



Monday, February 5, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was held in the Council Chambers, 6615 Passons Boulevard, Pico Rivera, California.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Aric Martinez called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Celiz, Rocha, A. Martinez, R. Martinez

ABSENT: Elisaldez (excused)

STAFF PRESENT: Alvaro Betancourt, Director of Community & Economic Development
Julia Gonzalez, Deputy Director of Community & Economic Development
Estefany Franco, Planner
Jordan Perez, Analyst

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The pledge of allegiance was led by Chairperson Martinez.

PLANNING COMMISSION REORGANIZATION:

Director Betancourt asked if there were any nominations.

Commissioner Celiz nominated Commissioner Aric Martinez for another term as Chair, seconded by Commissioner Robert Martinez. Motion passes by unanimous vote.

Director Betancourt asked if there are any nominations for Vice Chairperson.

Chairperson Martinez nominated Commissioner Robert Martinez, seconded by Commissioner Rocha. Motion passes by unanimous vote.

PUBLIC HEARING(S):

1. GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 62 – UPDATES TO THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPTED 2021-2029 HOUSING ELEMENT AS REQUIRED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND FINDING THE PROJECT CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT PURSUANT TO CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15162 (B) AND 15061 (B)(3).

Analyst Jordan Perez provided the report presentation, explaining that the Housing Element is a component of the City's General Plan. It establishes goals, objectives, policies, and programs to address housing conditions and needs. By State law, the Housing Element must be updated every eight (8) years and certified by the State Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD). Cities may face penalties if their Housing Element is not certified.

Chairperson Martinez closed the public hearing as there were no public comments.

Chairperson Martinez motioned to approve the item; Vice Chairperson Martinez seconded the motion. Motion passes by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Celiz, Rocha, A. Martinez, R. Martinez
NOES: None
ABSENT: Elisaldez

2. ZONE CODE AMENDMENT NO. 194 - AN UPDATE TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE REFLECTING REQUIRED AMENDMENTS BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AFTER FINAL REVIEW OF THE 6TH CYCLE 2021-2029 HOUSING ELEMENT AND FINDING THE PROJECT CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO CEQA GUIDELINES SECTIONS 15162(B) AND 15061(B)(3).

Analyst Jordan Perez presented the report on an item related to the Housing Element amendment for the R-40 Overlay Zone. The R-40 Overlay Zone was introduced with the adoption of the Housing Element in August 2023. The City Council adopted Zone Reclassification No. 328, establishing the R-40 Overlay Zone, which applies exclusively to sites identified in the Housing Element. The city is using the R-40 Overlay Zone to meet the Housing and Community Development Department's (HCD) Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements.

Chairperson Martinez closed the public hearing as there were no public comments.

Chairperson Martinez motioned to approve the item; Vice Chairperson Martinez seconded the motion. Motion passes by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Celiz, Rocha, A. Martinez, R. Martinez
NOES: None
ABSENT: Elisaldez

NON-AGENDA ITEMS PUBLIC COMMENTS:

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. **Comprehensive Zoning Code Update Study Session 3 of 4**

Dudek Consultant Catherine Tang Saez introduced herself as a planner and urban designer with Dudek. She was joined by Janet Rodriguez, project manager. Ms. Tang Saez and Ms. Rodriguez provided a comprehensive progress update on the zoning code updates and an overview of the related standards and guidelines.

Vice Chairperson Martinez noted that the updates focus on requirements for onsite development and not in the public right-of-way, such as bike racks, sidewalk materials, and streetlights. He asked whether these elements would be included.

Planner Franco clarified that sidewalk and street improvements fall under Title 12 of the municipal code. The current zoning code update focuses solely on Title 18 of the municipal code, and the consultant is not addressing standards outside of Title 18.

Ms. Tang Saez explained that zoning codes and regulations pertain exclusively to private property. However, the zoning code includes provisions for street improvements, dedications, and easements for projects meeting certain thresholds. These provisions, however, are not within the scope of Title 18.

Vice Chairperson Martinez inquired how the city handles complaints against shopping center owners whose properties do not meet current standards.

Director Betancourt responded that the municipal code outlines development standards for private property, public right-of-way, and existing uses. Property owners have legal non-conforming rights if their structures or improvements predate the code or requirements.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked if the consultant would provide developers with a handout detailing architectural standards and guidelines as part of their scope of work.

Ms. Tang Saez confirmed that the Dudek team has been tasked with updating the zoning code, design guidelines, and creating a user guide.

Commissioner Celiz asked whether certain areas might allow for an 8-foot wall instead of a 6-foot block wall.

Ms. Tang Saez agreed that the current standards are not comprehensive enough, as they address only front, side, and rear conditions. She suggested revisiting these standards to account for different circumstances.

Deputy Director Gonzalez noted that the current ordinance allows for walls taller than 6 feet with a special entitlement, such as a precise plan of design.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked whether school improvements to El Rancho High School would be subject to these standards.

Ms. Tang Saez stated she would investigate but did not believe so, as such projects are state regulated.

Director Betancourt added that while state-regulated projects are exempt, any work done in the public right-of-way must comply with applicable public standards.

Vice Chairperson Martinez inquired whether the empty tree wells along the frontage road of El Rancho could be subject to conditions requiring trees.

Director Betancourt explained that such requirements might apply if the project involves larger-scale improvements, such as filling tree wells or ensuring ADA-compliant sidewalks and intersections. Otherwise, these tasks would fall under capital improvement projects.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:

Director Betancourt reported that Urgency Ordinance No. 1172 was approved on January 23, 2024, to develop development standards and use restrictions for commercial zones.

NEW BUSINESS: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Deputy Director Gonzalez provided an update to Vice Chairperson Martinez regarding the horse trails. She reported that the trails had been cleaned up as requested. The second part of the request, concerning signage along the horse trail, is being addressed by the Director of Innovation and Communication Javier Hernandez, who is working on a citywide signage program. The master signage plan is expected to be completed by September, and comments about the special signage to delineate horse trails have been forwarded to the consultant.

Vice Chairperson Martinez noted seeing a group of horses crossing the bridge onto Whittier Boulevard and requested that signage include the proper vehicle code provisions for horses.

Director Betancourt assured Vice Chairperson Martinez that updates on the signage plan would be provided and that his concerns would be addressed.

Commissioner Rocha inquired whether horses are allowed on Whittier Boulevard.

Director Betancourt confirmed that horses are allowed on the street.

Vice Chairperson Martinez added that horses are permitted if they comply with the vehicle code.

Commissioner Rocha shared that the city recently conducted a homeless count at City Hall, which she attended. Approximately 35 people participated, including Councilmember Dr. Monica Sanchez and Congresswoman Linda Sanchez. She asked Deputy Director Gonzalez if the final count was available.

Deputy Director Gonzalez responded that she did not have the final count, as it typically becomes available later in the year and is not always made public. She noted that the count was limited to areas deemed safe for volunteers.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked about the purpose of conducting the homeless count.

Commissioner Rocha explained that the objective is to determine the number of homeless individuals in the city and allocate resources accordingly.

With no further business, Chairperson Aric Martinez adjourned the Planning Commission meeting at 7:08 p.m. There being no objections, it was so ordered.

Yarisma Rocha, Chairperson

ATTEST:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct report of the proceedings of the Planning Commission Regular Meeting on February 5, 2024, and approved by the Planning Commission on February 24, 2025.

Alvaro Betancourt, Director
Community & Economic Development Department