

**City of Blue Lake  
Final Planning Commission Meeting Minutes  
February 20, 2023**

**The Blue Lake Planning Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.**

**Commissioners Present:** Earl Eddy, Matt Schang, and Robert Chapman

**Commissioners Absent:** Richard Platz, Cort Pryor

**Staff Present:** City Manager-Planning Commission Secretary Amanda Mager and City Planner Garrison Rees

**Staff Absent:** None

**Public Present:** Lee Martin, Sam Edmonds, Dutch Morrison, Sean Bennett

**1. Approval of Minutes: November 21, 2022**

- a. Motion (Schang, Eddy) to approve November 21, 2022 minutes as written.
- b. Motion passed (3-0).

**2. Public Input on Non-Agenda Items**

- a. None.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

- a. Motion (Chapman, Schang) to approve agenda.
- b. Motion passed (3-0).

**Discussion/ Action:**

**4. Information Only Item: Application #025-161-016/2022. Proposal by Thompson Gas LLC to locate a 30,000-gallon propane tank on APN 025-161-016. The tank will be used to fill up transport trucks that would deliver propane to residential and commercial customers in the area. Other activity at the site related to the business is proposed to include the parking of vehicles/trucks, use of a storage container for the storage of materials/supplies, use of a small portable office building for office work, and the storage of up to 50 empty propane tanks ranging in size from 120 – 1,000 gallons.**

- a. **City Planner Rees:** Presents the staff report; describes the proposal and provides an overview of the location and the permitting process. The applicant will apply for a conditional use permit, which would come before the Planning Commission for review and consideration if the applicant chooses to submit an application. Planner Rees provides an overview of the parcel's zoning and the allowable uses.
- b. **Chairman Eddy:** Asks the Thompson Gas representatives about their current operations, including their location and why they want to locate to Blue Lake.
- c. **Lee Martin (Thompson Gas):** Introduces representatives of Thompson Gas in attendance; explains that they have purchased the propane business from Redwood

- Fuels; their operation currently consists of one driver and no local storage facility; they are currently filling trucks in Laytonville for Humboldt County deliveries; they have moved in to the local market and are turning away business due to capacity issues; there is enough of a local customer base to make investment in a local storage facility cost effective. They found a local property owner that has the property to accommodate their needs and is willing to lease them space; they have been looking for two years for a location, but due to constraints presented by the coastal commission and impacts from the cannabis industry, it's been difficult to find a location that can be permitted on available sites in the Humboldt Bay region. The lease with Tavis Cain is for five years; eventually we will want to purchase a property to grow the business and have a permanent location. The operation doesn't create a lot of traffic or noise; they propose to have two drivers making two trips per day. The 30,000 gallon tank would need to be filled every two weeks; this would require 3-10,000 gallon deliveries.
- d. **City Planner Rees:** As part of the CUP application submittal, we will need to see growth projections for the business during the 5-year lease term and proposed traffic impacts based upon the growth potential.
  - e. **Commissioner Chapman:** Is there a similar sized tank in Humboldt County?
  - f. **Sam Edmonds:** There's a tank near the Figas property in Arcata with a similar set up and another Arcata location (Amerigas) that has 2-30,000 gallon tanks.
  - g. **Lee Martin:** Explains how the tank is set up.
  - h. **Dutch Morrison:** The tanks are engineered, and the slab and the tank system will be designed to meet seismic standards.
  - i. **City Planner Rees:** If aesthetics are raised as part of the discussion, have you considered screening or vegetation to screen the tanks?
  - j. **Lee Martin:** We have to put a fence around the tank for Homeland Security standards; we can put colored slats in the fencing, plant vegetation or paint the tank a different color.
  - k. **Planner Rees:** We are still waiting on comments from all of the City departments and Fire District; some of the initial comments are regarding safety bollards, stamped plans for engineered structures, and questions from Fire Marshall Ed Laidlaw, regarding fire code compliance.
  - l. **Chairman Eddy:** Who are usually the biggest detractors from prior applications for large tanks; homeowners?
  - m. **Lee Martin:** Usually people that have concerns over fire/explosions. Propane tanks like these don't explode like in the movies; there are safety features built-in to prevent explosions, along with regular inspections that take place.
  - n. **Planner Rees:** Have you ever proposed a tank where the community wants a blast wall around the tank? Such as the case where there is affordable housing that has received funding from HUD?
  - o. **Lee Martin:** We have installed concrete walls in other locations; usually in areas around gas stations.
  - p. **Matthew Schang:** From an initial review, the fire code appears to have requirements for setbacks from residences for the parking of propane dispensing trucks at night. Although there's no residential development now, how would this affect future residential development in the Powers Creek District?

- q. **Dutch Morrison:** The setback requirements in the fire code are most likely referring to the unsecured parking of propane dispensing trucks on public streets. We will be storing our vehicles on private property within a fenced area that will be secured.
- r. **Lee Martin:** There are layers of safety features; the tanks do not explode, they will vent; if it catches on fire you let them vent and burn off fuel.
- s. **Planner Rees:** The City has referred the project to the Fire District and will rely on their expertise to ensure compliance with the fire code requirements such as setbacks.
- t. **Sean Bennett:** We had several of our tanks go through recent forest fires in Redwood Valley and through the Paradise Fire; we have experience with how the tanks react.
- u. **Lee Martin:** When you have the public hearing for the use permit, can we attend?
- v. **Chairman Eddy:** Yes, anyone may attend public hearings. During the future meeting we'll open up the hearing to the public for questions and allow you to provide answers.
- w. **Commissioner Schang:** Will you have a retail site where people can fill smaller tanks?
- x. **Lee Martin:** Not at this time.
- y. **Commissioner Schang:** How long will it take to bring this item back?
- z. **Planner Rees:** Planner Rees explained the process and timeframe for a use permit application. Because this use isn't specifically allowed as a principally or conditionally permitted use in the O Zone, the Commission will have to make a finding regarding the project's consistency with the zoning and the Powers Creek District. It is anticipated that issues may be raised related to noise, odor, safety, hours of operations, light impacts, and traffic impacts.

**5. Discussion: General Plan Housing Element Update.**

- a. Planner Rees provides an update on the Draft Housing Element and indicated that staff is getting close to finishing responding to the comments from HCD. Once the HCD comments have been adequately addressed, staff will complete the CEQA process. Due to the significant revisions that have been made to the Draft Housing Element, the Planning Commission will need to provide an amended recommendation to the City Council for adoption of the Housing Element Update.

**5. Miscellaneous Planner Items**

- a. **Gas Line Replacement/Paving Project:** City Manager Mager provided an update on the gas line replacement project.
- b. **Kyle Boughton Project:** A revised plan has been submitted and will be presented to the Commission at a future date.
- c. **Ryan Rousseau Project:** The Rousseau's have submitted plans for the next phase of their development in the Powers Creek District; this item will be presented to the Commission at a future date.
- d. **Blue Lake Bike Park:** City Manager Mager provided an update.

**6. Upcoming Planning Commission Meetings for the next 3 months will be on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

- a. Commissioner Schang indicated that he will not be available for the March meeting.

- 7. Adjournment by 9:00 pm unless extended by the Planning Commission.**
  - a. Motion (Schang, Chapman) to adjourn.
  - b. Motion passed (3-0).
  - c. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.