



## MINUTES

### REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE

**March 4, 2025**

**6:01 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 summary of the action taken.*

#### **1. ROLL CALL**

Chair Ed Acosta, Vice-Chair Peter Radin, and Commissioners Lowel Hurst, Lucy Rojas, Brando Sencion, and Jennifer Veitch-Olson were present.

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

**MOTION:** None

Staff members present were Interim Community Development Director Justin Meek, Interim Assistant Community Development Director Matt Orbach, Housing Manager Carlos Landaverry (City Interpreter), Executive Assistant Celia Castro, and Permit Technician Rob Manansala.

#### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Vice Chair Radin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **3. PRESENTATIONS & ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

##### **A. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Council Member Ari Parker thanked Chair Ed Acosta for representing District 7, Vice Chair Radin, and all Commissioners for their service.

##### **B. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION**

None

#### **4. CONSENT AGENDA**

No items in the consent agenda.

#### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON**

**1) Nomination Period**

Chair Acosta nominated Vice-Chair Radin for Chair. Commissioner Hurst seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Sencion nominated himself for Chair. Commissioner Veitch-Olson seconded the nomination.

Chair Acosta shared a comment supporting the nomination for Vice-Chair Radin.

Commissioner Sencion shared a comment of his interest to be Chair.

Commissioner Hurst thanked Chair Acosta for his service and shared a comment in support of the nominations.

Chair Acosta shared a comment regarding the nominations.

**2) Public Input**

None

**3) Motion Electing Chairperson (roll call vote)**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Hurst, seconded by Commissioner Dodge, and carried by the following vote close nominations:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Acosta, Dodge, Hurst, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Veitch-Olson

NOES: COMMISSIONERS: None

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS: None

**Roll Call Vote Electing Chairperson**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Chair Acosta, second by Commissioner Hurst, to appoint Vice-Chair Radin for Chairperson:

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Sencion, second by Commissioner Veitch-Olson, to appoint Commissioner Sencion for Chairperson:

COMMISSIONER ACOSTA: Peter Radin

COMMISSIONER DODGE: Peter Radin

COMMISSIONER HURST: Peter Radin

COMMISSIONER RADIN: Peter Radin

COMMISSIONER ROJAS: Brando Sencion

COMMISSIONER SENCION: Brando Sencion

COMMISSIONER VEITCH-OLSON: Brando Sencion

By majority decision, Vice-Chair Peter Radin was elected Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

**B. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF PLANNING COMMISSION VICE CHAIRPERSON**

**1) Nomination Period**

Commissioner Dodge nominated Commissioner Hurst for Vice-Chair. Chair Radin seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Lowell Hurst declined the nomination and shared a thankful comment.

Commissioner Acosta nominated Commissioner Sencion for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Dodge seconded the nomination.

**2) Public Hearing**

None

**3) Motion Election Vice Chairperson (roll call vote)**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Hurst, seconded by Commissioner Dodge, and carried by the following vote close nominations:

AYES:	COMMISSIONERS:	Acosta, Dodge, Hurst, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Veitch-Olson
NOES:	COMMISSIONERS:	None
ABSENT:	COMMISSIONERS:	None

**Roll Call Vote Electing Vice Chairperson**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Acosta, seconded by Commissioner Dodge, to appoint Commissioner Sencion for Vice Chairperson:

AYES:	COMMISSIONERS:	Acosta, Dodge, Hurst, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Veitch-Olson
NOES:	COMMISSIONERS:	None
ABSENT:	COMMISSIONERS:	None

By unanimous decision, Commissioner Brando Sencion was elected Vice Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

**C. PRESENTATION OF THE 2024 HOUSING ELEMENT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

Staff recommend that the Planning Commission, by motion, recommend to the Watsonville City Council the acceptance of the Housing Element Annual Progress Report (APR) for the 2024 calendar year for the adopted 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle 2024-2031 Housing Element and submittal of the report to the California Department of Housing

and Community Development (HCD) and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR).

**1) Staff Report**

Housing Manager Carlos Landaverry gave the presentation.

**2) Planning Commission Clarifying and Technical Questions**

Commissioner Dodge inquired about the status of the Miles Lane project. In answering, Housing Manager Landaverry updated the Commissioners on his knowledge of the project that supported the acquisition of buying the property and buying an additional parcel to have more units. In addition, Interim Community Development Director Meek shared the approximate date of the entitlement process.

Commissioner Dodge further inquired if the number of units have remained the same as of the approval of the project in 2019. In answer, Housing Manager Landaverry confirmed that is correct. He further clarified how and when projects utilizing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are counted towards the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) unit numbers.

Interim Community Development Director Meek also clarified how HCD recognizes housing units as livable units.

Commissioner Dodge asked when the units stop being counted as RHNA unit numbers. In answering, Housing Manager Landaverry stated that there are different Housing Element cycles and further clarified how the units are counted in the fifth and sixth cycle of the Housing Element.

Commissioner Dodge asked if the City is currently short of housing units in the required total units from the State. Housing Manager Landaverry confirmed that is correct.

Interim Community Development Director Meek further shared information regarding RHNA numbers and projecting factors.

Interim Assistant Community Development Director Orbach shared information provided in the Staff Report that includes a running percentage of progress towards the City's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle RHNA goals (6%).

Commissioner Dodge asked what the definition of 'very low-income level' is. In answering, Housing Manager Landaverry answered that 'very low-income' is identified as fifty percent of the median income. The median income is \$130,000.00 for a household of four.

Commissioner Veitch-Olson asked how affordability is determined for an Additional Dwelling Units (ADU). In answering, Housing Manager Landaverry

clarified that all ADUs must be completed to be counted. The ADU's are shown in the Staff Report - Table A and Table A (2).

Commissioner Hurst asked to confirm the number of mobile homes and if all the mobile homes are under a rent stabilization program. In answering, Housing Manager Landaverry identified the mobile home parks that are not subject to rent control. He further explained an additional mechanism that keeps a mobile home out of rent control.

Commissioner Hurst asked if the City currently has vacant spaces for new mobile homes. Housing Manager Landaverry, answered there is not and identified the potential mobile home spaces that could become available.

Commissioner Hurst asked if there is any vacant land that may be buildable or possible sites that may be used for housing. In answering, Interim Assistant Community Development Director Orbach confirmed there is a limited amount and referred the Planning Commission to the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element on the City of Watsonville website.

Vice Chair Sencion inquired about the process to streamline ADU applications in the City and the ADU building process. In answering, Interim Assistant Community Development Director Orbach shared that part of the Housing Element program will be to update the ADU Ordinance and include an easy streamlined process by the State. He further shared information regarding splitting lots.

Commissioner Rojas asked how many projects are anticipated to be added in 2025. In answering, Interim Assistant Development Director Orbach referenced the Housing Element that identifies pipeline projects such as the Metro project as well as several Builder's Remedy applications.

Commissioner Rojas asked for the number of units for the 547 Airport Boulevard project and why the project will not proceed. In answering, Interim Community Development Director Meek clarified there were 21 units however the project was challenged in court and entitlements expired. The units were meant to be townhomes.

Commissioner Rojas inquired about the number of units in the Metro redevelopment project. In answering, Interim Development Director Meek clarified the number of units are currently uncertain however units are anticipated as a result of the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan.

Commissioner Hurst inquired about density in the City of Watsonville compared to other Cities. In answering, Interim Community Development Director Meek answered the City of Watsonville has pockets that are higher density than other jurisdictions.

Interim Assistant Community Development Director Orbach also provided a density comparison between City of Santa Cruz, County of Santa Cruz, and City of Watsonville.

Commissioner Veitch-Olson asked how is Watsonville doing in completing projects compared to neighboring communities and jurisdictions. In answering, Interim Community Development Director Meek did not have the exact information but would look into it and provide the information at a future time. He provided context regarding advance planning.

Chair Radin shared a comment regarding the current environment and costs to build housing. He further inquired about whether the economic increase in cost considered. In answering, Interim Community Development Director Meek clarified that the cost is out of our control, however housing development is cyclical and will be reviewed in time.

In answering Chair Radin regarding the Sunshine Gardens project being built in 2024, stopping in 2025, and resuming again in 2026, Housing Manager Landaverry clarified the project will not stop during year 2025, the project is active all consecutive years and that he would correct that information in the presentation. In further clarification, Interim Community Development Director Meek shared that the project has experienced abatement efforts over time due to exposure to the elements. Units in the first phase of the project are going through the final inspection process to be ready for occupancy and sale.

Housing Manager Landaverry shared a comment clarifying the remaining process of submitting the Housing Element report.

### **3) Public Input**

Chair Radin opened the public hearing.

Hearing none, Chair Radin closed the public hearing.

### **4) Appropriate Motion(s)**

**MAIN MOTION:** It was moved by Commissioner Rojas, seconded by Commissioner Veitch-Olson, and carried by the following vote to approve the following recommendation:

**STAFF RECOMMENDS THAT THE PLLANING COMMISSION, BY MOTION, RECOMMEND TO THE WATSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE HOUSING ELEMENT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT (APR) FOR THE 2024 CALENDAR YEAR FOR THE ADOPTED 2024-2031 HOUSING ELEMENT AND SUBMITTAL OF THE REPORTS TO THE STATE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (HCD) AND THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH (OPR).**

### **5) Deliberation**

Commissioner Dodge shared a comment regarding the challenges of homeownership and affordability.

Commissioner Rojas shared a comment regarding the cost of construction in years to come and concerns related to meet the housing goals, including development at the seven-year mark.

**6) Chair Calls for a Vote on Motion(s)**

AYES:	COMMISSIONERS:	Acosta, Dodge, Hurst, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Veitch-Olson
NOES:	COMMISSIONERS:	None
ABSENT:	COMMISSIONERS:	None

**5. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

Interim Community Development Director Meek provided an update on the Watsonville Transit Center Redevelopment Project and shared that Santa Cruz METRO has teamed up with MidPen Housing to redevelop the Watsonville Transit Center.

In addition, an update was provided regarding the AHSC Grant Funding / co-application opportunity. MidPen Housing has approached the City about partnering on a grant funding opportunity that could help fund the Watsonville Transit Center project and implement recommended roadway improvements for downtown through the AHSC program.

Finally, Interim Community Development Director Meek provided an update on the General Plan 2050 Update. During the public comment period on the Notice of Preparation for the General Plan 2050 Environmental Impact Report (EIR), multiple concerns were raised regarding the potential impacts of population growth and housing development both within and beyond the City limits.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairperson Radin adjourned the meeting at 7:25 PM. The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

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Justin Meek, Secretary  
Planning Commission

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Peter Radin, Chair  
Planning Commission