

Draft May 16th, 2016 MAC Meeting Summary

Steve Offerman of Supervisor Steve Bennett's Office called the roll. MAC members Terry Wright, Jill Borgeson, Chris Cohen, Grace Malloy, and Chair Joseph Westbury were present.

John Mirk reported on recent activity of the City Planning Commission, including a proposal for re-use of the bowling alley for either a hotel or brew pub. John said permit activity has doubled.

Shelly Sussman of the County Planning Division provided an overview of the process, timeline, and scope of the update of the County General Plan. The Ojai Valley MAC will be deeply involved in the process. There will be technical focus groups of experts on certain topics; the meetings will be open to the public. Bill Weirick asked if consistency between the Ojai Valley Area Plan and the countywide plan was necessary – No; area plans have unique policies and greater local specificity. However, there cannot be a contradiction between elements of the General Plan. The Planning Division anticipates returning to the MAC in July or August for a more in-depth discussion of issues. The PowerPoint presentation will be available on the County General Plan Update webpage, and citizens can sign-up for notices, see <http://vcrma.org/planning/plans/general-plan/gen-plan-update.html>

The next item of business was review of a request for a 20-year time extension of the CUP to continue to operate nine oil wells and associated equipment on the Bentley Ranch off of Creek Road. No new drilling or facilities are proposed, and a new truck trip limit of 12 one-way trips per week is included in the permit request. Discussion ensued regarding whether two wells that have been idle for 10 and 15 years respectively could be required to be abandoned. Rich Holly said that Kern County requires well abandonment when new wells are proposed. Brian Baca of the Planning Division said that only the State has legal authority determine when wells must be abandoned, and that there is new legislation pending to require abandonment of long-idle wells. The applicant stated that all wells have passed required inspections, and the two wells could produce gas at such time as a use or market for gas evolved.

Discussion ensued regarding truck routes and safety. Brian Baca said that there have been no known accidents involving the small number of oil trucks and no evidence submitted to indicate that continued operation at 12 trips per week would be hazardous. Bill Weirick said that night trucking should be considered to avoid high traffic periods. The applicant stated that this would create noise impacts to Persimmon Hill residents. Grace Malloy pointed out that highway 33 and Creek Road traffic has increased since the project was first authorized and that safety at intersections should be reevaluated. Chris Cohen questioned whether full-time flaring had been properly authorized and whether idle well abandonment could be given further consideration. Terry Wright summarized MAC comment into a motion: Recommend approval with the County giving further consideration and evaluation of intersection safety, how Kern County addresses idle well abandonment, and the time of day of trucking. The motion was approved by acclamation on a 4-0 vote with Joe Westbury abstaining because he lives within 300 feet of the project.

Regarding MAC Officers, the MAC selected Joe Westbury as Chair, Terry Wright as Vice-Chair, and Jill Borgeson and Chris Cohen as Co-Liaisons to the Ojai Planning Commission.