

MINUTES
ALTA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, October 13 2020, 3:30 PM
Alta Community Center, 10351 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

PRESENT: Roger Bourke, Vice Chair
Rob Voyer
Dave Abraham
Jeff Niermeyer
Harris Sondak, Mayor (ex-officio)

ABSENT: Jon Nepstad, Chair

STAFF PRESENT: John Guldner, Town Administrator
Chris Cawley, Assistant Town Administrator
Polly McLean, Town Attorney

OTHERS: Mike Maughan, Alta Ski Area; Jarret Pelletier, Ennead Architects

1. INTRODUCTION, READING OF THE LETTER OF DETERMINATION, AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Vice-Chair Roger Bourke called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM and read the Letter of Determination to hold the meeting without an anchor location.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JULY 28, 2020 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Assistant Town Administrator Chris Cawley noted that Chair Jon Nepstad's name was spelled incorrectly throughout the document. He requested that this be corrected.

MOTION: Jeff Niermeyer moved that the Planning Commission APPROVE the minutes of the July 28, 2020 Planning Commission minutes, with the corrections mentioned. Rob Voyer seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous consent of the Commission.

3. UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES FROM THE ALTA SKI LIFT COMPANY – *Mike Maughan, Alta Ski Area*

Mike Maughan provided an update from the Alta Ski Area. In March, the Ski Area was shut down and they did their best to take care of their employees in getting them where they needed to be. Fortunately, over 75% of their expected visits had already occurred, and the Ski Area broke even for the season. Last year, they started the Alf's expansion project, and that would be wrapping up before the upcoming ski season. The Albion parking lot project had also been completed. Those projects had been funded in advance, so they were able to finish the both this summer. From an operational standpoint, the Ski Area will have to reduce all food services capabilities to meet requirements for physical distancing. They would reduce to 54% capacity, and the Alf's expansion

helps make that possible. Recently, they had noticed that Corkscrew had become too challenging for the low and intermediate skiers, and it was become dangerous. They had received feedback from some of the skiers regarding this problem, and it had been suggested that they put the old Wildcat Track back into play. Alta Ski Area was looking into a few options to resolve the issue. They had seen an unbelievable increase in back-country skiing over the past year, and it was beginning to negatively impact Ski Area operations. They were losing as many as 200 parking spots to back-country skiers on busy days. Alta Ski Area had been meeting with the Forest Service, the Town of Alta, and some of the back-country skiing groups to find a solution to this problem.

Mr. Maughan then addressed increased safety measures for the upcoming season. This would include face mask requirements for all employees and guests, physical distancing in the lodges and lines, increased sanitation and more frequent cleaning, limiting capacity with food and beverage areas, opening a grab-and-go coffee shop and food trailer, and using parking to control guest volume. He noted that UTA had reduced service to 20 people per bus, which was one-third of their normal capacity. Alta Ski Area would be limiting overall capacity to 70% of normal visitation. This plan would be a work in progress, and they hoped to learn a lot within the first few weeks of opening. He believed that there would be a higher demand than usual this year, as they saw with summer activity in the canyon.

Rob Voyer asked if they would be selling tickets at the resort or just online. Mr. Maughan said that they would be selling tickets at the resort. While limiting tickets to pre-sale only would help with capacity, it would cause other issues.

Roger Bourke noted that there were some issues with access to the parking area from the top of the Rustler Lodge chairlift. Mr. Maughan said that he would be working with the Rustler Lodge on enhancing or improving their lift to help alleviate the problem. Roger Bourke then asked how they would address concerns about visitors overtaking the resident parking areas. Mr. Maughan said that this was a discussion already being had between the Ski Area, the Town of Alta, and UDOT. They were considering permits for overnight parking in those areas.

4. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE STATUS OF THE ALTA COMMUNITY CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY – *Jarret Pelletier, Ennead Architects*

Jarrett Pelletier, with Ennead Architects, said that he was present with Elodie Graham and Don Weinreich, and he would be giving an update on the Alta Community Center Feasibility Study. When they last spoke with the Planning Commission in July, they were in the process of engaging the community and gathering input regarding the expectations for the community center. A website was created for the project, and anyone could provide feedback through that website. They had also put together an Advisory Committee and reached out to prominent members of the community to seek their opinions. From that feedback, they were able to determine a functional space program, which was really the basis of the feasibility study.

Elodie Graham said that they received responses from 95 individuals. 59% of those people lived or worked in Alta year-round, 22% lived or worked in Alta seasonally, and 19% were visitors or “other”. They felt that this was a good representation of the community.

Mr. Pelletier said that there was a lot of emphasis on the importance of a gathering place, formal and informal. It was important to the wellbeing of the community. Another item that came out of the discussion was that the center needed to tell the complex story of Alta. The community Center needed to be financially sustainable, and an exemplar of environmental stewardship. Some of the functions of the space that were considered priorities were a multi-purpose events space, trail head, exhibition space, coffee shop and retail areas, office space, a post office, and space for Alta School. Mr. Pelletier presented some images and walked the Commission through the building concept. He noted that there would also be a studio apartment for building management, and a two-bedroom apartment for the police. One concern they needed to address was making sure the building didn't take away the existing parking, so they proposed that the building be raised. This would provide parking beneath and provide better views for those inside the building. The site was in an avalanche path, and they were working with experts to address safety.

Jeff Niermeyer asked if they were looking into a specific sort of LEEDs rating for the building, and Mr. Pelletier said that is what they were hoping to do in the feasibility study. The study would provide a menu, essentially, of what could be included in the community center, and what it would cost. This included the cost of building a structure compliant with energy code requirements.

Rob Voyer asked about the difference between “needs” and “musts” on the list. Mr. Pelletier explained that the “must have” items are functional requirements, such as mechanical, electrical, and janitorial spaces. These things are necessary for the building to function.

There was a brief discussion regarding cost estimates and potential funding.

5. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE OUTDOOR LIGHTING EFFORTS (DARK SKIES)

Mr. Guldner provided an update on Dark Skies. In October of last year, the Planning Commission took some time to actually look at the Town of Alta after dark, and Aubrey Larson, a resident, joined them. She then put Mr. Guldner in touch with Daniel Mendoza at the University of Utah's Metropolitan Planning Department. The University actually had a Dark Skies minor available. Their program had a drone that could measure light from the ground level on up, and they were willing to do four such flights for the Town of Alta as a preliminary assessment. The department would then do a write-up on their findings and provide that to the Town. The Town of Alta would also be included in a mural showing Salt Lake City from both the east and west. The Town of Alta would be contributing some funds to be part of this project. Mr. Guldner said that they were looking at coming to Alta at the end of October or beginning of November for those four flights. With the Planning Commission's recommendation, staff would like to take this information to the Town Council.

Roger Bourke expressed his support for the project. He suggested that the flights be done later in the season for a more accurate reading. The end of October and beginning of November were the quietest and darkest times in the Town of Alta. They would get a much better idea of the issues they were really facing when there was more snow on the ground and more people in the canyon. Mr. Guldner said that the students needed to have their project done by the last week of November,

so they needed to take their measurements before that. He would speak to Mr. Mendoza about coming back after the New Year for more accurate readings.

There was some discussion about the four locations for the drone flights. Mr. Guldner noted that all the Town's lighting had been replaced with lights that were Dark Skies compliant, so it wouldn't be helpful to fly at the streetlight. He suggested Snowpine and the Wildcat Base. Sugar Plum and Blackjack were also suggested.

MOTION: Rob Voyer moved that the Planning Commission authorize staff to work together and bring back a model that was specific to the Town of Alta. Dave Abraham seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous consent of the Commission.

6. NEW BUSINESS

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Mr. Guldner said that there were no pressing issues for the next meeting. They discussed having a meeting after they received information back from the drone flights. The next Planning Commission meeting would be in January 2021. It was noted that the Commission could schedule a meeting if something came up in the meantime.

8. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Rob Voyer moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 PM. Jeff Niermeyer seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous consent of the Commission.

Minutes Approved on April 27, 2021.



Chris Cawley, Assistant Town Administrator