



**CITY OF FOWLER**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**January 5, 2012**  
**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mukai at 6:34 p.m.

**Commissioners Present:** Gary Mukai, Chairman, Craig Mellon, Vice-Chair, Sandie Monis, Mark Rodriquez

**Commissioners Absent:** Fernandez

**City Staff Present:** David Elias, City Manager, Scott Cross, Legal Counsel, David Weisser, Public Works Supervisor, Mike Koch, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, Bruce O'Neal, City Planner, Karen Mukai, Asst. Planning Secretary

**Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioner Monis noted corrections to minutes as: under **Agenda Item No. 5**, second paragraph, Jemi Juarez should be Remy Juarez; also discontinue should be continue.

Vice-chair Mellon moved to approve the minutes for November 3, 2011, as corrected, second by Commissioner Monis and passed by unanimous voice vote.

**Public Presentation:**

There were no public presentations (Public Presentations closed at 6:36 p.m.)

**Agenda Item No. 5:**

**Public hearing to Consider Site Plan Review Application No. 11-03, A Proposal filed by Fowler Development, LLC, to Construct a Motel 6 on Property located at 210 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street (APN No. 343-201-05** Bruce O'Neal presented a brief overview of the Staff Report and noted that the Design Review Committee met on 11/10/11 with minor comments. There is a condition of approval that is a payment to CalTrans to provide signalization at the on & off ramp of Hwy. 99 on Merced Street. The site plan includes on street parking for 28 vehicles to meet the required parking for 81 rooms. He then clarified the Planning Commissioners options: they can approve the site plan as presented with conditions, they can modify the conditions, they can modify the site plan itself,

Commissioner Monis questioned the hours of construction, noted on conditions as 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and should be corrected to 7:00 a.m.

The applicant, Manu Naran, CEO, Fowler Development LLC, gave some historical background on Motel 6 past properties, changes that are being made and how the present design has incorporated these changes. The full license agreement has been approved and includes control of the Kingsburg, Selma, and Fowler area.

The Public Hearing was opened at 6:55 p.m.

Caesar Rodriguez, GR Consulting Group, engineer working with Mr. Naran on this project. Motel 6 is trying to make improvements to remove the stigma it has now. The new design is more mid-range, the rooms are nice, better lighting in the parking lots, security, etc. They have been talking with the McDonald's owner regarding the development of the ½ acre between the hotel and McDonald's. They have also been looking into the proposed use of solar panels. They hope to hire up to 12 Fowler locals to work at the hotel.

Sylvia Zuniga, representative from the La Quinta Hotel, stated that having another hotel in Fowler would affect the occupancy rate of the La Quinta. She has been in the hospitality business since 2004 and has worked at Motel 6 and other comparable hotels. She feels that that level of hotel does attract a certain level of clientele that would not be favorable to the community. The winter months are generally a low occupancy rate for all hotels and having another hotel in town would add to this burden.

Ernest Mata, 223 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, one of the residents that signed the submitted letter. As a representative of the residents across from the proposed site, he appreciates the progress of this endeavor; however he does not feel the clientele and Motel 6 issues would not be favorable. He also feels the street parking issue could reduce the value of the property and would be a safety issue.

Commissioner Monis asked about the truck parking issues on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Naran shared an idea of possibly having a shuttle bus between the Manning Ave. truck Stop and the proposed Motel 6.

Pilar Miller, across from McDonald's would like to see speed bumps added- to slow down traffic on 10<sup>th</sup> Street when the Motel 6 is built. He is in favor of the proposed Motel 6 because improvements to 10<sup>th</sup> Street are included in the proposal, there will be better lighting because of the hotel and he feels that the trash problem might be improved upon.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked how people will know about the upgrade efforts of Motel 6. Mr. Naran stated they will be advertising and marketing to promote the new concept for Motel 6.

Andy Gonzalez, Fowler resident and Fowler Barber Shop owner, feels the Motel 6 is a good idea but he doesn't want it to take away from the La Quinta. We should concentrate and support the La Quinta which we already have operating. They approached the City Council and were asking for a temporary reduction in loan payment during the slow months. City manager Elias explained that the La Quinta had asked the City Council if they could lower their loan payment during the slow months (winter). He also stated that the City is not in the position to provide financial assistance to any future projects.

Mr. Naran was asked if he was aware of this and if the project could still move forward without financial assistance from the City. Mr. Naran stated that financial was not required to move forward but they were looking into the possibility of deferring on ½ of the 10<sup>th</sup> St. improvements, storm drain to Merced St and/or possibly asking the City for apply \$70,000 - \$100,000 towards fixtures and apply to fee reductions. Similar to what has been offered to other businesses downtown.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7:52 p.m.

City Planner O'Neal addressed the parking concerns. There are 55 spaces on-site which is equivalent to 65% occupancy. If the Council does not support street parking the options are to reduce the size of the building, apply for a parking variance where the commissioners would approve a lesser requirement (not recommended), There will be space available once the abandonment of Fowler Avenue is completed (projected within 90 days), code does allow for additional parking to be furnished within 350 ft of the location.

Chairman Mukai stated striped street parking could be a deterrent to truck parking on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Commissioner Monis' main concern is the effect on traffic congestion at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Merced Street. Chairman Mukai asked for clarification on what the Commissioners' vote would be regarding. City Planner O'Neal stated the vote would be to approve the site plan or to recommend additions and/or changes to the site plan and if they deny the site plan the must give clear reasons for denial and then the applicant would have to submit a new site plan to the Planning Commission. Vice-Chair Mellon wanted it further clarified that it is not the Planning Commission's prerogative to deny a hotel on this site, only to approve, request modifications or deny the site plan. If the site plan is denied, the applicant has the right to appeal to the City Council.

Chairman Mukai's main concern is the extended time the lot has remained vacant.

The Public Hearing was reopened at 8:02 p.m.

Ernest Mata stated that the safety and street parking were his main concerns along with the commercial vehicles parking on the street (council would have to approve signage regarding no truck parking) and the impact the motel would have on the traffic on Merced Street. City Attorney Cross clarified that if the commissioners vote to eliminate street parking and they propose they move the parking to Fowler Avenue once the abandonment is complete, that parking would have to be voted on after the abandonment is complete.

The Public Hearing was closed at 8:10 p.m.

An alternate site plan was available which included parking on Fowler Avenue, a gymnasium and proposed walkway/shopping on the ½ acre between the motel and McDonalds. Mr. Naran stated they could eliminate the pool and the proposed gymnasium to accommodate the needed parking if the street parking was not approved. It was recommended that these amenities not be eliminated because they improve the appeal of the motel. City Attorney Cross & City Planner O'Neal clarified that it would be up to the discription of the commission

The commission conducted a quick vote regarding who is in favor of street parking: 2 in favor, 2 against.

They then clarified for Mr. Naran that the street improvements would still have to be done, if street parking were eliminated.

Vice Chair Mellon moved to approve the Site Plan Review Application No. 1103 with the correction on item 30 to 7:00 a.m. Motion was seconded by Chairman Mukai, roll call vote: Vice-chair Mellon: yes; Chairman Mukai: yes; Commissioner Monis: no; Commissioner Rodriguez: no – motion did not pass.

Commissioner Rodriguez moved to approve Site Plan Review 11-03 without street parking, second by Commissioner Monis. Roll call vote: Commissioner Rodriguez: yes; Commissioner Monis: yes; Vice-chair Mellon: no; Chairman Mukai: yes; motion carried.

**Communications:**

Chairman Mukai reconfirmed that everyone received information on the Planner's Institute. City Manager Elias stated that Councilmember Aguayo has resigned from the City Council for a career change and to further his education. He also reminded everyone to RSVP to Karen Mukai by 1/19/12 for the Employee Appreciation Dinner.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Mukai  
Assistant Planning Secretary

  
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Chairman Mukai

  
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Planning Secretary