



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Adjourned Regular Meeting held
February 24, 2004

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Esquivel in the Executive Board Room at the Civic Center, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Joseph Esquivel
Vice Mayor Todd Rogers
Council Member Wayne Piercy
Council Member Larry Van Nostran
Council Member Robert Wagner

PRESENTATION OF CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Director of Community Development Chuck Ebner introduced consultants Frank Wein, with URS Corporation, and Robert Vasquez, with GRC Associates, who had been working on options for development of the Lakewood Civic Center.

Mr. Frank Wein reported that he had spent time interviewing each of the City Council Members to determine priorities and as a result, had developed six different courses of action. He advised that the purpose of this presentation was to come away with one or two options which could be further developed. He presented each of the six options which included such variants as a remodeled city hall building; construction of new city hall building; remodeled or new post office; new park or other open space area; or mixed uses such as retail/commercial with offices or loft residential areas. He advised that with any use of the property on the corner of Del Amo Boulevard and Clark Avenue as a pocket park or open space area, safety and security would be major concerns due to the traffic of the adjacent intersection and that safety and/or noise barriers would be necessary. He displayed slides showing other pocket park uses and noted that they were looking at passive areas for sitting, rather than active recreation areas.

Responding to a question from Council Member Piercy, Mr. Ebner advised that the present city hall building was approximately 25,000 square feet in size.

Vice Mayor Rogers inquired if there were any assumptions made in financing. Mr. Wein responded that they had used a figure of \$300 per square foot for a city hall building. Mr. Wein also responded to a question about post office financing by stating that a figure had not been used since any construction would depend on whether the land was actually acquired or just leased.

Vice Mayor Rogers questioned whether redevelopment funding could be used for the construction of a new city hall building. Assistant City Manager Michael Stover responded by stating that would not be an allowable use of those funds.

CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN ALTERNATIVES - Continued

Vice Mayor Rogers inquired if a strategic plan had ever been prepared for city hall needs over the next twenty years. City Manager Howard Chambers responded by stating that although there had been a recent assessment about the feasibility of adding several hundred square feet to the building, a long-term needs assessment had never been performed.

Council Member Van Nostran asked about the options showing the 5220 Clark Avenue building. Mr. Wein stated that the study had looked primarily at the need to expand the post office use and since expansion to the south was impossible because of the Sheriff's Station needs, the study had looked at expanding onto the property directly north.

Mr. Robert Vasquez stated that a review of the building on the corner of Clark Avenue and Candlewood Street showed only a four percent vacancy rate and that in the 5220 building, there was currently only about 3,000 square feet of vacant space. He advised that they had estimated a cost of \$5.6 million to cover property acquisition, tenant relocation and building demolition, or approximately \$180 per square foot.

Vice Mayor Rogers stated he felt a city hall needs assessment needed to be done. He advised that he did not favor residential or retail uses in the civic center area. He also advised that he strongly supported the incorporation of an open or public space as a symbolic center of the City. He stated that the concept he had envisioned would not be just a passive use, but rather a place where people could gather. He noted that many people were looking for places to go for family-themed events.

Council Member Van Nostran stated he would like to see an open space focus area located on the present city hall site, away from the traffic and noise on Del Amo Boulevard. Such a use could be tied in with the existing open area in front of the Centre and the planned Legends of Lakewood Hall of Fame structure. He noted that the present city hall building was a 1950's era building which was not accommodating to today's technologies, was already crowded with no room for expansion and would be an ongoing maintenance problem as it aged. He stated that due to the current State budget crisis and its impacts on local governments, any major construction project was not feasible at this time; however, he felt that it was important to take a look at design options so that when funding became available, we would be ready to move ahead with a project. He concluded by stating he was not in favor of commercial uses in the civic center area.

Council Member Piercy stated that it was important that the City Council remember that the basic principle of a contract city was to run a lean, efficient operation. He noted that the square footage in the proposals which would double or triple the size of the existing city hall would send a wrong message to residents. He stated that while not advocating commercial development in the civic center, the examples shown of loft designs were attractive uses.

Council Member Van Nostran, while acknowledging that running an efficient operation was the priority, stated it was also important for the City Council Members to be visionaries who were looking ahead to the future needs of the City.

CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN ALTERNATIVES - Continued

Council Member Wagner stated that he agreed with many of Council Member Van Nostran's observations. But he, too, noted that the option showing a 70,000 square foot city hall building was totally out of line with the way the City operated, especially since the City was essentially built-out and an increase by a factor of three was not likely to ever be needed. He agreed with the concept of an open space that would be useful rather than passive, but stated he had a problem with placing such a use on the corner. He concluded by stating that the post office building was a problem that must be dealt with, as the present configuration was an abomination to the City.

Council Member Van Nostran referenced a post office building in Long Beach which accommodated employee parking on the roof of the structure, stating that perhaps the Lakewood Post Office building could be modified in a similar fashion by adding a new structure over the current building so that post office vehicles and employees could park on the roof, leaving the whole ground level available for customer parking and improved ingress and egress.

Responding to questions from the Council, the Assistant City Manager responded by stating that there was a substantial chance that if post office improvements were financed through the Redevelopment Agency, that the Agency would never be able to repay the debt. Finance Director Larry Schroeder confirmed that this was true with current levels of redevelopment funding, not projecting any further take-aways or changes by the State.

Mr. Wein stated that as he was listening, the City Council appeared to be interested in two options: Either construction of a new city hall building on the corner lot with the existing city hall lot to be utilized as an open space gathering place and the existing post office building to remain and be remodeled; or the existing city hall building to be remodeled and an open space be located on the corner, with the same post office specifications.

VICE MAYOR ROGERS MOVED AND COUNCIL MEMBER PIERCY SECONDED THAT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT BE CONDUCTED TO DECIDE WHETHER THE CITY HALL BUILDING SHOULD UTILIZE THE EXISTING FOOTPRINT OR NEW CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN OF AN OPEN SPACE THAT WOULD COMPLEMENT THE CIVIC CENTER AND BE USEFUL TO THE COMMUNITY.

Council Member Wagner inquired about how the corner could be utilized for open space. Mr. Wein responded by stating there would be extra costs involved to make the site safe and secure, such as fencing or traffic mitigation measures.

Council Member Piercy noted the importance of also developing some short-term plans for dealing with the overcrowding in the city hall building.

In response to a question from Council Member Wagner, Mr. Ebner stated the current lease on the post office site would terminate in 2014. Council Member Wagner stated that since the lease would terminate in ten years, there were a wider range of options for the property.

CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN ALTERNATIVES - Continued

Mr. Stover, noting that many cities had to virtually 'give away' property to the postal service in order to have a facility located in their community, stated that it would be extremely difficult to put together a new deal with the postal service. The City Manager advised that it might be beneficial to enlist the help of Lakewood's Congresswoman in any future negotiations with the postal service.

Council Member Wagner inquired if a combined use city hall/post office was feasible. Mr. Wein responded by stating that considering homeland security issues, a post office use would probably require isolation.

Council Member Piercy, noting that passive land areas were not necessarily unused areas, cited Del Valle Park, with events like the Concerts in the Park and the Safety Expos, as an example of a passive space used effectively as a gathering place.

Council Member Wagner stated he would like to see the corner property utilized on a temporary basis and that he would not be opposed to community groups, such as the Girl Scouts, holding functions in that area.

Vice Mayor Rogers suggested consideration be given to a weekly farmer's market on the site. He noted that if well managed, that kind of use could be an asset to the community.

Mayor Esquivel stated he wished to go on record as being not in favor of any retail or post office use on the Clark/Del Amo corner property. He noted that he did like the idea of the Sycamore Centre as an open space area.

Vice Mayor Rogers stated he had a four-part, substitute motion.

VICE MAYOR ROGERS MOVED AND COUNCIL MEMBER PIERCY SECONDED TO:

PART #1 – PERFORM A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE CITY HALL BUILDING AND DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF EXPANSION ON THE EXISTING FOOTPRINT VERSUS CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW FACILITY, NOT TO EXCEED 50,000 SQUARE FEET

PART #2 – CONSIDER THE OPTIONS IN SECTION 1, EVALUATE THE INCLUSION OF OPEN SPACE THAT WOULD ALLOW FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

PART #3 – EVALUATE PARKING MITIGATION WITH THE EXISTING POST OFFICE SITE, NOT ASSUMING EXPANSION TO THE NORTH

PART #4 – RECEIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STAFF FOR INTERIM USES OF THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT THE CORNER OF DEL AMO BOULEVARD AND CLARK AVENUE WHICH WOULD REQUIRE MINIMAL EXPENDITURES

CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN ALTERNATIVES - Continued

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE, THE MOTION WAS APPROVED:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: Piercy, Rogers, Van Nostran, Wagner and Esquivel

NAYS: COUNCIL MEMBERS: None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Esquivel adjourned the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise R. Hayward, CMC
City Clerk