

City of Fresno

Tower Theater
815 E Olive Ave., Fresno, CA 93728



Meeting Minutes - Final

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

5:30 PM

Regular Meeting

In Person and/or Electronic,
Ted C Wills, 770 N San Pablo Ave., Fresno, CA 93728

Tower District Specific Plan Implementation **Committee**

Chairperson - Christopher Johnson

Vice Chair - Janay Conley

Board Member - Annie Lokrantz

Board Member - Michael Birdsong

Board Member - Myra Coble

Board Member - James Kitch

Board Member - Joseph Catania

**THE COMMITTEE WELCOMES YOU TO THE TED C WILLIS COMMUNITY CENTER,
LOCATED AT 770 N SAN PABLO AVE, FRESNO, CA 93728**

**The meeting can also be viewed live at 5:30 P.M. on Comcast Channel 96 and AT&T
channel 99.**

PUBLIC COMMENT:

**The following options are available for members of the public who want to address
Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee:**

1. You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

a) Register in advance for this webinar:

https://fresno-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_taAP1qgNRGGeXj2cB5mzQQ

**After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about
joining the webinar.**

**b) If you do not wish for your name to appear on the screen, then use the drop down
menu and click on “rename” to rename yourself.**

c) Those addressing Committee must state their name for the record.

OR

2. Join by phone: 1-669-900-9128

Webinar ID: 951 8694 8275

**a) Those addressing the Committee must state their name and address for the
record.**

3. Email: LongRangePlanning@fresno.gov

**a) Attendees may also email comments to be read during the meeting. Please include
the agenda date and item number you wish to speak on in the subject line of your
email. Include your name, and address for the record, at the top of the body of your
email.**

b) Emails will be a maximum of 450 words.

c) All comments received will be distributed to the Tower District Specific Plan

Implementation Committee prior and during the meeting and will be a part of the official record.

d) Notwithstanding subsection c) above, unless otherwise required by law to be accepted by the City at or prior to a Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee meeting, no documents shall be accepted for review unless they are submitted to Long Range Planning at least 24 hours prior to the commencement of the meeting at which the associated agenda item is to be heard.

All participants will be on mute until they are called upon, at which point each person will have the opportunity to speak for two minutes on each item. To prevent participants from having their video on, we will remove the option to show their video.

Pursuant to the Executive Order, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in the Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee meeting, please contact the Planning Division, 559-621-8277 within 48 hours of the meeting.

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm and initiated roll call.

Also present were Long Range Planning staff Sophia Pagoulatos, Adrienne Asadoorian-Gilbert, Yamilex Nava, Preston Her, Matthew Chea, and Christopher Green; High Speed Rail Authority staff Samer Shaath; Caltrans staff Scott Friesen;

Present 7 - Chairperson Christopher Johnson, Board Member Michael Birdsong, Board Member Annie Lokrantz, Vice Chair Janay Conley, Board Member Myra Coble, Board Member James Kitch, and Board Member Joseph Catania

II. Approve Agenda

On motion of Board Member Coble, seconded by Board Member Catania, the above Action Item be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chairperson Johnson, Board Member Birdsong, Board Member Lokrantz, Vice Chair Conley, Board Member Coble, Board Member Kitch and Board Member Catania

III. Approve Meeting Minutes

III-A [ID 24-445](#) March 19, 2024 Tower District Specific Implementation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

On motion of Board Member Lokrantz, seconded by Board Member Birdsong, that the above Action Item be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chairperson Johnson, Board Member Birdsong, Board Member Lokrantz, Vice Chair Conley, Board Member Coble, Board Member Kitch and Board Member Catania

IV. Council District Updates

Staff member Asadoorian-Gilbert gave an update on behalf of District 3 on the Broadway Parque. The construction bids are being evaluated by City staff and a construction agreement award is anticipated for May 2024.

V. Staff Updates

Gilbert-Asadoorian updated the Committee and the public on the special meeting taking place on April 30th, 2024 at Ted C. Wills Community Center.

VI. Continued Matters

VII. New Matters

VII-A [ID 24-448](#)

Caltrans Workshop regarding upcoming projects and closures in the Tower District.

Scott Friesen presented on the purpose of 99 El Dorado to Clinton pavement rehabilitation project, project description, the closures of Belmont and McKinley ramps, traffic impacts, project benefits, features, and schedule.

Catania asked about the accessibility of Weber Avenue going South to Belmont Avenue, and whether it was a Caltrans project and Friesen responded that Weber would go under Belmont, and that there will be no direct access. Catania also asked if there were any plans to widen the streets, and Friesen replied that there aren't any plans to do so because it is not in their jurisdiction.

Coble raised concerns from Tower residents about the closure of the McKinley and Belmont ramps, stating that it would result in increased traffic on Belmont Avenue. Coble further asked if any studies have been conducted to assess the impact of this decision to this, Friesen replied that they have run simulations, and show that there are minimal impacts.

Lokrantz expressed appreciation for the sound wall's aesthetics and the overpass idea.

Catania asked that if Belmont Avenue and McKinley Avenue are closed how will traffic traverse the area without negatively impacting the area and Friesen reassured that the only thing that is closing are the exits, but the streets will remain open and gave alternative ways to access the area.

Birdsong expressed concern about the circulation problems that will occur

once McKinley and Belmont close.

Conley has the same concerns as all the other board members and asked how the public will have access to the zoo and the cemetery. Friesen said the primary entrance to the zoo will be off of Olive Ave.

Coble stated she had concerns about how UPS will have access to the freeway.

Johnson asked what the project budget was, and Friesen said it is around \$400 million.

Public comment

Members of the public have raised concerns and suggestions regarding various aspects of transportation in their area such as route for trucks, lighting under the underpass, repair of El Dorado Bridge, UPS access, roundabouts at Olive, Caltrans and HSR impact, zoo accessibility, and better lighting and bike lanes.

VII-B [ID 24-515](#)

California High-Speed Rail Workshop regarding upcoming projects in the Tower District.

Samer Shaath presented on the infrastructure projects that are currently underway. The Belmont Ave Overhead project includes utility relocations, signalization of Belmont/SR 99 on-ramp, and the construction of the Belmont Ave Overhead structure. The Olive-overhead project involves the construction of an overpass leading to the zoo. The McKinley-overhead project includes the construction of a connector road and a roundabout. These projects are anticipated to be completed in 2026 and will include bike lanes and sidewalks for improved safety.

Birdsong asked for the most efficient way to get to Belmont when exiting at Olive.

Johnson is concerned about the overpass wall on Weber in the neighborhood and its impacts the overpass will have on the nearby businesses. He also asked if there will be a connection from Belmont to

Weber and how the DMV will be accessed.

Coble asked about Delno and Carruth, and what's happening there.

Johnson asked HSR (High-Speed Rail) about the timeline and Shaath stated they are coordinating with the City and are very committed to the schedule.

Public Comment

Member of the public raised concern about the Olive construction project between Fruit and 99. Business owner wants to protect bike lanes on overpasses. Property owner had concerns about delay claims in contracts related to High-Speed Rail. The closure of H Street and single eastbound lane on Belmont bridge into Palm causing safety concerns.

- VII-C** [ID 24-493](#) Review and discuss the topic of Circulation of the Tower District Specific Plan Update.

Birdsong expressed the need to have access to Belmont from Weber.

Catania raised a question about H Street being excluded from the discussion.

Public Comment

Members of the public suggested improving universal accessibility, defining "mobility help", enhancing transit amenities, and had concerns about traffic flow and sidewalks.

- VII-D** [ID 24-446](#) Review and discuss the topic of Land Use of the Tower District Specific Plan Update.

Item continued to April 30, 2024.

On motion of Board Member Birdsong, seconded by Board Member Catania, that the above Discussion Item be CONTINUED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chairperson Johnson, Board Member Birdsong, Board Member Lokrantz, Vice Chair Conley, Board Member Coble, Board Member Kitch and Board Member Catania

VIII. Unscheduled Oral Communications

Member of the public asked when TED will be addressed and staff stated it will be on a separate track to be presented to City Council in July.

IX. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned meeting at 7:39 pm.