



## OJAI VALLEY MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

### FINAL MEETING MINUTES

18 Valley Road, Oak View  
Monday, May 15, 2023 - 7:00PM

**Chair:** Chris Cohen, **Vice Chair:** Joseph Westbury

**Council Members:** Barbara Kennedy, Grace Malloy, Terry Wright

**Public Comments FOR IN PERSON MEETINGS may be provided using the following **TWO** options:**

**Option 1: E-MAIL PUBLIC COMMENT-** If you wish to make a comment on a specific agenda item, please submit your comment to the Executive Officer at [ovmac@ventura.org](mailto:ovmac@ventura.org) for that item via email by 3:30 p.m. the day of the meeting to ensure your letter is received and entered into the record. PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN YOUR EMAIL: (A) MEETING DATE, (B) AGENDA ITEM NUMBER, (C) SUBJECT OR TITLE OF THE ITEM, (D) YOUR FULL NAME. DURING PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE AGENDA ITEM SPECIFIED IN YOUR EMAIL, YOUR COMMENT WILL BE SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD. Please limit your written correspondence to 300 words or less.

**Option 2 – IN PERSON PUBLIC COMMENT -** If you wish to make a comment in-person, you must be present at the meeting location and provide your comment prior to the close of the public comment period for the item you wish to speak on. Each meeting will have sign-in sheets to participate in Public Comment at the meeting location for in-person comments.

#### 1. Call to Order of the Meeting

*Meeting Commenced at 7:00PM.*

#### 2. Flag Salute

#### 3. Roll Call

*Member Malloy Absent. Members Kennedy, Wright, Vice Chair Westbury and Chair Cohen present.*

#### 4. Adoption of the Agenda

*Motion made by Chair Cohen to adopt the agenda as presented. Seconded by Member Wright. Approved 4-0*

#### 5. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

*Public Comment No. 1 – Ron Solorzano: Library Update – Summer Reading Program started today. You can visit [www.vencolibrary.org](http://www.vencolibrary.org) and log on to track minutes and books you have read. Includes book giveaways and goes through August 4<sup>th</sup>. You can also enter on behalf of an entire family. There are also programs for Adults as well as children through the website. There will be a Kick Off Event on June 8<sup>th</sup> at the Oak View Library for this program.*

## 6. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of April 17, 2023 – DRAFT MINUTES ATTACHED

*Motion made by Member Kennedy to approve the April 17, 2023 minutes as presented, seconded by Chair Cohen. Approved 4-0.*

## 7. City of Ojai Planning Commission Update

*Planning Commissioner Judy Murphy gave a summary of recent activities of the City of Ojai Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has been busy! Have been issuing regular design review permits for second story additions. In April, they recommended changing the number of formula chain businesses from 10 to 5, which would require them to ask for a Conditional Use Permit if over 5. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, they received an update from staff on their Housing Element, currently in its 6<sup>th</sup> cycle of 8 years. The Housing Element was submitted to the HCD in late 2021. HCD sent a letter requesting revisions. We sent the revisions back in December. In February, HCD sent an additional letter requesting additional revisions indicating that the City of Ojai is out of compliance with their Housing Element. The Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation and the Becker Group are trying to build affordable housing in Ojai, specifically on four different parts of town with deed restrictions. There is a potential lawsuit regarding the lack of affordable housing, pending 5/29. City Council had a consent item to hire additional help for \$20,000 to assist with compliance.*

## **FORMAL ITEMS**

### 8. Review of a Conditional Use Permit Renewal – 8597 N. Ventura Avenue, Casitas Springs:

The proposed project (PL20-0069) consists of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to authorize the continued operation of an existing auction hall facility for a 20-year period, extending the existing CUP (LU07-0147) for California Auctioneers and Appraisers, located at 8597 N. Ventura Avenue in Casitas Springs. The project proposes approximately 3,820 square feet of new landscaping throughout the site. No other changes are proposed to the site or the existing operations. The auction hall operates weekdays from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, or by appointment, and Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM or by appointment. Live auctions occur on designated weekends 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM. One full time employee is onsite during the weekdays, and a maximum of seven part time employees are onsite during scheduled auction days. A maximum of 288 occupants are permitted inside the auction hall during auction events. The 34,838 square-foot (0.8 acre) property is located in the Commercial Planned Development Zone (with Temporary Rental Unit and Dark Sky overlays), has a General Plan land use designation of Commercial Planned Development, and an Ojai Valley Area Plan land use designation of Commercial.

#### **Staff Contact:**

John Novi, Senior Planner

[john.novi@ventura.org](mailto:john.novi@ventura.org)

805-654-2462

*Staff presented a brief power point highlighting the project site aerial and project scope as noted in the above description. Staff indicated that the project was subject to review and approval by the Planning Director. When the notice was sent for the Planning Director hearing, an adjacent property owner sent a letter of opposition indicating she believed nefarious activities were being conducted at the subject property. As a result of this correspondence, staff elected to have the OVMAC review the project and engaged the Sheriff's office to get information regarding calls of service to the subject property. Such calls were primarily related*

*to false alarm system alerts. Chief T. Newman was present to address any questions of law enforcement.*

*Member Wright – Question about site maintenance and prior violation in 2015 – just says “property maintenance” what was this regarding?*

*Planning Staff – Landscaping. Staff conducted site visit and the landscaping maintenance was addressed.*

*Chair Cohen - Noted the letter of opposition and the concerns of the adjacent property owner about potential activities in the “alley”. Chair Cohen asked staff to clarify the Conditional Use Permit renewal process – what is our scope and what do we look at?*

*Planning staff clarified that the review is limited to the scope of the permit, but if issues arise, staff can add additional conditions or requests of the applicant. Sometimes staff is limited, but sometimes staff has some wiggle room dependent on the nature of the request.*

*Chief Newman chimed in and stated that their current system contains calls back to 2015. Of those calls the majority were related to false alarms, and one theft.*

*Applicant – This has been a family business for 55 years. Haven’t had any problems that they are aware of in the past. There was the one theft issue that Chief Newman spoke of, and the person who was attempting to steal a motorcycle, who was obviously on drugs, and that situation was addressed.*

*Chair Cohen opened the meeting to Public Comment:*

*Public Comment No. 1 – Mary Galati: Has lived there for 45 years. It’s a very neat community. She came back from a trip and noticed something different and wasn’t feeling as secure as she usually had been. She is now retired and is there more often and has witnessed changes in the neighborhood. There have been more unsavory people around this area and down Ranch Road. The drug element is coming into their little town and she mentioned a story how she smelled cannabis from her house, which she believed came from the subject property. She has smelled it more often walking by the Casitas Springs Community Center.*

*Public Comment No. 2 – Eileen Rimers: I live in the Casitas Springs Mobile Home Park and I’ve seen an increase in homeless individuals along the river. I have struggled with being house-less in the past, and it can happen to anyone. I’m concerned about fires with the increasing amounts of people, trash, and debris. I’m glad the Auction House is there; it gives it a unique class.*

*Public Comment period was closed. Returned to OVMAC questions and deliberations:*

*Member Kennedy asked about the security system that exists and if there is lighting.*

*Applicant – Yes, we are very concerned about theft based on the nature of our business. We have cameras and lights, which has deterred a lot of characters in the past few years. My son-in-law lives a few doors down and is very aware of the property. It’s in our interest to protect our property; we have a professional safe, alarms; we haven’t had any issues there; We also have 24 hour security on the property as well.*

*Member Wright – What about the canceled/false alarms noted in the past calls to law enforcement?*

*Applicant - Our past alarm system was very sensitive; it would be triggered by rodents. We've since changed it and it hasn't been a problem.*

*Chair Cohen – Asked Ms. Galati if her concerns were directly attributed to the property or the neighborhood in general.*

*Public Comment No.1 (Continued) – Mary Galati: It's in the alley by the property. I have serious reservations about what is going on there, and I think this property (auction house) has access to it.*

*[OVMAC asked Ms. Galati to confirm the location of the “Alley” she spoke of. Upon review of an aerial photo, she noted the “Lesall alley” area in question is actually located on the parcel to the north of the Auction House parcel, and does not have access to/from the Auction House property.]*

*Applicant – Acknowledged Ms. Galati's concerns about the adjacent property to the north, and offered to be more aware of it. The subject Lesall alley is not on the auction house property. They are also very concerned about the activities there and is appreciative of Ms. Galati expressing her concerns to them and to the Sheriff's office.*

*Member Wright - Noted that the project also includes a Landscaping plan, and will include drought tolerant and California native species.*

*Chair Cohen made a motion to recommend approval on the project as presented, seconded by Member Kennedy. Approved 4-0.*

## **9. Announcements and Updates –**

Receive an Informational Presentation from the County of Ventura Planning Division and the Code Compliance Division regarding Bed and Breakfast establishments and Temporary Rental Units –Scheduled June 12, 2023.

## **10. Councilmember Comments**

*Member Wright complimented Chief Newman and the Sheriff's Office with their response to the Ojai Tennis Competition and some kids that were causing trouble. He thanked her and her staff.*

*Member Kennedy noted there is a Memorial Day parade in Oak View on May 29<sup>th</sup> with a flyover. The parade will start at 10AM – preceded by Lions Club breakfast from 7-10AM. The parade should last about 20 minutes.*

## **11. Adjournment:** Next Meeting will be held on **Monday, June 12th at 7:00PM IN PERSON at the Oak View Community Center**

***Meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.***