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RON SMITH

Lancaster City Council

CITIZENS MAY GET CHANCE TO 'PAINT THE CITY'

Julie Drake
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LANCASTER— The city's Planning Commission will recommend the City Council consider the formation of an independent commission or citizens' advisory committee to review architecture, art and design for the city.

The committee would serve as an advisory panel to the Planning Commission and likely would be appointed by council members.

Commissioners approved the recommendation on a 3-0 vote, with commissioners Scott Idleman and William Andy absent.

Commission Chairman Ron Smith initiated the discussion and noted he has discussed the concept with the city's planning department and some council members.

"The General Plan went to a certain point, but we've never really addressed design codes and the way we want the city to look," Smith said. "I know we want to paint the house; just haven't decided what color yet."

He added the commission would like to have citizens' input on design standards, but wants to avoid bureaucracy that could delay projects or impose too many restrictions. "We want to have a vision for the city... We'd like it to look attractive, but we need that plan," Smith said.

Community Development Director Brian Ludicke pointed out that any type of citizens' advisory appointed by the City Council would be subject to the Brown Act and must conduct public meetings.

Smith suggested the advisory committee could range from five to 10 members, depending on whether council members decide to appoint one or two citizens each. The committee would not look at every plan that goes before the commission, but would look at the city overall and advise the commission.

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“I know we want to redesign Lancaster Boulevard; what’s the signage going to look like?” Smith asked.

The advisory committee also could take a role in advising the commission on any public works of art. Beyond recommending the formation of the advisory committee, Smith suggested the City Council could work out remaining details.

Vice Chairman Kenneth Mann said he could see the value in such a committee and noted a precedent, when the commission changed residential standards to get rid of wooden garage doors.

“That would be an example... would it not be, from a standpoint of architectural?” Mann asked.

