



City Council Report

Date: June 4, 2009
To: City Council
Through: Kari Kent, Deputy City Manager
From: Christine Zielonka, Development and Sustainability Director
John Wesley, Planning Director
Subject: Proposed Modification of Citizen Advisory Boards Associated with the Land Development Process: Downtown Development Committee (DDC), Design Review Board (DRB), Planning and Zoning (P & Z), Development Advisory Board (DAB)

PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION

In response to general discussions with the Mayor and City Manager we have been asked to propose options for streamlining the organization and efficiencies of the Downtown Development Committee (DDC), Planning and Zoning Board (P&Z) and the Design Review Board (DRB). Additionally we have been asked to define the responsibilities for a new Development Advisory Board (DAB) and outline a process for the establishment of this board. This memorandum provides staff recommendations on how to proceed with these proposed board changes. The intent of the proposed modifications is to continue to improve the efficiency of our processes while maintaining the opportunity for public involvement in the land development process.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Combining DDC and P&Z

There are currently overlapping functions between the DDC and P&Z. The proposal is to eliminate the DDC and have P&Z assume the planning and zoning functions for the downtown area. Planning has assumed responsibility for handling the downtown entitlement cases (previously managed by Economic Development) and has been working collaboratively with Economic Development on downtown projects since January, 2009. Planning has also already assumed responsibility for the historic preservation program that was previously administered by Economic Development and more recently by Neighborhood Services.

Code Changes

The DDC is established in Section 2-20 of the City Code (Boards and Commissions) and in Section 11-18-11(Zoning Ordinance). Section 501(A) of the Mesa City Charter authorizes Council to abolish any board that is not required by law or Charter. Both of these City Code provisions would have to be modified via ordinance to eliminate the DDC. Per City Code Section 2-20-1, modifications eliminating the DDC would be made solely by Council.

It is proposed that the Council eliminate the DDC in conformance with the City Charter provision. A Zoning Ordinance text amendment would then be processed through P&Z and

then Council to make the conforming Code changes. In order to facilitate processing of development applications in the downtown area, the time between the elimination of the DDC and the approval of the zoning ordinance text amendment giving the authority for development applications in the downtown area to the P&Z Board should be kept as short as possible.

Modification of the Design Review Board

The current DRB has seven members, reviews any project over 20,000 sq. ft. and any project on arterial roads. DRB is also the appeals board for the smaller projects that are currently handled by Planning staff. Appeals of the DRB go to the full Council.

The proposal is that design review and approval of all projects would be authorized at the staff level. The name of the DRB would be changed to the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) with the primary function to hear appeals from staff decisions when applicant and staff are unable to agree on design proposals. The only new cases the ARC would consider would be City projects. It is also recommended that the ARC meet on a quarterly basis to provide high level guidance on design goals for the City. This could be done by reviewing best practices, new ideas and technologies as exhibited in recent projects and other methods as appropriate. There would be no work sessions and if there were no appeals or City projects, the committee would meet only four times per year. Appeals would be scheduled on an as needed basis. Although DRB currently has seven members the ultimate goal for the ARC would be to have only five members. This reduction in membership would be achieved by attrition over time. The current DRB members would become the initial members of the ARC.

Code Changes

The DRB is established in Sections 2-9-1 and 11-18-9 of the City Code. Both of these sections will require modification. The change to Title 11 will require review and recommendation by the P&Z Board. As a courtesy, it may be appropriate to also receive the input and feedback of the DRB on this proposed change.

Architectural Review

Because there is no longer a registered architect on the Planning staff a contract architect will be retained on an as-needed basis. This contract architect will provide guidance on design solutions and will be available to meet with applicants as necessary.

Establishment of a Development Advisory Board

There has been discussion about formalizing the Developer's Advisory Forum (DAF), which has been in existence for many years. Therefore, a new Development Advisory Board (DAB) is being proposed to provide comprehensive oversight of the land development processes and to provide input and participation from a diverse appointed body. The duties and powers of the board would be in an advisory capacity only. The proposed scope of work for the DAB would include the following:

- Review and comment on proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance, Building Codes, and fees and charges associated with the development process. Modifications to these Codes would be considered by the DAB prior to consideration by other Boards (e.g. P&Z). The comments and recommendations of the DAB would be included with the staff report and recommendations provided to other Boards (e.g. P&Z) and to the full Council for final consideration.

- Receive information and provide feedback to City staff on proposed modifications to City development standards as part of the public outreach process.
- Provide review, consideration and direction for new or pilot programs being considered or proposed by staff.
- Identification and recommendations on process or program enhancements that would result in improvements to the development process.
- Other related topics as identified by the Mayor, DAB members or other advisory boards, or City staff.

It is recommended that the Board consist of 7 voting members and that the Board membership include a broad range and balance of interests from both the development community and the public (i.e. residents of Mesa).

Possibilities for voting membership include the following:

- Development Professionals (Architects, Engineers, Attorneys)
- Contractors – both residential and commercial
- Developers or Property Owners – commercial/industrial and residential
- Representatives of a City wide organization of business interests (Chamber of Commerce, East Valley Partnership, Valley Partnership, Convention and Visitors Bureau).
- Citizen/Neighborhood Representative

It is recommended that the Development and Sustainability Director or their designee function as the non-voting member of the Board.

Residency requirements: Direction is requested on requirements for residency of the proposed DAB. Options include:

- The actual member must reside in Mesa
- The firm being represented must have an office in Mesa
- The firm being represented must conduct business in Mesa
- No residency requirements as determined by the Mayor's selection process.

Relationship to the Development Advisory Forum:

Stakeholders in the development community who have been participating on the DAF would be able to provide input through the new DAB. The appointed members could bring agenda items to the board which are identified by non-members. Additionally, DAB meetings could be structured to have a relatively informal discussion with audience members on topics under consideration. The current e-mail list, which includes over 300 stakeholders, would continue to be used to provide information on Mesa programs and issues to the development community.

Timing

It is recommended that all three recommendations including elimination of the DDC, reconfiguration of the DRB to the ARC, and establishment of the DAB be processed at the same time.

The following is the proposed schedule for consideration of the Board modifications:

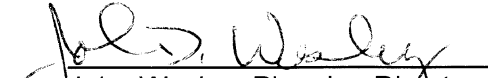
- Presentation to the Developer's Advisory Forum (DAF) at the June 3rd special meeting,
- Discussion and direction from Council at the June 4th Study Session
- Consideration by P&Z in July
- Introduction and consideration of all ordinance changes in August.

FISCAL IMPACT

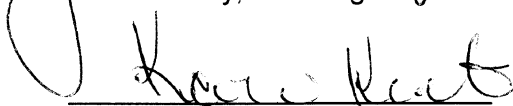
There is no direct fiscal impact associated with this proposal. Planning fees associated with affected processes (downtown projects, design review etc.) are not being modified. There are staff resource efficiencies that are anticipated to be realized with the board combinations.

COORDINATED WITH

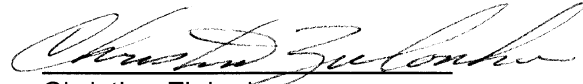
The proposed board modifications have been reviewed with the Water Resources, Transportation and Engineering departments.



John Wesley, Planning Director



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