City of Rohnert Park
PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: January 24, 2017

Agenda Item No: 8.1

Subject: Discussion of Options for Planning Commission Communication with City Council.

The Planning Commission has expressed a desire to have more effective communications with the City Council on important issues. The purpose of this discussion item is to identify a preliminary list of issues and to weigh different options to convey the information to the City Council. As identified below the Planning Commission is assigned certain responsibilities by the Municipal Code, and while the commission does not have carte blanche authority to offer recommendations to the City Council on any topic, it is clear that the intent of the code is to allow the commission to weigh in on land use issues.

ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

The Municipal Code identifies two significant areas of responsibility for the Planning Commission:

1. Title 16 (Subdivisions). Section 16.06.010 designates the planning commission as the advisory agency regarding major subdivisions under the Subdivision Map Act.

2. Title 17 (Zoning). Chapter 17.25 (Administration and Enforcement Procedures), Article IX (Planning Commission) creates the Commission and establishes rules for meetings and responsibilities. It states that:

   > " The Planning Commission shall have such powers and duties as may be assigned to it by the city council...."

3. Chapter 17.25 also assigns the Planning Commission decision-making authority over Site Plan and Architectural Reviews and Conditional Use Permit.

4. The Municipal Code also assigns the Planning Commission the responsibility of making recommendations to the City Council on a wide variety of land use decisions, including: maps, Specific Plans, General Plan amendments, zoning amendments, Development Area Plans, etc.

It is clear from the Municipal Code that the Planning Commission has the authority to make recommendations to the City Council on land use topics. Also, California land use law vests certain land use responsibilities with the Planning Commission.

ZONING ORDINANCE UDPATE PROJECT

Planning staff has been tasked with updating the zoning code this year. The idea is to do a thorough clean-up and streamlining of code provision. Planning staff is also investigating ways to initiate a form-based code for the Central Rohnert Park area. It was anticipated that the Rohnert Crossings project was going to help initiate the form-based code effort, but that project is on hold. Through this zoning update process, Planning Commission will have opportunities to weigh in on important code changes.

LIST OF TOPICS

The Planning Commission has mentioned several topical areas (e.g. solar panels, parking) that it would like to discuss in more detail. The purpose of the discussion tonight is to develop a comprehensive list of topics. Staff will engage the Planning Commission in a discussion to identify preliminary issues.
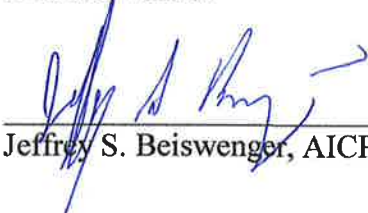
METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Three primary methods of communication could be considered to relay information to the City Council. One or all of these could be considered:
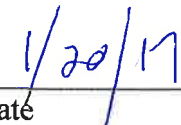
1. Joint Meeting. This could be a meeting to discuss a comprehensive list of topics or to focus on a few issues at a time. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission better define a list of discussion items, and analyze the topics in more detail prior to pursuing a joint meeting.

2. Reports / Memo. The Planning Commission could issue reports or memos to the City Council on important topics. For example it could issue a report on "solar," along with an analysis of how the zoning ordinance could be update to incorporate requirements and/or incentives.

3. Comprehensive recommendation on zoning ordinance changes. Planning staff has been tasked with update the zoning ordinance this year. Input and direction from the Planning Commission will be critical to this effort and this input will be forwarded to the City Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a Study Session and provide direction to staff.

APPROVALS:

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Jeffrey S. Beiswenger, AICP

1/20/17
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Date