

## **PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**

**DATE:** November 12, 2013

**TIME:** 4:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Porter, Commissioners Boettcher, Davis, English, Buelow and Ballard

**ABSENT:** Commissioners Hahn and L. Olson

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Planner, Mark Moeller; and Assistant City Planner, Carlos Espinosa

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The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman Porter.

### **Approval of Minutes – October 28, 2013**

The minutes from the Commission's meeting of October 28, 2013 were reviewed. Chairman Porter noted that during that meeting, he had referenced various studies and data relative to the Clean Air Task Force and findings related to particulate levels. He stated that although his comments were not reflected in minutes, he would like them to be. Given this correction it was moved by Commissioner Boettcher and seconded by Commissioner Buelow to approve the October 28, 2013 minutes as modified. When the question was called, the vote of the Commission was unanimous to approve the motion.

### **Air Quality Monitoring Recommendations**

Chairman Porter called on Carlos Espinosa, Assistant City Planner to provide a summary of this agenda item.

Mr. Espinosa noted that at the conclusion of the Commission's last meeting, it was suggested that Commissioner's review the Citizen's Environmental Quality Committee (CEQC) full set of recommendations. In summary, CEQC recommendations included 9 points generally revolving around air quality monitoring along truck routes and monitoring at sand processing facilities.

Given these, Mr. Espinosa explained that the current proposal from the MPCA for air quality monitoring addresses the recommendations pertaining to monitoring along truck routes and 2.5 particulate (diesel) monitoring. The proposal from the MPCA does not, however, address the recommendations for monitoring at silica sand facilities in Winona. In consideration of this set of recommendations, Commissioners may reference the letter from the MPCA, which he had attached to the agenda item. After discussion, Commissioners may make a recommendation to City Council regarding air monitoring along truck routes as well as silica sand facilities. In concluding, Mr. Espinosa noted that all formal recommendations of the Commission would be forwarded to Council for final certification.

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Commissioner Boettcher explained that although CEQC recommendation number five suggests that costs associated with monitoring be paid by the sand industry, the MPCA letter, at page three, implies that this is a cost that could be absorbed by the MPCA.

In response, Mr. Espinosa noted that although the MPCA may absorb costs for generic testing, this would not include specific site testing at sand facilities. Again, the MPCA has agreed to do generic testing at the Highway 43/Fourth Street Intersection. Given this, the agency has committed to absorbing the majority of costs for this testing.

Chairman Porter stated that in giving full consideration to this issue, he was disappointed with CEQC recommendations. When those recommendations came forward, the Commission had been working on the frac sand issue for a number of months. Additionally, it was his understanding that the CEQC had only met once in developing its recommendations that, to him, had little substance.

In addressing the MPCA proposal, Chairman Porter noted that although the MPCA's offer of assistance in promoting a monitoring program was greatly appreciated, he felt that there were areas throughout the state with more significant air quality issues. Although a testing site at the Highway 43/Fourth Street Intersection might certify this, he felt that the expense of the tax dollars for this monitoring site was not needed and a waste of money. For the most part, sand passing through this intersection is wet in nature and would not be airborne. Given this, he did not see a purpose in monitoring the area for airborne emissions of any kind.

Commissioner English stated that he too was not totally comfortable with establishing expensive monitoring systems without having a better handle as to whether a problem actually exists. Although problems had been implied, he felt that these were, given his understanding of the nature of the sand industry, circumstantial.

Chairman Porter noted that although testing will certainly generate numbers, he did not feel these would point to a specific problem.

Commissioner Buelow emphasized that, until some form of testing is actually completed, the City will not know if a problem exists. Given this, he suggested that the Commission approve of the MPCA proposal and that testing be undertaken over a 12 month period.

Commissioner Davis stated that although she too appreciated the MPCA proposal in this matter, she was curious as to what will happen with the information once it's collected. To this point, she has seen no plan as to what the next steps might be. Chairman Porter replied that he was not aware of any plan and that once information is collected, the City, in cooperation with the MPCA, would decide the next step in the process.

Mr. Espinosa stated that according to the MPCA letter, if testing concludes that elevated air emissions exist, additional, more specialized testing could be under taken.

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Commissioner Boettcher explained that a great deal of work on this issue has been conducted to date. Given this, his recommendation will be to continue the process by approving of the MPCA study. Once completed, the issue could be put to rest. His concern is that if the study is not undertaken, there could always be a question mark related to the air quality standards discussion. In short, he suggested that the Commission move forward in approving of the MPCA proposal.

Commissioner Ballard noted that he too was concerned of recommending the approval of an expensive study when he wasn't sure that a problem actually exists.

Following brief discussion, it was moved by Commission Boettcher and seconded by Commissioner Buelow to recommend that the City Council approve of the MPCA's proposal to establish an air monitoring site at the YMCA property for a one year period. This recommendation would include an understanding that the MPCA would pay for equipment and most monitoring costs through the twelve month period.

In response for comments, Commissioner Davis asked if this process would require some form of City staff time. Mr. Espinosa responded that the plan right now is to utilize existing staff in the local administration of monitoring equipment. No new staff would be hired for this purpose.

Commissioner Boettcher emphasized that his motion would require testing for a one year period only.

When the question was called, the vote of the Commission was as follows: ayes Commissioners Boettcher, Davis and Buelow; nays Commissioners English, Porter and Ballard; abstaining: none. Given this split vote, Chairman Porter stated that the motion was not adopted.

At this point, Commissioner Boettcher moved to reconsider this issue during its next meeting to be held in two weeks. Following a second, the vote of those present was unanimous to approve the motion.

**Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.



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Mark Moeller  
City Planner