

DINUBA SENTINEL

City council considers neglected tract

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By: Jackson Moore

The future of abandoned, unfinished homes along Road 72 remains uncertain after a council work session on Jan. 24.

Prior to the regularly scheduled Dinuba City Council meeting, the council spent 30 minutes addressing the eyesore, but no direction was concluded before the allotted time ended.

The housing project was first approved in 2005 as a 42-unit development south of Kelly Drive, but the eventual result was five unfinished model homes and three poured foundations on the property. The homes sit with boarded-up windows and unpaid city fees, owned by a group of more than 50 senior citizens who only intended on being investors.

The city was offered three options. First, they could decide to continue with the status quo of the past several years – monitoring the site, responding to nuisances and waiting for a private developer to take over the project.

A second option was to solicit a private developer to complete the project as designed. Self-Help Enterprises was in attendance along with representatives of the large group of owners who have been in talks on how they could implement their programs at the site. If the city were to go with this route, Mayor Scott Harness mentioned the possibility of exploring other developers.

A third option of turning the property into a public use, like a park, was also proposed. However, the costs the city would incur by acquiring the property and demolishing the standing homes could be difficult to manage.

After the presentation and input from Self-Help Enterprises and the homeowners, the council held a short discussion and opted to continue the topic to a later date as their time frame expired.

In other council actions:

- A special meeting was held prior to the work session for the city's annual audit report for fiscal year 2015-16.

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada has awarded the city of Dinuba a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 23 consecutive years.

A representative of Moss, Levy & Hartzheim, LPP told council that they believe the 2015-16 audits will earn another consecutive award.

A brief explanation of the audit's progress was given to council.

- The city council voted unanimously, 4-0, to approve the sale of property in the downtown area. Councilman Emilio "Joey" Morales was not in attendance.

The property at 220 South L Street is an empty lot situated between the Spotlight Restaurant and the Dinuba Vocational Center. The sale was approved at \$36,900, as is. The property was evaluated at \$36,000.

- City Manager Luis Patlan told council that interviews for the city's finance director position are ongoing and a hire could come soon. Carlos Sanchez has served as the city's interim finance director.

- The council was informed of a minor change to the citywide bicycle lane project.

The city's two brick "welcome signs" will be returning to town as a part of the project. One will be installed at the northeast corner of Alta Avenue and L Street. The plan for the other sign has been changed from the northeast corner of Alta Avenue and M Street and moved to Alta Avenue and Uruapan Street.

The signage on the monuments will also be changed to be consistent with the city's wayfinding plan.

The city was awarded \$261,000 of Active Transportation Program funding and \$83,000 of Measure R funding that will also be used for 3.21 miles of Class II bikeway striping and signage, 11.21 miles of Class III bikeway striping and signage, beatification of wayfinding signage, a wayfinding monument sign for the transit center and public education for the bike routes.

- The 2012 merger of the Community Services Commission and the Dinuba Pro-Youth Commission was repealed.

According to a staff report, members of the Pro-Youth Commission believed that they would be both a part of the commission and the Dinuba Pro-Youth nonprofit corporation. However, the two entities are intended to be operated separately.

The commissioners voted to serve as board members for the nonprofit corporation.

Council voted unanimously on the action.