

**PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, February 6, 2024 – 7 PM

Meeting Conducted In-Person and Video Recording is Archived on the City Website
<https://www.ci.claremont.ca.us/government/city-council/watch-city-council-meetings>

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Emerson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

COMMISSIONERS: ALVAREZ, DAVIS, EMERSON, GONZALEZ, WONG

ABSENT

COMMISSIONER: RAHMIM

ALSO PRESENT

Brad Johnson, Community Development Director; Alisha Patterson, City Attorney; Alex Cousins, Management Analyst; Anne Bennett, Administrative Assistant; Nhi Atienza, Senior Administrative Assistant

CEREMONIAL MATTERS, PRESENTATIONS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

This item starts at 1:00 in the archived video.

Director Johnson announced that at the last City Council Meeting Commissioner Zimmerman was transferred from the Planning Commission to the Architectural Commission. A replacement Commissioner is expected to be announced at next week's City Council meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

This item starts at 1:45 in the archived video.

Chair Emerson invited public comment.

There were no requests to speak.

CONSENT CALENDAR

This item starts at 4:24 in the archived video.

Chair Emerson invited public comment.

There were no requests to speak.

1. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of January 16, 2024

Approved and filed.

Commissioner Wong moved to approve the Consent Calendar, seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez; and carried on by roll call vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioner - Alvarez, Emerson, Wong

NOES: Commissioner - None

ABSTENTIONS: Commissioner - Davis, Gonzalez

ABSENT: Commissioner - Rahmim

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

2. Cannabis Informational Session and Regulatory Review

This item starts at 6:35 in the archived video.

Director Johnson introduced Management Analyst, Alex Cousins, to the Planning Commission.

Management Analyst Cousins gave a PowerPoint presentation. He addressed Commissioners' inquiries regarding a) study results regarding the effect of cannabis businesses on communities and addiction; b) revenue projections; c) buffers; d) City Council decisions about cannabis after its legalization in California; e) cannabis businesses in Pomona; f) the population of Pomona; g) the distance from the Village to the nearest cannabis store; and h) equity applicant criteria.

Vicky Noble, south Claremont resident, visited three cannabis businesses in Pomona, and encourages Commissioners to do so as well. For each store she noted the number of parking spaces, a very high volume of traffic, fencing around the lot, armed security guards, and exterior cameras. She does not think South Claremont shopping centers have adequate parking and recommends stand-alone buildings or new construction for potential cannabis businesses.

Elisa Solis, resident of south Claremont and retired LAPD Officer, has three main concerns: crime, driving under the influence, and Claremont police officers' drug recognition skills training. She submitted two articles on these topics to the Commission Secretary.

Jim Keith, Claremont resident, is very concerned about the location of a cannabis business in Claremont. He urges commissioners to visit a store and see for themselves the high volume of traffic and number of armed guards. Peppertree Square should not be an option; it would kill that neighborhood shopping center. He suggested Von's shopping center as a possible location.

John Scott, Claremont resident, urges against allowing cannabis businesses in Claremont because it goes against what makes Claremont special. We do not have billboards, drive-throughs, or overnight parking here, and we should not have stores that require armed guards. These stores are tacky and disrespect what is unique about Claremont.

Murray Monroe, Claremont resident, is concerned about the high volume of business at cannabis stores. Our Village is not set up for these businesses. Also, school kids come to the Village which makes that location inappropriate. He suggested other locations besides the Village.

Darryl McKantz, Claremont resident, said cannabis businesses are inappropriate for Claremont. They go against what makes the City special. Cannabis is still illegal federally and banks refuse to deal with these businesses. They would not benefit the student- and senior-based industries in Claremont.

Herman Jansen, Claremont businessman, appreciates all the comments so far. He is a proponent of cannabis businesses and has spoken to Claremont business owners. Most are supportive, seeing it as good for business because of the additional foot traffic.

Megan Bang, cannabis nurse educator, discussed addiction, equity, LA's failures, and gave a recommendation.

- Cannabis has legitimate medicinal properties. Increasing access does not increase addiction rates. Its use decreases use of other harmful substances, like alcohol and opioids.
- Equity applicants have been impacted by the war on drugs, including incarceration. They are given priority in the application process including fee waivers.
- LA's permitting processes, which had several stages (business permit, security permit), caused months-long delays that resulted in some applicants being unable to open their businesses by the time the process was completed.
- She recommends Claremont engage an industry consultant to help make practical decisions if the City goes ahead with cannabis businesses.

Sue Keith, Claremont resident, lives near Peppertree shopping center. She is not against cannabis but finds it controversial, especially where businesses are located. Peppertree struggled for a long time and has only recently started to thrive. She urges against permitting a business at Peppertree because it is a vulnerable area and cannot handle the traffic.

Mark Ramos, president of Claremont's UFCW Local 1428 (which represents and advocates for the State's cannabis workers), spoke about choosing good applicants, the 1000-foot buffer, Pomona's businesses, and best practices for cities:

- This is a struggling industry, heavily taxed, with lots of volatility. He therefore encourages the City to make sure applicants are well-capitalized.
- If Claremont removed its 1000-foot buffer, Pomona likely would as well.
- There have been zero incidents at all four of the Pomona businesses. Mayor Tim Sandoval can confirm this. It is a cash business, but debit cards can be used. A local credit union works with local cannabis businesses. Access to 24-hour video is very important for police and store owners.
- If Claremont moves forward, he advises having as few staff as possible working with business owners in the licensing process. The fewer staff working on this, the less likely it is that mistakes will be made. You want to avoid legal trouble.

Aaron Gary, Claremont resident, does not think this business is good for Claremont's family-centered community. He addressed infrastructure and equity.

- Claremont's infrastructure is not set up for overseeing this business; it will get out of control. But if you do go forward, you must have the right infrastructure in place.
- He is an example of an equity applicant, an African American who has been prosecuted for marijuana.

There were no other requests to speak.

Management Analyst Cousins addressed Commissioners concerns about a) logistics; b) location of businesses; c) number and size of stores; d) the selection process; e) regulations; f) code enforcement; g) the purview of the Commission; h) licensing and transferability.

The Commissioners gave staff the following recommendations and direction:

- Location Restrictions:
 - A cannabis business should not be located in neighborhood shopping centers that have grocery stores (Von's, Trader Joe's, Stater Brothers), nor at Peppertree Square.
 - Super King is already disallowed because it is within the 1000-foot buffer zone.
 - Commissioner Wong is okay with a business located at the commercial parcel west of DoubleTree, even though it is near Trader Joe's.
- Buffer zone:
 - There is Commission consensus that the 1000-foot buffer with Pomona should remain. Commissioner Wong, however, questions the logic of having a 1000-foot buffer if the City approves a cannabis business.
 - Commissioners are fine with state-mandated buffers.
- Type of facility:
 - Commissioners agree that retail should be the only type of facility. Commissioner Wong agreed on this point, but he likes the idea of a manufacturing facility because it has little impact on traffic or parking.
- Number of licenses:
 - The Commission agrees to a limit of one to two licenses, except for Commissioner Wong who would initially limit licenses to two, leaving open the possibility for a third should conditions be right.

REPORTS

This item starts at 2:18:21 in the archived video.

Commission

Director Johnson described items that will be coming before Commission at future meetings, including the House of Pong CUP continuation, a Cultural Preservation Ordinance, and a Cannabis Ordinance.

Commissioner Comments

There were no comments.

Staff

Briefing on Council Meetings

Director Johnson reported on items of interest from the previous City Council meeting, including Ken Zimmerman moving from the Planning to the Architectural Commission; a Via Padova parcel map item subdividing one lot into two (a consent calendar item); an annual report on the progress of the hotel motel ordinance (administrative item) which Director Johnson encourages Commissioners to watch. Regarding the hotel motel ordinance, the Council voted to extend the reduction in the application fee, and to allow additional time for operators to apply.

At Chair Emerson's request, Director Johnson reported that the Residence Inn's demolition permit has been delayed, but demolition should take place within one-two weeks.

Briefings on Other Items

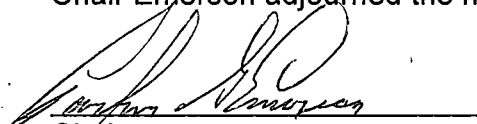
There was no report.

Upcoming Agendas and Events

Chair Emerson reminded the Commission of the upcoming Commissioner training in Long Beach. Director Johnson reported that two commissioners have requested to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Emerson adjourned the meeting at 9:22 PM.


Chair

ATTEST:


Administrative Assistant