

**Alta Planning Commission Meeting Summary  
Our Lady of the Snows, Alta, Utah  
August 1st, 2016, 4PM**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Planning Commissioners:** Joan Degiorgio (chair), Jon Nepstad (vice-chair), Rob Voyer, Dave Abraham, Roger Bourke, Mayor Tom Pollard (ex officio).

**Town of Alta staff:** John Guldner, Chris Cawley, Mark Vlastic (Landmark Design).

**Members of the public:** Ross Olsen, Karen Travis, Harris Sondak, Marcus Dippo, Cliff Curry, Jen Clancy, Margaret Bourke, Creighton, Allen Orr.

**INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

Planning Commission Chair **Joan Degiorgio** opened the meeting and described the meeting agenda.

**00:00:35 UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS, STAFF**

**John Guldner** discussed the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act of 2016, introduced by Congressman Jason Chaffetz in the US House of Representatives. **John** described a Town Council work session devoted to the legislation, and described a proposed land exchange between Alta Ski Area (ASA) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) for which the legislation makes provisions. **John** indicated that the acreages to be exchanged are subject to change if a land exchange takes place, and indicated that the town could be involved as a “participating agency” in any environmental analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that takes place. **John** described the treatment of ASA’s special use permit (SUP) boundary in the legislation and the effects of this treatment on ski area expansion in Grizzly Gulch, which is that if ASA conveys its private property in Grizzly Gulch to USFS, its permit boundary will be made permanent. If ASA does not convey its private property in Grizzly Gulch to USFS, it will be allowed a one-time opportunity to request permit area expansion, which would be subject to public processes associated with permit application review. **Rob Voyer** asked whether ASA will be granted additional culinary water if ASA conveys its private land in Grizzly Gulch to USFS, and **Mayor Pollard** clarified that the legislation has no effect on the provision of culinary water to ASA. **Mayor Pollard** described various proposals for ski area permit expansion, including adding Patsy Marley Hill, which is currently within a USFS SUP area for avalanche control work, to the ski area SUP. **Jon Nepstad** reminded the planning commission that the Town of Alta would be responsible for regulation of the use of any private land acquired by ASA through a land exchange, and **John Guldner** described that the town’s Commercial Core Plan will provide the town leverage over use of private land acquired through a land exchange.

**Chris Cawley** reported on a conversation that took place during the council work session between a town council member and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor, who was in attendance at the work session. The forest supervisor had indicated that during the process of writing a management plan for the Central Wasatch National Conservation Area, as directed by the legislation, the town could propose alternative management guidelines for the Albion Basin Summer Road. **Roger Bourke** agreed that the forest supervisor had not dismissed the notion that the town could propose that the Summer Road be closed to public vehicle access in a new management plan.

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**John Guldner** added that the town will host a meeting of invasive weed specialists in order to plan for a presentation to the planning commission on issues related to invasive plant species in Alta and potential Town of Alta regulatory measures related to invasive species management.

**John** indicated that the Shrontz Estate has submitted a special use permit application to USFS to install utilities on the Patsy Marley property, some of which will require crossing USFS property. **John** added that the Snowpine Lodge is preparing to submit a building permit application for a significant expansion and remodel of the Snowpine, and that staff is preparing to present amendments to the zoning ordinance which have been in development for over one year.

**00:11:55 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 27, 2016, PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING.**

**Joan Degiorgio** asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 27<sup>th</sup> Alta Planning Commission meeting. **Rob Voye** made a motion to approve the minutes, **Dave Abraham** seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

**00:14:00 REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF COMMENTS SUBMITTED ON THE COMMERCIAL CORE PLAN**

**Joan Degiorgio** introduced **Mark Vlastic** of Landmark Design. **Mark** described the comment period that transpired between the presentation of the Draft Commercial Core Plan to the planning commission on June 27<sup>th</sup>, and the conclusion of the comment period on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Mark** read directly from a summary of the comments received during that comment period, stating that comments reflected various concerns with the plan, including concerns with the level of economic analysis included in the plan; the town center architectural concepts; and the suggestion that the “summer event zones” indicated on the plan were intended to host events for several thousand people. **Mark** stated that the summer event zones on the plan were intended to be much smaller scale. **Mark** mentioned concerns regarding the extent to which the plan includes effective pedestrian safety enhancement, and concern regarding the likelihood that the town center location indicated on the plan would be economically viable. **Mark** indicated that the plan will be updated to make the conceptual intent of the architectural drawings more explicit. **Mark** stated that the comments received during the comment period are posted on the project website. **Joan** asked whether the draft plan had been adjusted, and **Mark** indicated that the plan will not be adjusted until the plan goes before the town council.

**Roger Bourke** observed that the romantic, eloquent nature of the comments submitted was not conveyed in the comment summary presented by Landmark Design. **Chris Cawley** indicated that the comments Roger mentioned were not included in the summary because they were not provided until briefly before the August 1<sup>st</sup> planning commission meeting, but that the substance of those comments has been noted. **Jon Nepstad** asked whether the planning commission agrees that the purpose of the project, and the intent of the plan itself, is directly related to the proposed land exchange between ASA and USFS. **Roger** observed that many key elements of the plan involve USFS property and that they may depend on USFS conveying such property to private ownership. **Jon** recommended that the plan include a more explicit statement of the intent of the plan relative to land ownership. **Mayor Pollard** stated that the purpose of the project has been to establish general plan-level policy regarding the location and

content of future development in the commercial core, and opined that some observers mistakenly assume that the intent of the plan is to prepare for the Town of Alta to directly pursue commercial development in the commercial core. **Joan Degiorgio** agreed that the purpose of the plan is to accommodate existing business and provide definition to ideas for where development should occur in the future. **Joan** added that making a plan for how potential future growth should proceed will facilitate conservation better than assuming development will not happen and opting not to make a plan. **Joan** observed that the plan does not endorse specific public transit proposals such as a canyon railway or a tunnel to Big Cottonwood Canyon.

**Joan Degiorgio** asked Mark Vlasic to include modifications to the plan, including clarification that the summer event zones illustrated in the plan are not meant to accommodate large events; that an acknowledgement of the effect a land swap between USFS and ASA would have on the feasibility of aspects of the plan; clarification that the architectural concepts included in the plan are merely conceptual; and a statement of neutrality regarding potential future transit development in Little Cottonwood Canyon. **Mayor Pollard** added that it may be preferable not to specifically identify the parcels of land owned by the Town of Alta; **Mark** added that the project team had discussed this question, and opined that the town's ownership of land is a very important current condition and that the decision to place a community center on the town's largest parcel of land, which is generally steep and rocky, would not have been made if it were not for the town's ownership of that parcel.

**Dave Abraham** asked whether the town owns the land underneath the current library/community center belongs to the town; **Chris Cawley** replied that the town does own the land under the community center, and opined that development of a new community center on the town's vacant parcel could provide the town the ability to reprogram, rearrange, and enhance a variety of current public uses in Alta. **John Guldner** described that initially, the town's goal in acquiring land from USFS had been to acquire contiguous property, and observed that the Town of Alta General Plan states that the town will amend its zoning ordinance to provide for community center development. **Mark** added that the plan's illustration of developed community center facilities on both sides of SR 210 is intended to create a socially active location and an identifiable town center. John Guldner indicated that the planning commission is free to recommend changes to the plan before forwarding the plan to the town council. **Harris Sondak** opined that the town council will want to understand how current and future land ownership would affect the implementation of the plan.

**00:43:20 Joan Degiorgio** indicated she felt that the planning commission may be ready to forward the plan to the town council. **Roger** recommended that when the plan is forwarded, all the comments should be included in the report. **Mark Vlasic** indicated that the plan will include all comments made during the project. **Mayor Pollard** asked whether the planning commission needs to hold a public hearing before recommending a general plan amendment, and **John Guldner** opined that the planning commission could recommend that the town council consider the plan and initiate the process of amending the General Plan, at which point the planning commission could recommend changes to the plan and then hold a public hearing. **Mark Vlasic** observed that the general plan currently acknowledges the commercial core and states a goal of adopting a master plan for development in the commercial core. **Mark** opined that the town should not lose momentum with the project and should pursue a general plan amendment. **Jon Nepstad** agreed with John Guldner that the town council could endorse the plan and initiate the process of amending the general plan.

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**Marcus Dippo** asked whether a second grant of funding from Wasatch Front Regional Council was intended to be used to enhance the current project. **Chris Cawley** described that the town has not yet settled on a scope of work to be completed with the additional funding it has received, and described various possible projects. **Roger Bourke** asked how much money the town received, and **Chris** indicated that the town had received \$50,000 and pledged a \$10,000 match.

**Harris Sondak** observed that section 4.3 of the Town of Alta General Plan recommends that the planning commission and town council should pursue a conceptual master development plan for the commercial core. **Harris** opined that this general plan policy supports the planning commission in recommending the commercial core plan to the town council. **Dave Abraham** asked whether the planning commission will forward the entire Commercial Core Plan document, or create a general plan amendment based on the “preferred alternative” and key language regarding the intent of the amendment. **Mayor Pollard** agreed that the town needs to refine its goals regarding the commercial core plan and the general plan. **Mark Vlasic** observed that the planning commission could remove section 4.3 of the general plan and replace it with a summary of the planning process and the preferred alternative plan, while also adding an appendix to the plan containing the entire Commercial Core Plan document.

**Rob Voyer** recommended that the planning commission forward the commercial core plan to the town council. **Rob** stated that he has spent much of his life in Alta, and that while he respects concerns about development detracting from the character of Alta, he finds the amount of development, and the content of the development envisioned in the commercial core plan to be complimentary to the town’s character and beneficial to the community.

**Roger Bourke** stated that he is not prepared to recommend the plan to the town council. **Joan Degiorgio** asked Roger what causes him to hesitate from recommending the plan, and **Roger** stated that he wanted to take more time to consider the plan in light of the comments received. **Rob Voyer** opined that he would prefer to see more input on the future of Alta from the many thousands of annual visitors to Alta, and that the handful of comments the town received from individuals who do not want to see Alta change should not outweigh various other perspectives on Alta’s future.

**Joan** asked Roger to review the document as soon as possible, and asked for a motion from the planning commission to recommend the plan to the town council for their consideration and for discussion of an amendment to the general plan. **Rob Voyer** made such a motion and **Jon Nepstad** seconded the motion. **Dave Abraham** asked for clarification of the process the planning commission expects will follow this motion. The commission discussed that they would ask the town council to endorse the plan and begin the process of creating a general plan amendment based on the preferred alternative plan and supporting information. **Roger Bourke** stated that he wanted to spend more time reviewing the proposal in light of all the comments provided. **Rob Voyer** made a motion to forward the Commercial Core Plan preferred alternative to the town council for their review. **Jon Nepstad** seconded the motion, and the motion carried by a vote of four ayes and one nay. **Joan** made an amendment to Rob’s motion, adding that the plan should be modified slightly to clarify concerns expressed earlier, including clarification that the summer event zones illustrated in the plan are not meant to accommodate very large events; an acknowledgement of the effect a land swap between USFS and ASA would have on the feasibility of aspects of the plan; clarification that the architectural concepts included in the plan are

merely conceptual; and a statement of neutrality regarding potential future transit development in Little Cottonwood Canyon. **Jon** seconded Joan's amendment, and the amendment passed by a vote of four ayes, with one planning commission member abstaining.

**1:25:10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Joan Degiorgio** indicated that the next planning commission meeting will take place on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Jon Nepstad** recommended that the planning commission should host a presentation of an avalanche mitigation study conducted by Utah Department of Transportation Avalanche Safety.

**Roger Bourke** observed that the impacts of summer visitation are growing faster than the availability of resources to mitigate those impacts, and recommended that the planning commission take up the challenge. **Joan Degiorgio** opined that the commercial core plan is intended in part to mitigate the impacts of summer visitation to Albion Basin by directing traffic into the Albion Base parking area before it ascends into the basin, which **Roger** contested. **Jen Clancy** observed that a huge portion of Alta's summer visitors are interested solely in visiting Secret Lake. **Joan** suggested that existing information about summer visitation to Albion Basin, and any existing concepts or plans for new management strategies, be gathered in order for the planning commission to begin a discussion of the issue. **Jon Nepstad** recommended that USFS attend any future meetings on the subject of Albion Basin visitation issues, and the planning commission discussed convening a committee to focus on this topic.

**1:46:28 MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**Joan Degiorgio** asked for a motion to adjourn the planning commission meeting. **Rob Voye** made a motion to adjourn, **Dave Abraham** seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

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The content of the minutes are not a verbatim transcription of the meeting. These minutes are a general overview of what occurred at the meeting.

These minutes were approved on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2016.

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Chris Cawley  
Assistant Town Administrator