

Motel project approved as expected

Once again, despite protests from the city staff, the City Council has given its support to plans for a motel at Lee and Beach roads.

Specifically, the council, acting as the Redevelopment Agency, approved a use permit for the planned 111-unit Ramada Inn last night. The council had already approved amendments to the city's General Plan and Redevelopment Plan, and a rezoning of the four-acre site last year.

Each time the matter has come before the council, the city staff has been united in its opposition to the project. And each time the vote has been the same — council members Rex Clark, Gwen Carroll, Roy Ingersoll and Joe Marsano have voted in favor of the project.

The staff's opposition to the motel proposed by Heritage Development Company stems from its location — next to a cold storage plant in the city's industrial area. Ammonia leaks are not uncommon at cold storage plants, and the staff warned the council of the potential for disaster in the event of a big leak when the motel is full of people.

Although it was a foregone conclusion that the council would continue to support the project and grant the use permit last night, there were still several details to be ironed out. The council, the staff and the developer haggled over some of those points last night.

Police Chief Ray Belgard asked the council not to allow

cars to exit the motel property onto Beach Road, saying there's too much traffic there already. This was the perfect chance to prevent future problems, Belgard said, suggesting instead that traffic be allowed to enter the motel on Beach Road, but exit onto Lee Road.

The council rejected Belgard's suggestion in favor of a request by developer Scott

The planning staff had also recommended that a masonry wall be built around the motel, largely to block out the noise of the freeway and the neighboring industry. But the council agreed with Johnson that the wall is only needed on the two sides where the property abuts industrial buildings.

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Johnson to put two driveways on Beach Road, allowing cars to both enter and exit the property on that side.

Johnson also asked that he not be required to put in parking for five truck-trailer rigs, as requested by the Planning Department. The council argued over the need for truck parking, with Councilman Rex Clark saying he didn't think truck drivers would stay at the Ramada Inn, even if it is in the industrial section of town. Clark said he was sure truck drivers would look for cheaper accommodations.

The council eased the requirement by allowing Johnson to use his right-of-way on an adjacent parcel to provide some of the truck parking.

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The proposed Ramada Inn is one of three motels recently approved by the city. Another will be built on Airport Boulevard at the freeway and the third is planned for Green Valley Road at Main Street.

In another matter last night, the City Council considered a plan to levy a traffic-impact fee on all new construction in the city. The council is looking for a way to recoup the approximately \$750,000 it has to pay for traffic improvements in the Green Valley Road/Main Street/Harkins Slough area.

The developers in that area are to be assessed for road improvements and traffic sig-

nals, but the city had agreed to pay a share of the cost, and is now seeking a way to finance its share.

The council had asked the staff to come up with a plan to spread the cost over the entire city after the property owners in the Harkins Slough area protested the original plan, under which they would be charged more than they already have been.

The staff presented several alternatives, variously placing the major burden on residential, industrial and commercial developers.

But council members didn't like the idea of imposing another fee, especially because builders are now facing higher school-impact fees.

"Permits today cost more than a house cost 20 years ago," Councilman Vido Dere-tich said.

Councilwoman Betty Murphy said she, too, is reluctant to charge another fee, but said that the city has to find a way to raise the money.

"The only other alternative is digging into our street fund at the sacrifice of everybody who lives here already who might want the potholes fixed," she said.

The council didn't adopt the traffic-impact fees, deciding instead to have the staff look into other ways to pay for the traffic improvements, such as perhaps trying to float a bond issue.

—Nancy Barr