

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 6, 2012 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gibson.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners D'anjou, Gibson, Polcari, Rizzo, Weideman and Vice-Chair Uchima.

Absent: Chairperson Skoll (excused).

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Sr. Planning Associate Santana, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Plans Examiner Noh, Planning Associate Joe, Sr. Fire Prevention Officer Kazandjian, and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Friday, May 31, 2012.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of the May 2, 2012 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote, with Commissioner Polcari abstaining (absent Chairperson Skoll).

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

Vice-Chair Uchima reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

8. TIME EXTENSIONS – None.

9. SIGN HEARINGS – None.

10. CONTINUED HEARINGS

10A. CUP12-00005: MYUNG CHUNG (ALLEN HAGENBAUCH)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of a church within an existing industrial building on property located in the former Industrial Redevelopment Project Area M-2 Zone at 1812 Abalone Avenue.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Manager Lodan introduced the request.

Myung Chung, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Commissioner Rizzo noted that the staff report mentions that the applicant needs to obtain a reciprocal cross access easement with the owners of the railroad right-of-way in order to utilize 12 parking spaces at the rear of the site.

Mr. Chung explained that the railroad was asking too high of a price for the easement therefore the church has made arrangements to lease parking spaces from other businesses in the area, including the Department of Motor Vehicles (1785 220th Street), which will benefit both parties because the DMV needs additional parking during the week and the church needs additional parking on Sundays.

Planning Associate Kevin Joe provided clarification regarding parking arrangements and confirmed that parking requirements were met.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Mr. Chung discussed revisions that were made to the project to maximize the use of the sanctuary and comply with parking requirements. He reported that the only activities on weekdays are small bible study groups and confirmed that there will not be any large-scale events, such as baptisms or weddings, on weekdays.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved for the approval of CUP12-00005, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

Sr. Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-027.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-027. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

11. WAIVERS – None.

12. FORMAL HEARINGS

12A. DVP12-00004, WAV12-00004: BRYANT PALMER SOTO INC. / TK MED LLC (WILLIAM A NIKKEL)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Development Permit to allow first and second-story additions to a former restaurant building being converted to medical in conjunction with a Waiver of the side setback requirement on property located in the H-MP Zone at 23365 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

Keith Palmer, Bryant Palmer Soto Inc., project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He briefly described the proposed project, which would convert the former Marie Callender's restaurant to medical offices. He reported that the first floor will be expanded by approximately 2,000 square feet for a total of 9,200 square feet and a second floor of approximately 5,000 square feet will be added that cantilevers over a row of parking at the rear of the building. He noted that residents to the rear of the project have expressed concerns about the project's impact on their privacy, however, the project greatly exceeds the required minimum rear setback of 20 feet, and the maximum height of the building will be 35 feet, which is under the maximum height limit of 45 feet. He explained that the upper floor will consist of exam rooms and offices for the doctor and medical staff and windows will be designed to ensure privacy for both patients and residential neighbors to the west. He related his belief that residents were far more likely to have their privacy impacted by their next door neighbors than from this project.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Mr. Palmer explained that he was proposing to use standard-sized windows on the second floor, but the lower panel would be opaque or translucent glass for purposes of privacy. He clarified that he initially proposed having designated employee parking at the rear of the parking lot due to a narrow one-way driveway, however the driveway has been enlarged so there's no longer any need to have designated employee parking.

Dorothy Robley, 23334 Los Codona, stated that residents appreciated being notified about this project because they did not receive notice when the Arjay's shopping center was approved at the corner of Hawthorne and Lomita Boulevard. She questioned whether any Commissioners had visited the site and observed the condition of the alley.

Commissioner D'anjou stated that she's very familiar with the property and was aware that the alley is in dismal shape, but suggested that Ms. Robley confine her comments to the issue at hand.

Ms. Robley questioned the need for additional medical office space in Torrance, explaining that according to her research, there are currently 99 medical office suites available in Torrance and several are located in the immediate area of this project. She expressed concerns that a real estate sign has been posted on the property offering medical suites, which gives the impression that the project has already been approved.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan advised that the Planning Commission considers a project from a land-use perspective and not its marketability.

Ms. Robley reported on large medical office facilities that have been approved or are under construction on Lomita Boulevard.

Vice-Chair Uchima reiterated that it was not the Commission's role to determine whether or not a project was financially viable; and Commissioner Gibson encouraged Ms. Robley to focus on how she would be personally impacted by the project.

Ms. Robley expressed concerns that the project would impact the privacy of her backyard, pool and master bedroom balcony, as well as all of the east-facing rooms in her home. She also expressed concerns that the medical offices will generate a huge volume of traffic that will create noise and affect air quality and that it would block her view. She explained that the structure will appear taller than 35 feet from the adjacent residences because they are at a lower elevation.

Commissioner Weideman noted that privacy impact can be addressed by modifying windows, and Ms. Robley stated that she was still not comfortable with the project.

Arum Bhumitra, owner of Arjay Plaza, 23211 Hawthorne Boulevard, disputed Ms. Robley's claim that the public was not informed when the shopping center was approved. He voiced support for the proposed project, stressing the need to revitalize this area. He related his experience that office/retail space in other areas like Valencia, rents for far more than comparable space at Arjay Plaza.

Christina Perparas, 23338 Los Codona, reported that she is already subjected to a tremendous amount of noise from aircraft due to her proximity to the airport and contended that the addition of this building will increase traffic, noise and pollution levels to the extent that it will have a negative effect on residents' health and welfare.

Vice-Chair Uchima doubted that the traffic impact would be greater than when Marie Callender's was in operation serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Ms. Perparas recalled that the restaurant's customers were not a problem. She expressed concerns about truck traffic in the alley that causes her house to shake like an earthquake, and Vice-Chair Uchima noted that medical offices do not typically generate a lot of truck traffic.

Dr. Sherif Khattab reported that he is partnering with another doctor to build this project because there is a shortage of medical office space that meets current standards and related his understanding most of the new office space being built near Torrance Memorial has already been spoken for. He explained that the second story is needed to make the project financially viable and the real estate sign on the property is there because additional doctors are being sought to share the proposed building. He contended that the project would generate significantly less noise and traffic than Marie Callender's, which was open 7 days a week with frequent deliveries by refrigerated food trucks. He offered his assurance that residential neighbors' privacy would not be invaded, explaining that he is a plastic surgeon and his patients also value their privacy.

He noted that his current office on Pacific Coast Highway is adjacent to residences and there have never been any problems.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Dr. Khattab stated that he will be occupying the entire upper floor; that no surgical facility is planned; that his staff leaves at 5:00 p.m.; and that he only sees patients on Sundays and Saturdays if they need to be seen for medical necessity.

In response to Commissioner Weideman's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan advised that the majority of traffic is expected to enter from Hawthorne Boulevard, but there will be a certain percentage that will leave via the alley because it provides more convenient access for traffic heading north. He reported that the applicant will be required to rebuild the center swale of the alley and the half of the alley adjacent to the subject property.

Vice-Chair Uchima noted that the plans show a row of trees at the rear of the property that could help with privacy issues.

Mr. Palmer reported that he was successful in addressing privacy issues at his personal residence using the Brisbane box tree, which is a hardy evergreen that does not have invasive roots.

Commissioner Polcari recommended that the trees be included as a condition of approval, and a brief discussion ensued regarding the appropriate size.

Vice-Chair Uchima questioned whether the building would be exclusively for medical offices, and Mr. Palmer explained that it's planned for medical offices, but other types of professional offices would not be precluded. He confirmed that there will be no restaurant on the site.

In closing comments, Mr. Palmer emphasized that development standards require only a 20-foot rear setback, while the proposed project is approximately 70 feet from the rear property line thereby creating a much larger buffer for residents.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of DVP12-00004, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, with the following modification:

Modify

No. 8 That a landscape plan shall be submitted to the Community Development Department for approval prior to the issuance of any building permits and shall be implemented prior to occupancy. That mature trees, minimum 24-inch box, shall be included to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

Add

- That west-facing windows on the second-story addition shall be opaque to a minimum of 6-feet in height.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

Sr. Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-030.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-030 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of WAV12-00004, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

Sr. Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-031.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-031. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

The Commission briefly recessed from 8:15 p.m. to 8:25 p.m.

12B. CUP12-00007, DIV12-00004, DVP12-00003, WAV12-00003: MARY MELLONE

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Development Permit to allow the construction and operation of a new child daycare center in conjunction with a Waiver to allow a reduction of the side setback requirement and a Division of Lot to consolidate two lots into one on property located in the H-MP Zone at 23104 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

Nagy Bakhoun, Obelisk Architects, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He stated that his client, Mary Mellone, currently operates two successful pre-schools in Orange County and would like to expand to the South Bay where she lives. He reported that the school accepts children from 18 months to 6 years old, but most are between 18 months and 4 years old. He explained that creating a safe drop-off area was a prime consideration so the project was designed with a subterranean parking garage that vehicles will circulate through to a drop off point next to the front door where teachers will receive children and take them into the office. He noted that the same type of valet system is used at his client's other schools in Orange County.

Mr. Bakhoun briefly described the proposed project. He reported that the building will be smaller than the existing Florence Fabrics building on the site; that

classrooms are situated to the rear and will be only one-story and modest in scale to minimize the impact on residential neighbors to the east; and that the front of the building will be moved back from Hawthorne Boulevard to create a buffer, which will also improve visibility for retail spaces on either side of the property. He explained that the new building will create a five-foot setback on the north side, which does not meet current requirements, but is better than the existing situation because lots along this stretch of Hawthorne Boulevard were developed with a zero lot line so the north wall of the existing building sits on the property line.

Mr. Bakhoum reported on an open house that was held for nearby residents and businesses. He stated that residents to the rear were mainly concerned about construction so he explained that the builder will follow City and CALGreen guidelines to minimize the impact and he also offered to install green mesh during construction. He noted that there were also concerns about playground noise, but no more than two classrooms will be allowed on the playground at one time and play periods are limited to 30 minutes. He pointed out that the applicant will be required to hire a noise consultant and will implement whatever additional measures are recommended. He advised that the owner of the retail property to the south objected to having the driveway adjacent to her property, however, he believes this is the safest location. He reported that a public sewer was discovered on the site, which the applicant would like to have relocated to the public right-of-way in order to address access issues. He voiced his opinion that the school would be a great addition to the City of Torrance and an asset to the community.

Commissioner Gibson noted that the applicant was proposing to have 180 children at the school, but the staff report indicates that only 160 would be allowed based on the size of the playground. Mr. Bakhoum responded that the Department of Social Services will typically grant a waiver allowing 10% more students.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Mr. Bakhoum reported that there will be a maximum class size of 24 toddlers and smaller classes for younger children; that the ratio is 1 teacher for every 12 toddlers and 2 to 12 for younger children; and that there will be a total staff of 16. He confirmed that students bring their own lunch; that there is an area for them to nap; and that the outdoor play area is enclosed and supervised at all times.

Commissioner Gibson expressed concerns that the preschool was proposing to operate until 11:00 p.m., and Mr. Bakhoum explained that the 11:00 p.m. closing time was included on the application in case the school has to remain open to accommodate a parent who gets delayed while working at the nearby hospital.

Commissioner D'anjou expressed concerns that the queue of parents dropping off children in the morning could back up onto Hawthorne Boulevard during rush hour. She noted that it takes time to unbuckle a child from a car seat and gather their belongings and a small child might not be comfortable with being handed over to a teacher at the drop-off point. She related her experience that parents often need to accompany their children to the classroom to calm them before leaving.

Mr. Bakhoum explained that parents will be able to park and accompany their children to the classroom, however, a Montessori school has a different philosophy in dealing with separation anxiety and the drop off goes smoothly for most children after a brief training period.

Noting that she has had occasion to take her grandchildren aged 3 years and 6 months to preschool, Commissioner Gibson stated that she could not imagine a parent who is late for work waiting patiently in line and doubted that the drop-off procedure would go as smoothly as described.

Mr. Bakhom suggested that the valet arrangement would be especially helpful for a parent with a 3-year old and a 6-month old, because the parent could simply drop the toddler off without having to park and take the baby along to the toddler's classroom.

William Hess, legal counsel representing Helen Hess, owner of 23112 Hawthorne Boulevard (vacant Surprise Store building), submitted a letter detailing objections to the project. He stated that the on-site circulation/parking arrangement defies common sense and parents are likely to park on his client's property to avoid a long queue thereby creating safety and liability issues. He noted that that the Dollar Tree store's success has already led to a lot of traffic traversing his client's parking lot. He pointed out that there was no mention of any security measures in the plans and expressed concerns about having so many small children in a confined area in the event of an emergency such as an earthquake or a fire. He voiced his opinion that the proposed project would greatly diminish the value of the Hess property and likened it to trying to put a square peg in a round hole.

Citing TMC §95.3.46, Mr. Hess contended that the play area should be confined to the rear of the property rather than immediately adjacent to his client's building and that it must be surrounded by a 6-foot high wall/fence for noise mitigation. Citing TMC §92.36.6, he contended that the Conditional Use Permit could not be approved because contrary to required findings, the proposed development will not enhance the commercial development of the area so as to increase the taxable value of the property (subsection (b)(5); traffic impacts have not been mitigated by the design of an on-site circulation system so as to minimize hazard and congestion (subsection (b)(6); and the development would pose a substantial risk to the public interest, health, safety, convenience and welfare (subsection (b)(9).

Commissioner Weideman requested that Assistant City Attorney Sullivan review and evaluate the TMC sections cited by Mr. Hess.

Bruce Kusada, Capital Real Estate Group, on behalf of Helen Hess, contended that the proposed project would infringe on her property and make it difficult to lease. He stated that the location of the play area was particularly problematic because no one is going to want to spend 8 hours a day next to screaming kids. He expressed concerns about the traffic jam that would be created by parents exiting the site during rush hour. He related his understanding that the Hawthorne Boulevard corridor was intended for commercial uses, which provide sales tax revenue for the city.

Thomas Carpenter, owner of 23036 Hawthorne Boulevard, stated that he supports the project and was glad something was being built on the site and he felt there was potential that the preschool could bring in customers for his tenant, Thomasville Furniture. He indicated that his only concern was that the sewer easement could make it difficult to reconfigure his property in the future.

Vice-Chair Uchima related his understanding that the applicant intends to relocate the sewer line to the street so an easement will not be necessary.

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the applicant is working with the Public Works Department to accomplish this, but the plans have not been finalized. He noted that a condition has been included requiring that the applicant to fund the relocation of the sewer line or obtain an easement on properties to the north and south for access and maintenance of the sewer.

In response to Commissioner Weideman's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan explained that the plans call for an 8-foot high wall to be constructed along the southerly property line to the point where it connects with the building.

Returning to the podium, Mr. Bakhoun expressed confidence that the on-site circulation plan would work as described, noting that it was based on an analysis of actual operations at Ms. Mellone's other preschools. He reported that Ms. Mellone requires each parent to sign a contract that clearly spells out all the rules, which includes the prohibition of parking on neighboring properties, and the penalty for not following the rules is disenrollment from the school. He explained that children arrive at the school between 7:00 – 9:00 a.m., with the largest influx from 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.; that the valet system of receiving children takes only about 90 seconds per car; and that the nearby signal at Lomita Boulevard will provide a break in traffic so vehicles can easily exit. He disputed the claim that the preschool would diminish the value of neighboring properties, suggesting that property values are more likely to be adversely affected by vacant buildings that have become an eyesore.

Mary Mellone, applicant, clarified that in cases where children are not comfortable with the valet process, parents are asked to come earlier in the morning so they can park and bring the child into the school to allow the child to get acquainted with caregivers and staff and become familiar with the drop-off process. She noted that a conference is held with parents prior to enrollment and they are provided with a handbook so they thoroughly understand how the school operates. With regard to security, she explained that doors are locked while school is in session; that the front desk is staffed to let people in; that any adult coming into the school must show proper identification; that teachers have cell phones in the classrooms; and that there has never been an incident where police have had to be called.

In response to Commissioner D'anjou's inquiry, Ms. Mellone confirmed that people must be "buzzed in" in order to enter the school and no one can enter via gates, which are for emergency exit only.

Commissioner Weideman asked if the applicant would be willing to extend the wall along the southerly property line, and Ms. Mellone agreed to do so.

Vice-Chair Uchima questioned whether either of Ms. Mellone's preschools are located in a commercial area and if so, if they have a similar configuration for queuing/drop-off.

Ms. Mellone reported that her school in Irvine is in a commercial area on Main Street between McArthur and Jamboree and the approval includes restrictions which prohibit standing or parking on the street or in anyone else's parking lot or driveway.

She explained that the queuing arrangement is not the same because there is no underground parking garage so queuing space is much more limited.

Mr. Bakhoun noted that the school's Conditional Use Permit specifically prohibits queuing on the street so all queuing is confined to the driveway.

Commissioner Gibson expressed concerns about having so many children in such a small confined area with only one ingress/egress on Hawthorne Boulevard in the event of an emergency, and Mr. Bakhoun pointed out that there are two egresses for pedestrians and they can also exit through the building.

Commissioner Gibson stated that she likes the Montessori concept but believes this is the wrong location for a preschool.

Responding to the letter submitted by Mr. Hess, Assistant City Attorney Sullivan advised the TMC §95.3.46 applies only to child daycare facilities in conjunction with churches or schools located in the R-1, R-2, R-3, RR-3, RP and R-5 zones, so it was not applicable in this case. He explained that TMC §92.36.6(b)(5) is addressed in Resolution 12-034 Finding "G" and §92.36.6(b)(6) is addressed in Finding "H." He suggested that if the Commission was concerned about the potential impact on neighbors, a condition could be added prohibiting anyone associated with the school from parking on neighboring properties. He noted that daycare centers are allowed in the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor with approval of a Conditional Use Permit per Table IV-1 of the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan. With regard to the claim that the project would diminish neighboring property values, he related his belief that potential tenants would be more concerned about having a vacant, abandoned building next door than a preschool, which could be seen as a selling point for employees who need childcare.

Mr. Hess stated that Assistant City Attorney Sullivan failed to address the need for a finding that the development would not pose a substantial risk to and be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience and welfare - TMC §92.36.6(b)(9).

Commissioner Rizzo noted that the issue of public health and safety was addressed in Resolution No. 12-034 under "Finding "I" and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan directed Mr. Hess to Finding "K" in the same resolution.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

Commissioner Rizzo stated that he understood the concerns about parking and queuing due to the project's location, however, he recalled that the Commission approved a similar preschool to the south on Hawthorne Boulevard and 238th Street that had a much smaller area for queuing/drop-off and which does not have the same proximity to a traffic signal to provide a break for vehicles entering/exiting the property.

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the preschool has access on 238th Street, as well as Hawthorne Boulevard and is currently under construction. He recalled that preschool was approved for 140-150 students and that an office use will be sharing the building with the preschool.

Indicating that he was inclined to support the project, Commissioner Polcari stated that he thought it was a good use for a site that has been vacant for a long time; that he likes the façade and the way it looks from the street; and that his only concern was that a child would somehow get out and wander onto the busy street.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve CUP12-00007, DVP12-00003, WAV12-00003 and DIV12-00004, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, with the following modification:

Add

- That the applicant shall extend the 8-foot high wall along the southerly property line to the front of the property.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed as reflected in the following roll call vote:

AYES: Commissioners Polcari, Rizzo, Weideman and Vice-Chair Uchima
NOES: Commissioners D'anjou and Gibson
ABSENT: Chairperson Skoll

Planning Manager Lodan noted that the gate on the south side of the property will remain for Fire Department access.

Commenting on her vote, Commissioner D'anjou stated that she hopes to be proven wrong because it's a very nice facility, but she believes it's in the wrong place.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 12-032, 12-033, 12-034 and 12-035.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari for the approval of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 12-032, 12-033, 12-034 and 12-035 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed as reflected in the following roll call vote:

AYES: Commissioners Polcari, Rizzo, Weideman and Vice-Chair Uchima
NOES: Commissioners D'anjou and Gibson
ABSENT: Chairperson Skoll

Vice-Chair Uchima noted that the Commission's decision could be appealed to the City Council within 15 days.

The Commission briefly recessed from 9:40 p.m. to 9:50 p.m.

13. **RESOLUTIONS** – None

14. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

15. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

15A. LUS12-00001: ELECTRIC VEHICLE CODE UPDATE

Land Use Study to review recommended Division 9 Municipal Code additions and modifications with regard to Electric Vehicles.

With the aid of slides, Sr. Planning Associate Santana provided background information about the Stewardship of the Environment Strategic Priority in the 2008 Strategic Plan as related to encouraging the development and use of alternative fuels and energy sources in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. He reported on efforts to replace gasoline-fueled vehicles in the City's fleet with alternative fuel vehicles and to provide alternative fueling/charging locations for City and public use. He noted that a grant was received to upgrade the outdated charging unit at City Hall and a second unit was added so there are now two charging stations available at the Civic Center for EVs (electric vehicles). He discussed the City's participation in the Honda Fit-EV project and staff's creation of "Plug-(p)in-Maps," an exercise which allowed the public at various environmental-themed events to put pins in aerial maps of Torrance reflecting their preferred locations for EV chargers. He noted that the exercise was later replicated on the City's website along with a short survey, which indicated that the majority of people support EVs, but were concerned about the higher purchase price, the need for additional equipment to charge them, and their limited range. He explained that the City's goal is to ultimately have charging stations no further than 1 mile apart throughout Torrance in order to address "range anxiety." He displayed a Charge Station Map showing existing charging stations in Torrance and those under construction.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reviewed the proposed amendments to the Torrance Municipal Code, which provide definitions and development standards designed to facilitate the creation of an EV infrastructure (per written material of record). He advised that staff was recommending that an EV parking space requirement be established for new commercial/industrial projects with 50 or more parking spaces, which would require 2% of the parking spaces to be equipped with charging infrastructure. He noted that other cities have established lower thresholds, i.e. Santa Monica requires 1 for every 20 spaces, but staff was concerned that could lead to a parking shortage for smaller parking lots and was therefore recommending the higher number.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that staff originally proposed that new residential developments with at least 5 units be required to provide electrical conduit for a Level 2 charger for at least 20% of units, and the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission amended this provision to require all new residential units to have this capability, but as an alternative staff was recommending that the City incorporate Section A4.106.6 of the updated CALGreen Building Code, which accomplishes the same thing for single-family residences and multi-family developments that have a dedicated garage for each unit. He noted that for multi-family developments with shared garages, the requirement would be that at least 3% of total parking spaces be capable of supporting future electric vehicle supply equipment.

With regard to signage for EV parking spaces, Sr. Planning Associate Santana noted that Mark Yamauchi of Toyota (per supplemental material) recommended using the term "PEV" (Plug-in Electric Vehicle) instead of "EV" on signs, however, staff believes "EV" would be less confusing for the public. He reported that Mr. Yamauchi also recommended replacing references to "Level 3" with "DC fast charging" because standards for Level 3 have not been set, but staff prefers to retain Level 3 as a place holder.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that there is usually a small fee to connect to charging stations at locations such as Walgreens between \$1-2 per hour; that these sites are for “top-off” charging; and that it takes approximately 1 hour to obtain a 25% charge. He clarified that staff was recommending that EV parking spaces be reserved exclusively for EVs but was not requiring them to be plugged-in and drawing power, explaining that staff was concerned about cluttering signs with unnecessary regulations and was waiting to see if this becomes an issue. He confirmed that staff was working to accommodate other forms of alternative-fueled vehicles, including CNG and bio-diesel.

Vice-Chair Uchima thanked Sr. Planning Associate Santana for the very informative presentation.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to recommend that the City Council approve the staff recommendation as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Skoll).

16. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Manager Lodan advised that the City Council approved the Chicken Maison and Deli Roma expansions at the May 22, 2012 City Council meeting.

17. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the June 20, 2012 Planning Commission meeting.

18. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

18A. Commissioner Rizzo requested an excused absence for the June 20 meeting.

Commissioner Weideman, seconded by Commissioner Polcari, so moved, and voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Chairperson Skoll).

18B. Commissioner Gibson requested an excused absence for the June 20 meeting.

Commissioner Weideman, seconded by Commissioner Polcari, so moved, and voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Chairperson Skoll).

19. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:50 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Amended July 18, 2012 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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