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Downtown revitalization plan moves ahead

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TWENTYNINE PALMS — Twentynine Palms officials are moving forward on a plan to increase the flow of money and pedestrians into the city's downtown area.

During a lightly-attended Planning Commission meeting Tuesday, Feb. 16, commissioners continued two agenda items dealing with lighting standards and planned unit development until Tuesday, March 2, leaving plenty of time to hold a public hearing and give conceptual approval to a draft of the Downtown Economic Revitalization Specific Plan.

The draft was presented by Mark Brodeur of PMC Consulting in San Luis Obispo, who showed commissioners a vision of the city that includes diagonal parking downtown, traffic-calming measures and a pedestrian-friendly, "cool and inviting" atmosphere.

He said one of the goals of the economic revitalization plan is to "slow people down so that they stop and shop at your businesses," citing pedestrian and vehicle safety as equally important.

For years, the city has been plagued by fast-moving eastbound drivers who fail to slow down after entering the downtown area from Donnell Hill.

Brodeur also addressed the issue of the city's septic systems, saying the absence of a sewer system is restricting the city's potential for growth.

"Your downtown is on septic. That really holds you back in terms of your development potential," he noted.

Commissioner Bill Easter acknowledged the issue, but questioned the financial feasibility of a sewer system.

"There's some economic hardships here in this community," Easter said. "Even if we change the density downtown, how do we pay for the sewer system?"

Brodeur gave the commission a straight answer.

"The way you do it ... isn't on the backs of the current businesses that you have in the community, it's on the backs of new development that comes into the area. That's the way it's done in every community today," he noted. PMC's vision emphasizes the importance of concentrating businesses downtown, being careful to avoid an oversaturation of similar uses such as barber shops.

Comments? Questions? E-mail Courtney Vaughn at

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