Roll Call: Council Member McCracken, Council Member P. Martinez, Mayor Pro Tem F. Martinez, Council Member Hernandez, Mayor Hamilton

EDC Members Present:
- Greg Woodard, Chairman
- Art Cardell
- John Corkins
- Bill McKinley
- Gary Reed
- Rosa Carlson
- Paul Saldana
- Donnette Silva-Carter
- Neil Smith
- Mimi Stoneburner
- John Snavely

EDC Members Present:
- Dick Eckhoff
- Avtar Singh Barra
- Mary S. Leavitt

Public:
- Josef D. Guerrero
- Gilbert Ynigues
- Aaron Burgin

Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Pro Tem Felipe Martinez
Invocation - Moment of Silence

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
None

SCHEDULED MATTER

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

   The City Manager stated that there was a request from the Porterville Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee to meet with the City Council to discuss their priorities, including siting the new courthouse in Porterville. He stated that the Chamber had provided a copy of information on the Chamber EDC Mission, Objectives and Project Priorities. He stated that the Chamber EDC Committee Chairman was present, with some of the members, to meet with the Council.

   Mayor Hamilton asked Greg Woodard if he was going to speak for the EDC, and Mr. Woodard stated that he would.
Greg Woodard, 461 N. Crestview, spoke as the Chairman of the Chamber. He stated that they had talked a lot about economic development and where they were going as a community, as citizens and as government, with one community with one vision and one heart and one mind, all on the same page. He stated that several of the Council members had been part of those meetings where they had been together with elected officials who looked at them and stated that if their community comes up with a vision that was comprehensive, and it was something that the elected officials would agree with and buy into, then they would be there to do whatever it took in order to be able to get them the funds, the money, and the grants, and the legislation to be able to do what they needed to do as a community. He stated that they could talk about past actions, but they were more interested in talking about what their potential was as a community, not about all the past history that they could rehash and go over, but that was part of the impetus of this group, part of what had spurred them on, had been some of that history. He stated that they were there to talk about their mission, their objectives, their priorities and what they believe was a priority. Mr. Woodard stated that they were there for the Council’s agreement and buy-in, but they also wanted to know if those weren’t the Council’s priorities, objectives or missions, then let them know. He stated that they had twenty something community leaders on their Committee, and they were there to address those concerns and get the Council’s input and understand where they were at and needed to do as a government and legislative body that makes decisions on behalf of all the citizens. Mr. Woodard stated that the Committee was there to put their full weight, resources, abilities, energies, talents and strengths behind what they believe they were there to do—to promote a common goal, common vision, and common dream. If not for themselves then for their children and grandchildren. He stated that they were at a tipping point where they could pivot back and fall back or fall forward to achieve some great and fantastic things that all of their kids and grandkids could be proud of. Mr. Woodard stated that he knew the Council felt the exact same way, and was willing to make decisions that would last a lifetime. He stated that they were there to be partners, not adversaries, and they didn’t want the credit either. He then briefly reviewed their mission statement. He then reviewed the EDC Objectives and Project Priorities.

Mayor Hamilton asked what was a business friendly environment was as far as the EDC envisioned. Was it action by the Council or by the community.

Mr. Woodard stated that it was probably two separate entities, but they all had to work together in the effort. He stated that when a business comes to the community, if they had a streamlining process for permits, or if they had already accomplished some of those things, such as the General Plan Update, to incorporate a lot of the things needed from an environmental review standpoint, those were all things they needed to be thinking about. He stated that they needed to think ahead and get ahead of the curve.

Mayor Hamilton stated that he wanted Brad to interject about companies coming to them and it was a matter of ‘stealth,’ and the Council and the Chamber didn’t get to work on a lot of things.

Brad Dunlap, Director of Community Development, stated that it was a matter of balancing the confidentiality the perspective businesses want, and being ready to be able to accommodate them. One of the ways they have approached it is to try and line up the land ahead of time, or site readiness, so they can streamline the process to make it as quick as possible. He stated that they had become more effective in bringing all the different disciplines together at the table, while attempting to maintain confidentiality. Mr. Dunlap stated that they had dealt with companies that, if anything
got out, it could cost them contracts and/or millions of dollars. He stated that the process of making
everything an open discussion and bringing everything to Council, would be self-defeating. He
stated that sometimes that could have input from local developers, at the company’s request, and they
had in one instance brought in Mr. Woodard. Brad stated that site readiness was critical, but the fall
back has been City owned land. It should not be working that way, they should have private market
partnerships, but they had been fortunate to have the City owned land to make it happen, but that
can’t be the sole source of available land for new development, so they needed partnerships in that
regard. Mr. Dunlap stated that they also needed to work together to make the land site ready—none
of that had to be business specific, it just had to be goal oriented and mission sensitive. That could
still be achieved and maintain confidentiality on the individual business being worked. So there was
availability of land, site readiness, and streamlining of processes so they were able to bring them in
as quickly as possible with a short turn around time for the start of construction in order to meet start
up periods and time lines. Mr. Dunlap stated that time was of the essence, and it became more
problematic when layers were added in. He stated that it also needed to be clear, from the City’s
organizational standpoint, that it needed to become a priority for all the departments to participate
in the planning and preparation for future development. That would also require some awareness
from the Council’s position that some items may take a secondary role when it comes to
prioritization of efforts. He stated that they were working on eight deals right now, and it was very
time consuming, and there were a lot of logistical issues that varied from business to business. Mr.
Dunlap stated that it was a complex equation they needed the ability to work on, and they needed
the understanding that they couldn’t disclose all the information while they were doing it.

Mayor Hamilton clarified that although there was sometimes misinformation out in the City
that City Hall was holding up projects, that was not the case, it was that confidential information was
not readily going out, or sometimes the people that brought the project in the first place want to
sidestep something, and they start the rumors that the City is holding them up. He stated that if they
were all to be a cohesive group, they needed to be of a mind set that these things were not
necessarily true, and if they were all not held in the loop, they should not get their feelings hurt when
there was something they didn’t know about.

Mr. Dunlap stated that they all wanted the success, and the other element that had to be there
was that one of the critical paths in all the projects was the environmental review process, and they
were trying to streamline that process through a better EIR for the General Plan that would allow
them to come in and tier off of that. One of the things that had been very effective on their 74 acre
industrial property was that they jump-started that process ahead of time and went to the Porterville
Civic Development Foundation and got seed money to go out and map it, prepare grading plans, and
get the environmental done to be able to move forward with that. Mr. Dunlap stated that it had been
very beneficial, with regard to one prospective business in particular, it was a very important factor
in their consideration. He stated that they needed to be able to do that with individuals and private
property owners, to insure that the infrastructure was there, and there was a willingness to get the
environmental review done—to build the envelope. He stated that they had talked to developers or
contractors about getting 20,000 sf buildings plan checked and ready to go on a site, so if they got
a proposed use they could get it done in an expedited manner. Mr. Dunlap stated that they had not
had good results in that regard from the standpoint of the City partnering with the private sector.
There’s been interest, but interest only went so far, it had to play out in working with the City on real
property, specific buildings, and getting the envelop ready to go and turn-key when someone comes
in—that was where it was critical. Mr. Dunlap stated that there was a lot of room to improve in that regard.

Mr. Woodard added that they understood the value of the secrecy, and as the Economic Development Committee, if all twenty of them knew what was going on, there would be slight chance that it wouldn’t get out somewhere. So they understood that, and were ready to deal with that, however part of the collaborate effort that they would like to see and bring forth tonight was that they had an individual, a civic minded individual, Teresa Jackson, that had agreed to be a liaison, a coordinator, and facilitator between the Chamber and the City. The other thing the EDC would like is for the Council to have two Council members attend the Chamber meetings, along with the City staff currently attending, so the Chamber could get their thoughts and share ideas, which would achieve a higher level of communication as far as the collaborate effort goes.

The City Manager that such an arrangement might trigger the Brown Act for the Committee, but they would check into that.

Mr. Woodard stated that as on the EDC Priorities, they were at a tipping point, and one of the projects that was in the public eye, was the future courthouse. The project would be a huge catalyst in the revival of the downtown area. That project could bring up existing businesses and bring in new business, and create jobs and sales tax that would potentially help with several million dollars worth of allocation toward land. With the cooperation of the City with City-owned parking lots, in addition to monies available for land purchases, those dollars could be leveraged to create parking garages or to get grants, so that would not only would the facilities be able to be used during the day by the 107 employees of the courthouse, not counting sheriffs, deputies, support staff, and the 300 to 500 people that could be at the facility each day, but would be an opportunity for use by downtown in the evening. Mr. Woodard stated that there were areas that would be perfect to create a downtown courthouse complex that would be accessible, such as the intersections of Main and Olive or Main and Second, or along in that vicinity, that would be prime areas where people could get access to the courthouse.

Mayor Hamilton clarified that the EDC had not discussed this project as a whole and where they were in the process, however, they had discussed that they felt the prime location would be somewhere behind the alley on the east side of Main Street, all the way to Third Street, from Olive to Putnam. The Mayor stated that it was imperative that more than one location was offered to the State, so they had looked at various areas.

Mr. Woodard stated that if they all came together, and they decided that the best location was in downtown Porterville, then they needed to figure out the resources needed to make that the best location. That was the difference in the community now, they had decided, either directly or indirectly, that now was the time for Porterville to step up and not be the cheapest place to live, but the best place to live.

Mayor Hamilton stated that they needed the County to transfer to the State before any of this could happen, and they were knocking their head against a brick wall now. He stated that they could do all the planning, but if the County didn’t transfer the land to the State, it would phase out.
Mr. Woodard stated that he understood that was the trip wire—that if by July 2007 either the existing courthouse had to be mitigated for seismic danger, or the land had to be transferred.

Mayor Hamilton stated that he understood that this had to be in the budget by January 10 for the $4.4 million for the land acquisition and design, and to do it the land transfer needed to be done before that. So it was a shorter period.

Mr. Woodard stated that perhaps July 2007 was the drop dead date.

Mr. Longley stated that he had spoken to Supervisor Maples who stated that this was their number one priority, and the critical path to the State was the transfer of the courthouse. If it didn’t end up in the State Department of Finance budget, then there was an opportunity in the Governor’s budget, and the next one goes to the May revise.

Mr. Woodard stated that if this Council committed tonight that this was their choice, that was where they were going to put their resources behind, the Chamber felt they could put their public resources behind making sure that happens. He stated that they would like the Council to support a downtown location.

Mayor Hamilton stated that one offer the City had received was 1/8 of a mile from the Forestry property. He stated that half of getting the property was getting an agreement with the property owner, and the property owner would appreciate being in on the discussion.

Mr. Woodard agreed, but he stated that they felt that the chance for greater economic revitalization of downtown comes a lot better from a contiguous area to downtown rather than far away.

Mayor Hamilton stated that he heard Mr. Woodard use eminent domain to do this, and he had a problem with that. He felt that almost anything could be negotiated, and eminent domain was a last resort. He stated that he hated to see the term brought up so early in the conversation.

Mr. Woodard stated that there were advantages even to the property owners on the friendly condemnation side for public use. From the friendly condemnation side, there were advantages to the property owner because, to his understanding, that became a capital gain tax free situation. He stated that Paul Saldana may be able to address that. But where property may have been worth $250,000, without having to pay capital gains, the net value would be much greater.

The City Manager asked if Mr. Woodard was talking about a private group that would look at areas downtown, and the Mayor stated that he had asked Mr. Woodard to be the seamstress before and he was not sure if he had gone anywhere with it. The Mayor stated that back in the area being discussed it would have to be many parcels, and there would have to be a seamstress, either the City or EDC, and he was hoping that the EDC would speak to the property owners.

Mr. Woodard stated that it becomes a joint effort, and if the City buys in and says that this was the number one choice, they could assemble it, but the City has a huge stakehold in it because a large part of that area was City-owned parking lots. So there alone was the leverage—parking lots
could be abandoned and parking garages built, and if necessary, if the $4.4 was insufficient, then COPs and financing could be done.

Mayor Hamilton stated that borrowing the money was easy, the problem would be paying it back.

Mr. Dunlap stated that again one of the challenges they enter into when dealing with the City going out and acquiring property for any project was that they had to have the environmental complete. So that was the hinge-pin for the City to even go out and start negotiations on property acquisition, and it was not the same for the private sector to do that. Mr. Dunlap stated that there was a timing issue, and they needed to realize that the City had to adhere to different laws than a private group.

In answer to Mayor Hamilton, Mr. Woodard stated that the EDC voted on a general area of downtown, but there was a vote for that specific area as an alternative because it was more blighted, more vacant, and more City-owned property.

Dick Eckhoff stated that if the courthouse was established at a distant site from downtown it would be a neutral effect. If the courthouse was shifted to another area on the outer edge of downtown, it would be destructive and shift the downtown in that direction. He stated that placing the courthouse in the alley/Third, Olive/Putnam area would be a more positive influence to the development, growth and improvement in the downtown area. He stated that the ideal location would be centered up with parking pushed to both sides, so the parking garage setup would benefit the entire downtown.

Mr. Woodard stated that their Committee was of the opinion that the Council has the will, and a lot of the way, and the EDC also had the will also to get behind the Council and be a resource, support and partner, and if that meant that part of the time was dedicated to sew some things together, then they were there to help do that.

Mayor Hamilton stated that would be extremely beneficial as the City has its hands tied in certain processes. He stated that was why he asked for help, as Mr. Woodard understood acquisition. Mayor Hamilton stated that he liked the idea of behind the Porterville Hotel, as the area to the south needed to be developed also. He stated that parking garages were a dream, and they certainly needed to find out how Visalia got a $6 million grant for a parking garage.

Mr. Woodard stated that they were looking at needing 200 stalls for the courthouse, at $12,000 a stall, plus land, would $2.5 million, and if the City owned a big part of the land, then the City could be the recipient of some of the monies allocated for land acquisition, and then that money could be leveraged, along with land the City owned along Second Street, to get a grant. The legislators were there to say they would help with everything they could in a comprehensive effort. He stated that the courthouse project was that one catalyst project that they all agreed would be a huge benefit to the community.

Mayor Hamilton stated that the key was finding the site, and somehow helping the County figure out how to transfer the property.
John Corkins suggested that the EDC could act as a conduit to the Council to help facilitate some of the needs the Council and the community may have. Instead of appointing a separate steering committee, the EDC, as a preset committee, could be used with confidentiality for site selection. He stated that the EDC was not looking a site definition that evening, they were offering the olive branch if they would like the EDC to work on the Council’s behalf and look for areas and help facilitate.

Mayor Hamilton stated that he saw the benefits of the offer, and it made sense to him, and he noted that this was on the next regular Council meeting.

Mr. Woodard stated that they were open to offering that service, and to offering to consider other ideas by the Council. Mr. Woodard then reviewed the remaining items on the EDC Project Priorities, and spoke on cohesive efforts toward these goals. He stated that they wanted to know if the Council had other priorities besides these they were looking at that the EDC could get behind. He stated that the EDC wanted a partnership with the Council in helping anyway they could.

Mayor Hamilton asked John Snavely, Porterville Unified School District, if he had spoken to his Board about using the facilities out at the adult center, and Mr. Snavely stated that he had spoke to them about a month ago and they were in complete support. Mayor Hamilton stated they had picked a niche in this town as far as a nursing program, and it was something they wanted to follow through with.

Mayor Hamilton stated that he appreciated Mr. Woodard bringing this subject to the forefront, as this could be a great start for what they were trying to do for the community. He stated that when the EDC went back to discuss economic development amongst themselves, it was thought that Tulare County used to be so poor that we grabbed at whatever jobs came our way, but with the way the State was growing and coming into our area, we needed to decide what we wanted here instead of just grabbing. This was a prime opportunity to decide to become what we wanted to become.

Mr. Woodard stated that this was part of their efforts, and they were also requesting that the Council consider participating as a stakeholder in the effort of building and discovering their brand, and discovering their strategy to implement that brand. That would become a part of centering down as to who they were and what their assets were, and who best could use the assets they have, and direct their efforts in that area, while looking at opportunities they haven’t seen. They needed to see the forest for the trees.

Mayor Hamilton stated that as they looked at the courthouse, the needed to look at what they were trying to draw home. Most large courthouses have cafeterias, so how would they expand the courthouse into their downtown area.

Mr. Woodard stated that speaking from jury experience, the courthouse cafeterias were not overrunning with folks.

Gilbert Ynigues stated that he had a problem with industry secrets as rumors could be more damaging than the truth. He stated that several companies had been coming to Porterville and then didn’t, and the community never found out the reason. Either people wanted to come in or they
didn’t, and the truth should be out there for the people. He stated that he didn’t understand the secrecy.

Mayor Hamilton stated that it was at the applicant’s request to protect their business.

Paul Saldana spoke regarding the need for confidentiality and the complications of the process. He spoke on a city losing the Walmart Distribution Center to Porterville due to a lack of confidentiality and a lack of cohesiveness in the community. Mr. Saldana spoke on Items three and four regarding the COS campus, and the entrepreneurial activities funded with $50,000.

Rosa Carlson, President of Porterville Jr. College, spoke regarding the smart campus. She also addressed the grant just available for $50,000 to explore four year colleges for BA programs, and they would be applying with CSU Fresno and CSU Bakersfield.

The lack of nurses and the need for nursing training was discussed, and its effect on Sierra View District Hospital and the community.

Mayor Hamilton stated that getting the adult school going and getting Dominion here was the easy part. The internships were the hard part.

Mr. Woodard stated that the Committee would like to have resolution from the Council that they were on the same page and moving in the same direction.

Mayor Hamilton clarified with the City Manager that this would be discusses at the next Council meeting.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Council Member P. Martinez thanked the EDC for coming out to speak with them and spoke about this being a positive step for the community. He also spoke regarding the role played by the City staff in making the Council’s priorities a reality. He stated that they needed to work together and spend time together and had to have the same vision and priorities in order to move forward.

Council Member Hernandez stated that the Council was a team, and he appreciated the open hand, and he felt this was first step in reaching the goals of the City.

Council Member McCracken stated that he was glad to see the Chamber and the people involved working toward the same things as the rest of them. He stated that this was a step in the right direction from the lack of cohesiveness in the past.

Mayor Pro Tem F. Martinez spoke on the sharing of ideas and taking history and moving forward. He thanked individuals for coming forward and being heard.

Council Member P. Martinez spoke on moving forward with the General Plan and meeting the challenge of losing Mr. Dunlap. He stated that he was committed to filling the positions to keep the train moving to keep their train running. He asked the City Manager to address the challenges that were before them.
The City Manager stated that it was the General Plan, the Kit Fox Corridor, the Hillside Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinances, and just keeping up with current planning for the community.

Council Member P. Martinez stated that the community needed to know that they were taking care of this.

Neil Smith stated that he had worked on getting Main Street to be a vibrant segment of the community for years, and he thought everyone in the room was a winner directly or indirectly with the courthouse being located downtown. Property values would go up which would eliminate the hobby shop-owners, and provide for a more vibrant downtown. People coming downtown at night would eliminate the riffraff, and the educational opportunities were great, and the community as a whole would be a terrific winner.

Mayor Pro Tem F. Martinez stated that when he came back four years ago the community was splintered, but for the last year and a half they had moved together. He stated that they were ready to move forward as a Council and a community.

It was stated that pride started at the top and they all needed to be proud of our community.

ADJOURNMENT
Council adjourned at 8:04 p.m. to November 7, 2006.

Georgia Hawley, Chief Deputy City Clerk

Cameron Hamilton, Mayor