Call to Order at 9:14 a.m.
Roll Call: Council Member McCracken, Council Member Pedro Martinez, Mayor Pro Tem Felipe Martinez, Council Member Hernandez, Mayor Hamilton
Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Pro Tem Felipe Martinez
Invocation – a moment of silence was observed.

Mayor Hamilton noted the presence of County Supervisor Mike Ennis and Fair Board Member John Corkins in the audience, and invited them to be seated with the Council.

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

- Greg Shelton, 888 North Williford Drive, suggested that the City was “counting its eggs before they were hatched” and spending money on consultants prior to identifying a way to fund the project. He alleged that the City spent money on consultants, yet nothing was accomplished. He contended that staff’s time was being wasted on projects that never came to fruition, and that the proposed project was a bad idea.

**SCHEDULED MATTERS**

1. **THE FAIR GROUNDS AND THE COURTHOUSE PROJECT**

   Recommendation: After staff’s briefing, receive public testimony on the potential relocation of the Porterville Fairgrounds.

   City Manager John Longley introduced the item and indicated that the study session that morning was a scoping meeting to define parameters and receive public input. He stated that the State had decided to build a 90,000 square foot courthouse facility, and that it would be the second major Court facility in Tulare County. He emphasized that the location for the new facility would be determined by the State, not the City. Mr. Longley next spoke of the importance of the Porterville Fair to the community, and indicated that a relocation of the Fair would be necessary in the event the Courthouse Project proceeded at that location. He summarized that the meeting that morning had been scheduled to address the ramifications of the State’s decision to consider the Porterville Fairgrounds as a potential site for a new Courthouse facility, and that the Council would look at the possible need to schedule an additional Study Session so as to receive public input. Mr. Longley then introduced Community Development Director Brad Dunlap to present the staff report.

   Mr. Dunlap indicated that as Mr. Longley had stated, the impetus of the item had been the State of California’s plan to build a Courthouse facility, adding that the timing of the State’s decision dovetailed nicely with the City’s recent update to its General Plan. He noted that a number of Project Site Aerial Maps were set up for everyone’s review, and advised that the State’s preferred site for the facility was the Porterville Fairgrounds location. He noted that because of that, a
relocation of the Porterville Fair would need be a part of the project. Mr. Dunlap spoke of the significance of the Fair, and of its importance to the Porterville Community. He then spoke of the economic benefits that would be realized by the City in the event the project proceeded, such as the generation of ancillary uses like Sheriff’s Offices, attorney and paralegal businesses, D.A. and Public Defender Offices, etc. He noted that the project might also require the relocation of the Armory facility currently located on Plano Street, and that staff was currently reviewing that issue.

With regard to relocating the Fair, Mr. Dunlap stated that the Sports Complex property was being looked at as a potential site. He then emphasized that the City’s primary objective was to make sure that the Courthouse Facility came to Porterville rather than an outlying area, noting the importance in keeping the facility adjacent to downtown. He indicated that it would energize the area, and would serve as a magnate, drawing people to the downtown area, much in the same way Kaweah Delta Hospital served to draw spin-off businesses and individuals into Visalia’s downtown area.

Mr. Dunlap then referred everyone to a “bubble” diagram which depicted the Sports Complex property with the concept of intended uses including the proposed future fairgrounds location and the playing fields. Mr. Dunlap stated that the concept was to shift the Sports Complex to the east, and that staff was looking into a number of possible scenarios to accommodate the Fair. He then spoke of the benefits of relocating the Fair, and identified some issues that presently negatively impacted the Fair, such as the fact that it was landlocked which prohibited its future expansion; the issue of noise due to its proximity to residential; and its parking challenges. Mr. Dunlap concluded his presentation by stating that the Courthouse facility would be a more compatible land use for the site.

Mayor Hamilton thanked staff for the presentation and invited comments from the public.

- Greg Shelton, address on record, inquired why the matter had not been processed through the Parks & Leisure Services Commission. He then voiced concerns with crowding uses at the Airport, and questioned staff’s logic in comparing the proposed draw of the new Courthouse facility to that of Kaweah Delta rather than the Visalia Courthouse. Mr. Shelton then noted that the City actually owned the property on which the Fair operated and inquired how much the City stood to make off of the sale to the State. Mr. Shelton then spoke against the relocation of the Fair and the elimination of the OHV, contending that such consideration was premature and not well thought out. He stated that the Fair was a business venture that actually made a profit every year, and that the City could learn from its business acumen.

Mayor Hamilton clarified that the City was not considering the elimination of the OHV, but rather a relocation. He then pointed out that as Mr. Shelton was aware, a sales price could not be disclosed since negotiations with the State were ongoing. He noted that Mr. Shelton was aware of that since he too had been in negotiations with the State regarding one of his properties, noting that Mr. Shelton’s property was actually in the number two position, immediately after the Fairgrounds property. Mayor Hamilton then invited Fair Board Member John Corkins to address the concerns raised by Mr. Shelton with regard to the Fair operations.
• John Corkins, Porterville Fair Board, indicated that the Fair Board had been aware of the item for quite some time and that it had decided not to take a public position. He then spoke of ongoing challenges with the current location of the Fair, being the lack of ability to expand, noise problems, and parking issues, and that relocation had been considered by the Fair Board for a long time. Mr. Corkins then spoke in favor of relocation, indicating that it would be good for the long term benefit of the community. He concluded that the City and the Fair Board were not getting ahead of themselves, and emphasized that the discussions were very preliminary at that point.

• Dick Eckhoff, business address at 197 North Main Street, spoke of the need for relocating the Fair, noting issues with parking and noise. He questioned the comment that was made with regard to the City moving too quickly on the item, and suggested instead that the City was behind the curve. He spoke in favor of the proposed site at the Airport, yet inquired about the impact the Fair lights would have on flight traffic. Mr. Eckhoff then spoke of the importance of bringing the Courthouse facility to Porterville, and voiced appreciation for staff’s efforts in that regard. He spoke in favor of the proposed site, and voiced caution over potential traffic issues and of keeping the residential neighborhood to the north as residential. Mr. Eckhoff lastly voiced his support for keeping the property across Plano Street for Murry Park.

In response to Mr. Eckhoff’s concerns, Mayor Hamilton indicated that a site had not yet been identified for parking, and that staff had been discussing the issue of lights at the Airport with the FAA.

• Greg Woodard, business address at 1055 West Morton Avenue, voiced support for the proposed site and the relocation of the Fair. He stated that the project was very important for the Community, and that in looking at a cost/benefit ratio, the benefits far exceeded the costs. He then agreed with Mr. Eckhoff’s comments with regard to protecting the residential neighborhood to the north, noting that preserving the historic homes was important. Mr. Woodard indicated that he had advocated for a different location for the Courthouse facility, but that he now supported the site selected by the State. He then spoke of the economic benefit to the City, such as job creation, ancillary businesses, etc. He again emphasized that the benefits far outweighed the costs.

• Ben Arnold, Yokohl Valley Drive, Porterville Area Pilots Association, voiced support for the proposed plans. He indicated that he had been concerned with the lights from a carnival interfering with air traffic, however he stated that it might provide for a good landmark from the air. He then spoke of the importance of the Porterville Airport to the community and that his goal was to protect the pilots and the people on the ground. He concluded that while he would prefer less activity around the airport, he was supportive of the plans to relocate the Fair to the proposed site, and that the preliminary plans looked good.
• Mac Arnold, past Council Member and Planning Commissioner, acknowledged the Council and staff for their efforts with regard to the item at hand. He spoke of the benefits of the Porterville Airport, which he contended made Porterville the most valuable city in Southeast Tulare County. Mr. Arnold then voiced the need for proper planning of parking for the proposed facility.

• Dick Eckhoff, address on record, spoke of issues with noise when residential neighbors developed near other uses. He noted the need to prevent a situation in which future residential development near the proposed Fair site might complain about noise from the Fair.

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

• Greg Shelton, address on record, again inquired why staff likened the draw of the proposed Courthouse facility to Kaweah Delta Hospital rather than the Visalia Courthouse. He opined that the proposed site at the Fairgrounds was not the best location, and that the boom staff suggested was going to happen, would simply not happen. He spoke of the noise issue with the Fair, inquiring why noise was such a problem when the site only operated about three to four times per year, and questioned why noise would not be an issue with the Courthouse. Mr. Shelton then contended that the City owned the site and that was why it was selected.

Mayor Hamilton commented that Mr. Shelton’s site had also made the State’s short list and was being considered as a second choice.

• Dick Eckhoff, address on record, spoke of differences with the issues of noise between the Fair and the proposed Courthouse, suggesting that the Courthouse would have different hours of operations, and would not generate the same annoyances like noise and smells as did the Fair. He then opined that local businesses would benefit from visitors to the Courthouse, in that they would likely shop and spend money in Porterville.

Mayor Hamilton closed the public commentary portion of the meeting. He spoke of misinformation with regard to the proposed project and related relocation of the Fair, and of the desire of the City to make the public aware of the facts. He then confirmed with Mr. Corkins and noted for the record that the Fairgrounds were actually utilized approximately 184 days per year, not three to four as had been suggested. Mayor Hamilton then requested that Mr. Dunlap elaborate further on the project in response to some concerns raised during public commentary.

Mr. Dunlap indicated that staff was in the process of hiring a consultant to look into parking, pedestrian access, land uses, and connectivity to the project to the downtown area. He stated that the area to be analyzed encompassed the area north to Morton Avenue, east to Plano Street, and west to E Street. He added that the consultant would also look at the re-use of the existing Courthouse facility on Morton Avenue.
Mayor Hamilton noted that there had been some interest evinced in the scheduling of another study session to provide the public more opportunities for commentary. It was decided to direct staff to add an item onto the next agenda for the Council to consider whether to schedule an additional study session.

**OTHER MATTERS**

- Council Member Pedro Martinez spoke of the recently retired Chief Deputy City Clerk Georgia Hawley and lauded her dedication and contributions to the City during her employment with the City. He requested that she be considered as a nominee for the Wall of Fame for the coming year.
- Mayor Pro Tem Felipe Martinez spoke of his attendance at the Easter Egg Hunt; and noted that Kids’ Day would be taking place at Veterans’ Park from 12:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Saturday.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Council adjourned at 10:14 a.m. to the Council Meeting of April 1, 2008.

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Patrice Hildreth, Chief Deputy City Clerk

SEAL

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Cameron Hamilton, Mayor