

**CITY OF CHICO PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING OF
July 21, 2022
DRAFT Minutes**

Municipal Center
421 Main Street
Council Chambers

Commissioners Present: Toni Scott, Chair
Richard Ober, Vice Chair
Paul Cooper
Dennis Deromedi
Larry Wahl

Commissioners Absent: Lindsay Poulin
Bryce Goldstein

Staff Members Present: Brendan Vieg, Community Development Director
Bruce Ambo, AICP, Principal Planner
Kelly Murphy, Senior Planner
Matt Johnson, Senior Development Engineer
Scott Nichols, City Attorney (via Zoom)
Nicole Acain, Administrative Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Scott called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

1.1 *Chair Scott led the Pledge of Allegiance.*

1.2 Commission members and staff were present as noted.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Ober moved to approve the minutes from the June 16, 2022, meeting.

Commissioner Wahl seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

AYES: Scott, Ober, Cooper, Deromedi, Wahl.

NOES: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

ABSENT: Goldstein, Poulin.

3. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

None.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4.1 TownePlace Suites Hotel, located south of Sierra Sunrise Terrace and northeast of the intersection of Deer Creek Highway (SR 32) and Bruce Road, APN 018-230-001. A proposal to construct a new hotel building on a vacant 4.09 acre site located south of Sierra Sunrise Terrace and northeast of the intersection of Deer Creek Highway (SR 32) and Bruce Road. The site is designated Commercial Mixed Use on the General Plan Land Use Diagram and zoned CC (Community Commercial). The proposed hotel building would have four stories and a footprint of 16,655 square feet, containing a total of 112 guest rooms. pursuant to Chico Municipal Code (CMC) Section 19.44.020, Table 4-6, a hotel use may be established in the CC zoning district subject to use permit approval. The proposed development project has been determined to be categorically exempt pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15332 (In-Fill Development Projects). **Questions regarding this project may be directed to Senior Planner Kelly Murphy at (530) 879-6535 or kelly.murphy@chicoca.gov.**

Announcement of Ex Parte communications:

- Chair Scott met with Jim Stevens regarding the project and had a site visit.
- Commissioner Cooper met with Jim Stevens regarding the project, had a site visit and met with Hignell Company – California Park HOA
- Commissioner Deromedi met with Jim Stevens regarding the project and had a site visit
- Commissioner Wahl met with Jim Stevens regarding the project

Chair Scott announced there would be a short 10-minute recess after the first five speakers and opened the public hearing and invited public comments. She encouraged everyone to be respectful of others and refrain from making noises or waving signs and avoid reiterating the same concerns by acknowledging agreement in previous statements.

Addressing the Commission on this item were:

- Jim Stevens, NorthStar Engineering – Applicant
- Mark Wolfe, NorthStar Engineering - Applicant
- Michael Bowers- Applicant, HTH Management – Applicant
- Loren Chilson, Headway Transportation – Applicant
- Kathleen Lambkin – Former President of Sierra Lakeside HOA in Cal Park: Contended that the vision and plan for this community never included a hotel, otherwise residents would not have chosen that location.
- Jeff Lamkin on behalf of Judy Sitton – California Park was designed to create a sense of place, security and serenity for residents. The hotel is inconsistent with these characteristics and the neighborhood's values.
- Valerie Priola – President of Sierra Sunrise Village: Wrote nine letters detailing her concerns about the hotel; stated there are already 599 hotel rooms in Chico.
- Brad Azevedo – Executive Director of The Terraces senior living community. Shared his experience of evacuating the elderly population during the 2018 Camp Fire.
- Jesica Giannola – Resident of District 6. Lack of restaurants and services available for hotel guests would increase dependency on automobiles and generate more traffic. Expressed additional environmental concerns relating to the hotel's water usage.

In summary, speakers expressed that the hotel use would not be neighborhood-serving and would go against the vision and goals for this community, including both residents of California Park and the largest senior living community (Sierra Sunrise Village). Residents chose this area for its security, serenity and privacy, and feel the hotel would be detrimental to these core values. Approval of the hotel project would betray the trust of all residents in this community.

Chair Scott called a brief recess at 7:21 pm. The meeting was reconvened at 7:34 pm. And all members were present.

Reconvene and Call Meeting to Order- 7:34 pm.

- Tally Sturm – Resident of Cal Park since 1984. First community to have a vision, in which the hotel does not fit.
- Martha Ellington – President of Cal Park HOA. Hotel is of great concern to the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Greg Steele – Village Board of Directors (member for 15 years). Expressed concerns about the private road (Sierra Sunrise Terrace) and bridge safety, which are maintained and paid for by the residents of Cal Park.
- James Smith – moved to Chico five years ago. Raised questions regarding the traffic study. Cited General Plan goals and policies that call for “complete neighborhoods”.
- Jeff Carter – Attorney representing Cal Park HOA. Cited General Plan goals and policies for neighborhood compatibility.
- Sandy Goulart – Cal Park resident, longtime Chico resident. Sierra Sunrise Village developed as a model for a peaceful, safe and walkable community.
- Tim Donahue – Cal Park resident for 32 years. This is a corporate hotel chain, not a unique use or architectural design. TOT tax revenue from the hotel would come at the cost of respect for the community.
- Dorinda Salvo – Camp Fire survivors settled in Cal Park. Expressed concerns over emergency evacuation of the neighborhood with the addition of the hotel. Hotel would impact the general welfare of the community.
- BT Chapman – Contended the project does not meet use permit findings B, D and E.
- Janet Pearce – President of Cal Park HOA for past 3 years. Parking on Sierra Sunrise Terrace will impede emergency vehicle access. Traffic impacts would be detrimental.
- Pam Giuliano – resident of Cal Park for 20 years. Compelled the Commission to listen to the “human factor”. Potential tax revenue generated by the hotel should not outweigh the safety and welfare of citizens.
- Marsha Burch – Attorney representing Cal Park and Sierra Sunrise Village HOA. Cited issues related to the environmental document and design review process.
- Maureen Kirk – Hotel would not be compatible with surrounding neighborhood for reasons including impacts to emergency access and evacuation, security of lake and common areas, no amenities within walking distance for hotel guests, lack of employee parking, and traffic/circulation.
- Vic Makau – Claimed the location was marketed as a great place for a hotel to enable sale of the property. There are more suitable locations for this hotel use.
- Sandy Makau – Concerns regarding project lighting and glare, late night traffic, and visual impacts. Neighborhood should not be compromised for commercial development.

In summary, the speakers shared common concerns relating to traffic, emergency vehicle access and fire evacuation, neighborhood security, and cost of maintaining Sierra Sunrise Terrace (a private road). The speakers were unified in their opinion that the proposed hotel would not be compatible with the vision for the Cal Park and Sierra Sunrise Village community, and would be detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood, property and improvements, and general welfare. It was their collective opinion that there are more suitable locations for a hotel use.

With no other members of the public wishing to address the Commission, Chair Scott closed the public hearing at 8:24 pm.

Before further deliberation amongst the Commissioners, Chair Scott addressed the public and reiterated that everyone’s comments had been heard and considered.

Commissioner Wahl asked follow up questions regarding the emergency evacuation management plan for this area to Captain Aldridge, who elaborated on improvements made to the plan and evacuation procedures since the Camp Fire in 2018.

Following an inquiry from Commissioner Cooper, Captain Aldridge also expanded on the City’s ability to police and patrol the private road.

Chair Scott asked the City Attorney if the Commission would be violating any laws by approving the use permit associated with the project prior to a public hearing at the Architectural Review and Historic

Preservation Board. City Attorney Scott Nichols confirmed that the Commission was in receipt of most of the materials the Board would be considering and could proceed in that way.

Commissioner Wahl asked Senior Development Engineer Matt Johnson about maintenance of the bridge on Sierra Sunrise Terrace and any plans to accept a portion of Sierra Sunrise Terrace, a private road. Matt Johnson confirmed that the Public Works Director (Engineering and Maintenance) decided that the City would not be interested in accepting any portion of Sierra Sunrise Terrace.

Commissioner Ober offered observations and comments relating to the trip generation comparison highlighted in the staff report and traffic study. He said he was not convinced by the rationale provided for a hotel use at this specific location, such as economic benefit to the community through TOT, satisfying a need for extended-stay accommodations for professionals to stay, proximity to senior living and care facilities, and that these benefits could be achieved by siting a hotel in another location. Referring to the General Plan as it relates to neighborhood compatibility and the concept of complete neighborhoods, Commissioner Ober concluded that decisions of the Commission should be based on goals and policies that call for reductions to greenhouse gas emissions, creating walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, and reducing our reliance on automobiles. Further, the location proposed is not within the City's core, or a designated opportunity site, where infill is most appropriate and encouraged by the General Plan.

Commissioner Deromedi shared that his experience as both a long time resident and real estate agent in Chico made him sensitive and empathetic to the public opinion that the project would be detrimental to the health, safety and wellness of the surrounding neighborhood, and struggled with justifying a hotel at this location.

Chair Scott commended all in attendance for their participation and input, and specifically referred to a speaker who asked the Commission to consider the "human element" to decisions of land use. While she respected the perspective provided, she expressed that it was the responsibility of the Commission to provide consistency to property owners and investors, and to uphold private property rights. When looking at the black and white of Title 19, hotels are an allowable use with a use permit, and the project is not requesting a zone change or any deviations or exceptions from the development standards. She concluded that since the project meets the criteria set forth in Title 19, it would be detrimental to the investors who come to our community trusting in the integrity of Title 19, to assess projects on any other basis. She acknowledged that the project's compatibility with the neighborhood could be argued, but that would be the only reasoning to deny the project as it meets all other criteria for use permit authorization.

Commissioner Cooper expressed conflicted feelings between analyzing the project against the black and white of Title 19 and the more subjective elements of the project's compatibility.

Commissioner Ober made a motion to deny Resolution No. 22-04 (Attachment A), and deny Use Permit application 19-25 and Architectural Review application 19-22 for the property identified as APN 018-230-001, based on previous statements explaining that the project fails to meet the threshold outlined in items:

D: The proposed entitlement is inconsistent with the General Plan.

E: The design, location, size, and operating characteristics of the proposed use are incompatible with the existing and future land uses in the vicinity.

Commissioner Deromedi seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by the following vote:

AYES: Ober, Cooper, Deromedi,

NOES: Scott, Wahl.

ABSTAIN: None.

ABSENT: Goldstein, Poulin.

5. REGULAR AGENDA

None.

6. **REPORTS AND COMMUNICATION**

None.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm. to the following regular meeting of Thursday, August 4, 2022.

Date Approved

Bruce Ambo, Principal Planner
Community Development Department /
Planning Commission Secretary