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**MEETING MINUTES OF THE CITY OF
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION**

September 23, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ereth called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Chair Ereth led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Adam Ereth, Vice Chair Russell Toler, Commissioner Angely Andrade, Commissioner Karen Klepack, Commissioner David Martinez, Commissioner Jonny Rojas, Commissioner Jon Zich

Absent: None

Officials Present: Assistant Director of Development Services Scott Drapkin, Assistant City Attorney Tarquin Preziosi, Senior Planner Michelle Halligan, Engineer Seung Yang and Recording Secretary Anna Partida

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:

None.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Martinez acknowledged Hispanic Heritage Month and extended his best wishes to those celebrating in the community. He encouraged participation in the upcoming Costa Mesa Historical Society's historical bike ride and the "Week Without Driving" challenge, highlighting the importance of exploring alternative modes of transportation. Reflecting on a recent Energy Bill Savings Workshop, Commissioner Martinez shared valuable information about rebate programs offered by Southern California Edison, SoCal Gas, and the Costa Mesa 311 app, which helps residents report local issues. Commissioner Martinez also mentioned initiatives like the Parkway Tree Planting Program, Just Cause Residential Tenant Protection Ordinance, and home loan programs for qualifying residents. Additionally, he drew attention to rebates available through the Costa Mesa Sanitary District, Mesa Water, and the Municipal Water District

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of Orange County for sewer inspections, pool covers, and turf replacement. He concluded by emphasizing the need for better community engagement, urging the City to actively involve residents at events to ensure broader participation and representation in City programs and projects

Commissioner Klepack expressed her gratitude to Commissioner Martinez for highlighting community programs and services.

Vice Chair Toler thanked Commissioner Martinez for presenting the information.

Chair Ereth echoed his fellow Commissioners comments and thanked Commissioner Martinez for his presentation.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

No member of the public nor Planning Commissioner requested to pull a Consent Calendar item.

1. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: AUGUST 26, 2024 AND MARCH 14, 2022

ACTION: Planning Commission approved the minutes of the Planning Commission's regular meetings of August 26, 2024 and March 14, 2022.

MOVED/SECOND: Martinez / Toler

MOTION: Approve recommended action for Consent Calendar Item No. 1.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Ereth, Toler, Andrade, Klepack, Martinez, Rojas, Zich

Nays: None

Absent: None

Abstained: None

Motion carried: 7-0

PUBLIC HEARINGS:**1. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT PCUP-24-0010 FOR A RETAIL CANNABIS STOREFRONT BUSINESS WITH DELIVERY (THE HUMBOLDT CONNECT) LOCATED AT 2138 NEWPORT BOULEVARD**

Project Description: PCUP-24-0010 is a request for a Conditional Use Permit to allow a 920-square-foot retail cannabis storefront use with delivery in an existing one-story commercial building located at 2138 Newport Boulevard. The proposed use would be subject to Costa Mesa's regulations, conditions of approval, and State cannabis regulations.

Commissioner Martinez recused himself from the hearing and left the dais due to living within 1,000 feet of the proposed property.

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Environmental Determination: The project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1), Existing Facilities.

Five ex-parte communications were reported:

Commissioner Zich met with the applicant.

Vice Chair Toler met with the applicant.

Commissioner Klepack met with the applicant.

Chair Ereth received an email from the applicant.

Michelle Halligan, Senior Planner, presented the staff report.

Commissioner Andrade asked staff about the other approved cannabis storefronts in the area. Specifically, she requested clarification on a nearby conditional use permit at 2146 Newport Boulevard, asking where it stood in the approval process and whether it was included in the map shown during the presentation. Commissioner Andrade expressed concern over whether that property was still intended to be a cannabis dispensary or if there had been a change of use. Staff responded, confirming that while a cannabis storefront conditional use permit was initially approved at 2146 Newport Boulevard, the property owner had since submitted plans for a non-cannabis use.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing.

Chris Trent, applicant, stated he had read and agreed to the conditions of approval.

Commissioner Andrade asked about the applicant's commitment to donating 2% of revenue to local nonprofits, to which the applicant confirmed that he had already donated to several organizations, and those he had donated to were aware of that he was a cannabis business owner. He also assured the Commission that these donations would continue for the duration of his license. Commissioner Andrade then inquired about the local hiring and training practices at Humboldt Connect, and Mr. Trent responded that most of employees would be hired locally from Costa Mesa. He explained that the training would be tailored to each employee's role, whether in management, sales, or other positions, ensuring professional development for the staff. Additionally, Commissioner Andrade asked about the applicant's competitive edge in a market that may soon have multiple cannabis businesses. Mr. Trent highlighted that his vertical integration—owning cultivation, distribution, and manufacturing licenses—allowed him to offer unique products, differentiating his dispensary from others. He explained that integration gives him more control over product quality and pricing, ensuring a competitive advantage.

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Chair Ereth followed up with a question about the feedback the applicant had received from neighboring businesses. Chair Ereth wanted to know if the businesses listed in the applicant's letter had expressed active support or simply neutrality. The applicant clarified that most businesses were either supportive or neutral, with one business owner expressing opposition to cannabis in general.

The Chair opened public comments.

Jason Piazza spoke in support of the item.

Ryan Swan spoke in support of the item.

Caller three spoke in support of the item.

Caller four spoke in support of the item.

Caller five spoke in support of the item.

Sean Waddell spoke in support of the item.

Brian Michael Barash spoke in support of the item.

Eric Trent spoke in support of the item.

Caller nine spoke in support of the item.

Brian Esser spoke in support of the item.

Lance Barish spoke in support of the item.

The Chair closed public comments.**The Chair closed the Public Hearing.**

Vice Chair Toler made a motion. Seconded by Commissioner Rojas.

Commissioner comments on the motion included acknowledgement of the overwhelming community support the applicant received regarding his character. They emphasized that the project would revitalize the area and bring positive changes to the location. Despite some Commissioners' personal views about cannabis, Commissioners admired the applicant's professionalism, patience, and dedication, noting the potential positive impact his business would have on the community.

MOVED/SECOND: Toler/Rojas

MOTION: Approve staff's recommendation.

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The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Ereth, Toler, Klepack, Rojas, Zich

Nays: Andrade

Absent: None

Recused: Martinez

Motion carried: 5-1-1

ACTION: The Planning Commission adopted a resolution to:

1. Find that the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1) Existing Facilities; and
2. Approve Conditional Use Permit PCUP-24-0010 subject to the conditions of approval as contained in the Resolution:

RESOLUTION PC-2024-21 - A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA APPROVING PLANNING APPLICATION PCUP-24-0010 FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A STOREFRONT RETAIL CANNABIS BUSINESS WITH DELIVERY (THE HUMBOLDT CONNECT) IN THE C1 ZONE AT 2138 NEWPORT BOULEVARD

The Chair explained the appeal process.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

1. Public Works Report – None.
2. Development Services Report – None.

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE REPORT:

1. City Attorney – None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 7:11 PM

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Submitted by:

SCOTT DRAPKIN, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION