways to attract customers to come at different times rather than just weekday business hours. She also commented on the lack of attention to ways to attract new businesses, which is a vital component. She discussed the necessity for ongoing relationships with the downtown stakeholders, such as the County, the School District and Shell.

Councilmember DeLaney discussed her initial skepticism regarding the necessity for another look at the challenges with the City's downtown, and she acknowledged she had only participated in one of the workshops, but she was appreciative of the information gleaned from the process. She commented on the "Downtown Accomplishments", noting that there were more than what was on the list. She agreed that the wayfinding needs improvement, i.e. signage, public improvements in the downtown, and the possibility of more flexible space and/or outdoor dining. She expressed that the downtown is the heart of the community, and the advantages of developing a vision statement and a rendering of that vision.

Planning Commissioner Burt was appreciative of Ms. Moeller's positive outlook and the first real hope for a unified future. She expressed concern that the City not fall into the bad habits of the past but look at the whole picture to achieve common goals. Ms. Burt also discussed the impressions of a visitor to Martinez, both in the 1960s and more recently, and her comments about the many accomplishments. She agreed that a unified plan and mutual compromise would ensure greater success in the long run.

Planning Commissioner Alternate James Blair responded to Vice Mayor Kennedy's question about what it will take to keep the doors open later - as a business owner in the downtown; he commented on the need to attract more people to the downtown. He also discussed the dramatic demographic changes that are anticipated in the near future and the opportunities it presents for the City.

Commissioner Allen suggested that the schedule for showing the workshops should be included on the website and in the newspapers. She acknowledged her initial doubts that this process was even necessary, but she was impressed with the many simple things that can be implemented quickly. She noted that Lodi did not have redevelopment, but they developed a facade improvement program to assist business owners. She also discussed the need to develop a better partnership relationship with the major employers in the downtown. She was especially appreciative of the public outreach done by Ms. Moeller and her team.

Commissioner Glover said she was not able to attend the workshops, but she expressed appreciation for the presentation and the very useful information. She was excited about the possibilities.

Commissioner Waggener also expressed her appreciation for the level of expertise and the information about what has worked in other cities and could work in Martinez.

Commissioner Keller was very encouraged by the possibilities presented and the promising future.

Mayor Schroder opened public comment on the item.

Sally Sweetzer discussed a new marketing program called "Pop-up Hood" that could help meet the unique challenges of Martinez' small downtown area and traffic issue. Councilmember Ross echoed her comments and the possibilities for similar development in Martinez.

Mayor Schroder discussed an idea by Paul Craig to encourage artist spaces for lower rent in the downtown until more lucrative businesses can be attracted.

Mike Alford said it is time for the City to come together and work to implement these strategies - to dream and achieve the goals. He commented on new opportunities from businesses leaving other cities, as well as possibilities from the new annexation areas.

Linda Meza expressed her gratitude to Ms. Moeller for the process and the ideas that resulted. She commented on a documentary, "The Blood and the Stone," that showed how a small town held a blood drive, which unified the people under a common goal.

Seeing no further speakers, Mayor Schroder closed public comment on the item.

Mayor Schroder suggested that the City Manager review the specific actions to see which ones will work for Martinez.

Commissioner Burt said she wanted to be sure that these ideas be acted on and not stuck on a shelf and forgotten. She noted that the Planning Commission currently has time to review the Downtown Specific Plan and develop a unified vision.

Councilmember DeLaney agreed and also recommended that the City look at accomplishing short term implementation steps. She suggested that staff analyze the possibilities in terms of cost and viability.

Vice Mayor Kennedy suggested working on the signage and wayfinding.

Councilmember DeLaney suggested looking at the economic stimulus plan and extending the deadline and look at funds to dedicate to this purpose. Mayor Schroder said the deadline extension should be put on a future agenda.

Councilmember Ross agreed that the short-term projects should be easily achieved, and the community should be supportive of those accomplishments.

Councilmember DeLaney commented on the need to find new funding sources, such as the income from the new billboard as mentioned by Commissioner Allen.

Mayor Schroder indicated that State Senator Lois Wolk will be introducing a two year bill to help with funding for infrastructure improvements.

Commissioner Burt asked about her suggestion that the Planning Commission begin looking at implementation of the Downtown Specific Plan.

Commissioner Allen noted that the General Plan Update that is underway needs to include an economic element, so perhaps the Planning Commission and Council can help provide background information.

Councilmember Ross suggested having a workshop in January or February to discuss more specific steps.

Commissioner Burt recommended that Ms. Moeller facilitate again.

**PUBLIC COMMENT (COMPLETE SPEAKER CARD AND GIVE TO CLERK)
Reserved only for those requesting to speak on items not listed on the Agenda.**

Mike Alford stated that this meeting was a good positive start, and money should be put aside to bring in private investors so the City can move forward together.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 9:17 p.m. to a Regular City Council Meeting on November 16, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 525 Henrietta Street, Martinez, California.

Approved by the City Council

Rob Schroder, Mayor

Mercy G. Cabral, Deputy City Clerk – 12/7/11