

**CITY OF ARCATA
PLAZA IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE**

SENIOR ROOM
Arcata Community Center, Arcata

FEBRUARY 21, 2019
Thursday, 4:30 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson McGuire at 4:32 PM.

PRESENT: Bixler, Campbell, Grey, Hughes, McGuire (4:32 PM-5:58 PM), Steele (4:39 PM - 6:36 PM), Woodward.

ABSENT: Todd.

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy Director of Environmental Services--Community Services Neander, Redwood Community Action Agency Facilitator Sinkhorn.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Plaza Improvement Task Force - Regular Meeting - Jan 17, 2019 4:30 PM

On motion by Member Woodward, seconded by Member Bixler, and with a six to zero voice vote with two absences, the Task Force approved the minutes of the meeting held on January 17, 2019.

Ayes: Bixler, Campbell, Grey, Hughes, McGuire, Woodward.

Noes: None.

Absent: Steele, Todd.

Abstentions: None.

ORAL & WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson McGuire invited public comment.

Deputy Director Neander pointed out the two written communications that were included with the agenda packet from Colin Fiske and Nancy Keiber.

Chairperson McGuire also notified the Task Force that there were two additional correspondence items that came in after the agenda was published and passed those out to the group and members of the public.

Member Hughes shared that she appreciated the feedback from Nancy Keiber about cars on the Plaza and emphasized that it is important to look at potential consequences as well as benefits of having a more pedestrian-oriented space.

Member Campbell suggested that the Task Force not conclude causation from Nancy Keiber's letter with one example of Eugene, Oregon's pedestrian mall.

Member Woodward reminded the Task Force that there needs to be balance and suggested they get more information from business owners as well as people using the Plaza about if they would continue to come if there was not parking available on the Plaza.

Member Campbell inquired about what kind of data is legitimate when making considerations.

On inquiry by Chairperson McGuire, Deputy Director Neander confirmed that community feedback received and research compiled will be presented to the Task Force at a future date along with the survey data results.

Chairperson McGuire closed public comment.

On motion by Member Woodward, seconded by Chairperson McGuire, and with a seven to zero voice vote with one absence, the Task Force approved to modify the agenda order to allow presentations from guests to be heard first.

Ayes: Bixler, Campbell, Grey, Hughes, McGuire, Steele, Woodward.

Noes: None.

Absent: Todd.

Abstentions: None.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Outreach Update (20 minutes)

Chairperson McGuire introduced Humboldt State University (HSU) Sociology graduate students, Kellie Wilkerson and Tracie Wynard to the Task Force and explained that they were volunteers with the potential for funding through HSU, applied for by Chairperson McGuire.

Wilkerson and Wynard explained the process of the survey data analysis which includes the use of a statistical software called SPSS to quantify the qualitative survey responses by creating a database to run frequencies of the data. They also explained that they are looking for themes to arise and will do the final run of the data after the survey deadline of March 1, 2019.

On inquiry by Member Hughes and Member Bixler, Wilkerson and Wynard explained that an invalid response is coded when the respondent did not answer the question or answered it in a way that did not fulfill a category (i.e. answering "Earthling" when asked about

ethnicity) but that an invalid response does not invalidate their entire survey response. Additionally, they explained that there were multiple survey versions that went out prior to the final survey being ready that did not ask the demographic questions so those responses would be coded to explain that the respondent was not asked those particular questions as to not skew the results.

Deputy Director Neander confirmed that there were still many paper surveys that would be inputted into the online version before the March 1, 2019 deadline to be included in the database.

On inquiry by Facilitator Sinkhorn, Wilkerson and Wynard explained their final report would have the information analyzed in full and also showing various response themes based on the respondents' demographic information.

On inquiry by the Task Force, Wilkerson and Wynard clarified how they will be using themes that emerge to analyze the qualitative data of the survey responses and share the solutions that surface.

Chairperson McGuire pointed out that the survey results are under representative of young people and people of color and encouraged the Task Force to prioritize these populations for the final outreach push.

Chairperson McGuire invited public comment.

Colin Fiske, a member of the audience, encouraged Wilkerson and Wynard to be careful to not misrepresent data based on just frequency and to consider applying a correction for the under- and over-represented population data.

Member Campbell voiced agreement with Fiske and asked if the data could be weighted to better match the population demographics of the area.

Kent Falkenstine, an Arcata Police Officer in the audience, inquired about survey duplicates and if there was a way to confirm that people aren't submitting multiple responses.

Task Force Secretary Johnson explained the process of the online survey distribution through Google requiring a sign-in to avoid duplicate responses.

An unidentified member of the audience mentioned that perhaps the under-represented groups don't use the Plaza and won't no matter what changes are made.

Member Hughes emphasized the importance of recognizing that there are barriers to use the Plaza for certain groups of people, including safety concerns and not feeling welcome.

Member Steele and Member Woodward pointed out that some people still don't know about the opportunity to take the survey, especially HSU students.

Chairperson McGuire confirmed that there was outreach on the HSU campus including University Announcements and in-person efforts.

Fhyre Phoenix, a member of the audience, inquired about parents of young children being concerned about the Plaza not being fenced-in. He also mentioned the wetness of the lawn and if there is a way for better drainage to make the land a dryer, more useable space.

Member Hughes mentioned the balance of the community wanting the grass to be lush and green which required watering and aerating regularly.

Member Bixler emphasized the importance of documenting the individual ideas that come up, not just the ideas of the majority.

An unidentified member of the audience inquired about if there was a question on the survey specifically regarding the issue of parking on the Plaza.

Facilitator Sinkhorn mentioned that the survey questions were drafted in order to not suggest specific ideas for the community.

Member Hughes added a reminder that there was a questions about barriers to use of the Plaza and parking is an issue that is known.

Member Grey shared that she anticipates more specific community engagement once there are draft recommendations to share and encouraged the audience to help with outreach.

Ken Hamik, a member of the audience, inquired about if the Task Force had researched other models, successful or unsuccessful, specifically regarding parking.

Fhyre Phoenix inquired about taking into account the population size of Arcata when looking at other models, i.e. the Pearl Street Mall in Boulder, CO being a successful model but for a much larger community.

Member Grey confirmed that the Task Force is specifically looking at smaller communities in their research.

An unidentified representative of the Arcata Fire Department shared concern about the Plaza street closures impeding access for emergency services and that in the past, there have been times when the Fire Department was not notified in advance.

Deputy Director Neander confirmed that she would take that information back to the City to investigate and improve communication.

Member Hughes shared an example of the Farmer's Market doing a trial of street closures with the appropriate City permits and later being told that the Fire Department was not notified by the City staff.

Chairperson McGuire closed public comment.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Discussion with Arcata Police Dispatcher Andrea Schutt

Andrea Schutt, a Dispatcher with the Arcata Police Department gave a summary of what Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) entails including natural community surveillance, access control through sidewalks and landscaping, territorial reinforcement and space maintenance. She also described the benefits of CPTED in regards to crime prevention, safety, increase of business activity and quality of life. She confirmed that she would do site-surveys of the Plaza in the daytime and nighttime to come back to the Task Force with more information and suggestions.

On inquiry by Task Force Members, Dispatcher Schutt clarified the boundaries of the Plaza District as being the block of the Plaza, not any of the streets outside of that block.

Fhyre Phoenix inquired about the difference in number of incidents connected to alcohol versus marijuana and shared that a lot of the issues seem to be more alcohol-related.

Dispatcher Schutt confirmed that she would have more information to provide when she comes back with a final report for the Task Force and would make sure to split the incident numbers for alcohol and drugs rather than combining the data.

On inquiry by Member Campbell, Dispatcher Schutt clarified that the majority of incidents on the Plaza are Officer field interviews (FI) and municipal code violations. Officer Falkenstine explained that sometimes FIs lead to citations, searches or arrests but not always.

Member Hughes emphasized that the Task Force is looking for specific suggestions regarding CPTED in Dispatcher Schutt's final report back to the group.

On motion by Member Woodward, seconded by Member Bixler, and with a seven to zero voice vote with one absence, the Task Force approved to modify the agenda order to allow for input from event organizers to be heard next.

Ayes: Bixler, Campbell, Grey, Hughes, McGuire, Steele, Woodward.

Noes: None.

Absent: Todd.

Abstentions: None.

B. Input from Plaza Event Organizers

Chairperson McGuire invited Plaza Event Organizers to share their input with the Task Force.

Alex Ozaki-McNeill, the co-director of the North Country Fair and a Brio employee, shared input from her group which included the need for more access to electricity and water, more City support for trash removal prior to their event, better availability of barricades, more City support regarding the labor of placing protective grass mats for vendors, more City support in regards to towing vehicles, more City assistance with building local partnerships in regards to private parking lot use for ADA accessible parking, more bicycle parking options, and more City enforcement regarding blanket vendors.

Deputy Director Neander pointed out that there was additional input handed out at the beginning of the meeting that was received digitally and that another email was sent out to local event organizers soliciting their input.

Member Hughes noted that the North Coast Grower's Association appreciated being asked for this specific input as an existing event organizer.

Ozaki-McNeill shared that as a business representative, evening events on the Plaza help the restaurants but not the other retail businesses and encouraged the Task Force to consider how to better incorporate those businesses.

Nicole Maki, a local business owner, asked for the beer booth at the North Country Fair to be moved away from in front of the Jacoby Storehouse windows.

Member Hughes left the room at 5:50 p.m. and returned at 5:52 p.m.

Deputy Director Neander invited public comment. No one came forward to speak. Deputy Director Neander closed public comment period.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Outreach Update—continued discussion

The Task Force discussed various outreach efforts including to Pacific Union School, Coastal Grove Charter School, Sun Valley Farms, 1-on-1 discussions with community members, HSU tourism class soliciting responses on the Plaza, direct emails to HSU students in the Recreation Administration major, local after-school programs, youth basketball practice attendees, Valley West neighborhood, local mobile home parks, Arcata Elementary, Mexican restaurants and grocery stores, an NAACP event, Farmer's Market, Potawot, and the Open Door Clinic.

Member Grey noted that the survey wasn't necessarily designed to elicit responses from the youth.

Member Hughes reminded the Task Force that students of color at HSU are overburdened with surveys so suggested the group stays mindful about not demanding responses but still encouraging input by those who want to participate.

On inquiry from Member Bixler, Deputy Director Neander stated that the City Manager contacted the local Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO) of the Wiyot Tribe and Blue Lake Rancheria regarding the representation of local Native American Tribes on the Task Force and neither felt it was a priority at this time. The Bear River Band has been contacted but has not responded yet regarding their interest in participating. She also confirmed that there will be additional outreach attempts after there is a draft report of recommendations.

On inquiry from Member Grey, Facilitator Sinkhorn explained that there has been detailed documentation through meeting notes about all outreach efforts and encouraged the Task Force to fully describe the outreach process in the final report of recommendations to the Council.

Member Grey encouraged that the Task Force sends any draft recommendations to the local THPOs in case they want to participate once the improvement ideas are more synthesized.

Member Bixler shared concerns about the communication process between the City and the THPOs and having to trust a process that isn't verifiable. Additionally, he shared that because of the history of marginalization of certain populations, he understands that it might make this issue not a priority for them but that it doesn't change his desire to get their feedback.

Facilitator Sinkhorn invited public comment.

An unidentified member of the audience asked about how the Task Force meetings are noticed to the public and informed the group that she found out about it through the Lost Coast Outpost.

Deputy Director Neander explained the City process for noticing all meetings that included posting physically outside of City Hall, on the City website and sending to the local press list.

Facilitator Sinkhorn closed the public comment period.

B. Finalize Analysis Criteria

Facilitator Sinkhorn gave an overview of the previous efforts to finalize the analysis criteria, the changes that were made from the previous draft and asked for feedback from the group on the proposed criteria and matrix scoring system.

After lengthy discussion, the Task Force determined that more edits were needed specifically regarding diversity, physical access, and safety while keeping all criterion less subjective and consistent with the point scoring system.

Member Bixler invited public comment.

Colin Fiske shared a suggestion to add a criterion regarding how a proposed change would affect non-vehicular users of the space noting that the ‘Dangerous by Design’ report highlights them as typically the most vulnerable users. He also shared that the criterion regarding safety could be reworded to: “Improves both the comfort and safety of the most vulnerable users of the Plaza, including people on foot, on bicycles and people using assisted-mobility devices.” Lastly, he suggested that the Task Force try to apply criteria in an evidence-based matter rather than speculation.

On inquiry from Member Bixler, Deputy Director Neander emphasized that the Task Force needs to have criteria that all members agree upon and that the scoring needs to be consistent.

Facilitator Sinkhorn added that the Task Force will be sorting through the ideas that arise from the survey data as well as the research and other outreach that will need to be considered to suggest improvements.

Member Woodward mentioned that the City will need to provide input about cost and ease of implementation to inform the Task Force about those specifically.

Facilitator Sinkhorn invited public comment.

Nicole Maki inquired about how the Task Force gauges “busy” and explained that there might not be people walking around on the Plaza but there are no open parking spaces. She emphasized that the lack of parking directly affects the businesses.

By general consensus, the Task Force determined that more edits were needed regarding the criteria and asked that a refined draft be brought to the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Steele and Member Grey left the meeting at 6:36 p.m. Due to there not being a quorum of members remaining, the meeting was adjourned.