

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE



April 04, 2023

6:05 PM

In accordance with City policy, all Planning Commission meetings are recorded on audio and video in their entirety and are available for review in the Community Development Department (CDD). These minutes are a brief summary of the action taken.

1. ROLL CALL

Vice-Chair Ed Acosta, Commissioners Peter Radin, Lucy Rojas, Brando Sencion, and Jenni Veitch-Olson were present. Commissioner Martha Vega arrived at 6:11pm.

A. MOTION TO EXCUSE ABSENT PLANNING COMMISSIONERS (IF ANY)

MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Sencion, seconded by Commissioner Radin, and carried by the following vote to excuse Commissioner Dodge and Commissioner Vega's absence:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Radin, Sencion, Veitch-Olson
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: Rojas
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: Dodge, Vega

Staff members present were Assistant City Attorney Denise S. Bazzano, Community Development Director Suzi Merriam, Housing Manager Carlos Landaverry and Executive Assistant Celia Castro.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Radin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PRESENTATIONS & ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

A. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

B. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Rojas stated she voted no on attendance due to lack of reasoning behind the absence of the commissioners.

4. PRESENTATION AND REPORTS

A. GENERAL PLAN & HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATES

1) Staff Presentation

Community Development Director Suzi Merriam gave the presentation.

2) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions

In answering Commissioner Vega, Community Development Director Merriam clarified the different entities as part of the first and second lawsuits on the Vista 2030 General Plan. Community Development Director Merriam further noted the Watsonville Pilot Association will be contacted as part of the general plan update to prevent a future lawsuit.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Community Development Director Merriam noted that the site selection process involves looking for vacant and unutilized sites as well as areas that will allow for additional housing units to increase density.

In answering Commissioner Rojas question concerning environmental justice has, Community Development Director Merriam noted that there are several non-profits in Watsonville in addition to Regeneration and Watsonville Wetlands Watch.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Community Development Director Merriam stated the City of Watsonville did the best they could with the information that was gathered for the previous General Plan, and further stated the Housing Element is more prepared for any situation that may arise. Assistant City Attorney Denise S. Bazzano further clarified that the laws have significantly changed throughout the years, not only for the General Plan but also for the Housing Element. In further answering Commissioner Rojas, Assistant City Attorney Bazzano stated the Housing Element has more mandates in what the City needs to do to have a compliant Housing Element.

Commissioner Vega suggested engaging with real estates agents, contractors and other individuals willing to invest in the community.

In answering Commissioner Veitch-Olson, Community Development Director Merriam stated there will be workshops and meetings that are key points of the Housing Element and General Plan to engage the community. Community Development Director Merriam further stated both the Housing Element and General Plan will go before the City Council.

In answering Commissioner Veitch-Olson, Community Development Director Merriam clarified the differ review requirements for the general plans and the housing elements.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Assistant City Attorney Bazzano explained Brown Act considerations for commissioners attending workshops or meetings.

Commissioner Vega questioned if there will be sufficient personnel to review multiple plans being submitted. Community Development Director Merriam stated there will be sufficient personnel in the Planning Department to review plans for the new Housing Element units.

In answering Commissioner Acosta, Community Development Director Merriam stated the Planning Department is open to any ideas for non-profit organizations and community partners.

In answering Commissioner Vega, Community Development Director Merriam stated there is only one General Plan for the City, and it is the City's goal to get the General Plan right.

3) Public Input

A resident of Watsonville stated the General Plan should include a family friendly plan and specific policy change that implements mandatory changing tables in locations and restrooms that are public or are required by code.

4) Appropriate Motion(s)

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. PRESENTATION OF THE 2022 HOUSING ELEMENT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

1) Staff Report

Housing Manager Carlos Landaverry gave the presentation.

2) Planning Commission Clarifying & Technical Questions

In answering Commissioner Radin, Housing Manager Landaverry stated the Housing Department will be working with state programs. In further answering Housing Manager Landaverry clarified the department works with all developers, the diagram specifies non-profit developers because they produce the vast majority of low income and very low-income units. Commissioner Radin advised to broaden the departments goals by working with all developers not just non-profits.

In answering Commissioner Sencion, Community Development Director Suzi Merriam stated the Planning Department is looking at development in strategic locations by providing housing where the jobs are, to alleviate some of the transportation congestion in the City of Watsonville.

Commissioner Veitch-Olson commented on the importance of the General Plan process to important issues, such as traffic, infrastructures and services.

In answering Commissioner Rojas, Housing Manager Landaverry clarified the project being held on Atkinson Lane is part of the county and are being constructed in phases. Housing Manager Lanaverry further stated the City of Watsonville annexed that area of Atkinson Lane and Brewington Avenue. Community Development Director Merriam further clarified, the county will build the units and the City of Watsonville will get the housing units.

In answering Commissioner Vega, Community Development Director Merriam stated tiny homes are always considered but would not be a solution to density.

3) Public Input

None.

4) Appropriate Motion(s)

MAIN MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Vega, seconded by Commissioner, and carried by the following vote recommending that the City Council accept the 2022 Housing Element Annual Progress Report:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Radin, Rojas, Sención, Vega, Veitch-Olson

NOES: COMMISSIONERS: None

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: Dodge

6. DELIBERATION

7. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

No report from Community Development Director Merriam.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Dodge adjourned the meeting at 7:27 PM. The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 2, 2023, at 6:00 PM

Suzi Merriam, Secretary
Planning Commission

Daniel Dodge, Chair
Planning Commission