

CITY OF MORRO BAY
PLANNING COMMISSION
SYNOPSIS MINUTES

(Complete audio- and videotapes of this meeting are available from the City upon request)

Veteran's Memorial Building
Regular Meeting, 6:00 p.m.

209 Surf Street, Morro Bay
Monday, August 4, 2008

Chairperson Nancy Johnson
Vice-Chairperson Bill Woodson Commissioner Michael Lucas
Commissioner Gerald Luhr Commissioner Gary Ream
Michael Prater, Secretary

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ream led the pledge.

III. ROLL CALL

Johnson asked that the record show all Commissioners were present except for Commissioner Lucas.
Staff Present: Bruce Ambo, Michael Prater, and Kimberly Peeples

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

MOTION: Woodson, Luhr 2nd to accept the agenda as presented. VOTE: 4-0

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT/WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Ambo reported at the August 4, 2008 special meeting, City Council:

- Approved two resolutions to apply for General Allocation and Economic Development CDBG P/TA Grants for a Redevelopment Feasibility Study
- Held a public hearing for the Sprint cell tower proposed on Shasta Avenue; The vote was deadlocked and then continued to the August 11th City Council Meeting

Ambo noted there would be a workshop on August 13th to discuss the recommendations of the Management Partner's study and how to prioritize those recommendations.

At the August 11, 2008 meeting, Ambo said City Council would:

- Review a permit for a wine tasting room proposed at 307 Morro Bay Blvd. initiated by the Police Department and regulated by the Alcohol and Beverage Control Commission
- Hear a presentation by the County regarding a Vector Control Benefit Assessment District directly relating to Mosquito Control

Luhr asked Staff to clarify the process involved with the grants. Ambo explained the two-phase process.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Johnson announced Dahlia Days would be held on August 24th at St. Timothy Church

VII. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of minutes from hearing held on July 21, 2008

MOTION: Woodson, Ream 2nd to approve the minutes as presented. VOTE: 4 – 0.

VIII. PRESENTATIONS – None.

IX. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Planning Commission interpretation on decks in the front yard setback and what elements are allowed on them.

X. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Changes within the R-1 zone district, S.1, & S.2 Overlay Districts. The Planning Commission will be holding an ongoing hearing on Neighborhood Compatibility to consider a massing study analyzing the current zoning standards versus articulation standards (recessing the upper floors) to better understand the resulting floor area ratios. Comparisons of the existing built environment and implications of a zoning amendment will be discussed. This is a continuation of the workshop series held in late 2007 and early 2008 regarding large homes in relation to their lot sizes, which are referred to by some as mansionization. The Planning Commission is continuing their evaluation and will be making a recommendation to the City Council on what direction to take. Following the discussion staff is anticipating concurring with the City Council on the direction before drafting code changes. The community is invited to listen and watch the staff presentation and participate in the Commission discussion by sharing your ideas on the topic.
Staff Contact: Mike Prater, Planning Manager, 772-6261.

Prater made his presentation highlighting the history of the item noting the assumptions that had to be made for the examples he will present this evening. At the conclusion of the presentation Prater suggested that it would be best for the Commission to make a recommendation to the Council one way or the other. Ambo noted that part of this process has been to document the number of non-conformities that would be created by implementing FAR using a low number and indicated Staff's intent is to try and limit the number of non-conformities and keep the design regulations simple for the homeowners in the R1 zone.

The following questions and concerns from the Commissioners were addressed by Staff:

- If a FAR of .5 was implemented, 70% of the homes in Morro Bay would be non-conforming
- Staff used building permit data for building size averages instead of MLS data so it could not be disputed
- This change has to go to the Coastal Commission for review because it is a change to the General Plan/Local Coastal Plan
- Staff would try to do more of a surgical strike approach for approval of this change with the Coastal Commission if they think that is possible
- Stepbacks would be determined from the first floor plane
- How this change would affect the affordability of lots is unknown at this time, but it would directly affect secondary units, as a FAR would apply to all structures on the lot

Johnson opened the Public Hearing.

John Barta felt using FAR would have more negative impacts than positive and would negatively affect lot value.

Keith Franklin spoke about his concern of how a FAR, especially a low one, would limit the potential for future homeowners to develop their property.

Dorothy Cutter spoke negatively of our current zoning ordinance and felt there are more inequities when a large home gets built on a small lot.

Bill Opey was not sure what the answer is but knows there needs to be a change because the current ordinance allows houses that are too large for their lot.

Carol Greenwich expressed her frustration noting she did not feel tonight's presentation got at what the citizens were concerned about.

Andy Foster expressed his concern about implementing more mandates on homeowners. He felt the town was already in trouble and limiting homeowners even more will continue these problems and not help the City.

Johnson closed the Public Hearing seeing no further comment.

During discussion the Commissions expressed the following opinions and concerns:

- Commissioner Luhr:
 - Current FAR is near 1 on most lots, especially on small lots
 - Should not implement a FAR unless it is done street by street, especially due to the non-conformities it would cause
 - Would support using Staff's original suggestion of stepbacks
- Commissioner Woodson:
 - Felt presentation was exceptional
 - Knows there are 100 cities in California that have implemented some sort of FAR
 - Suggested using three different FAR numbers; for under 3000, 3000-5000 and over 5000 square foot lots
 - Give a larger FAR for the smaller lots and provide incentives for specific building features
 - Doesn't want to lose secondary units
 - Felt it is time to move this item on to Council tonight
 - Felt the numbers he previously thought should be used for FAR now seem too low after seeing Staff's presentation
- Commissioner Ream:
 - Believes a combination of stepbacks and FAR is the right way to go
 - Very concerned with non-conformities
 - Would like to go ahead with some of Woodson's numbers
- Chairperson Johnson:
 - Commended Staff for the time and effort they put into the presentation
 - FAR is not going to eliminate box-like houses
 - Does not want to send it on to Council until they have made a solid decision, as she feels it is the job of the Commission to make those decisions
 - Felt it was big box houses that brought this issue to the forefront initially
 - Doesn't feel there is one FAR that is going to solve the problem for the entire City of Morro Bay

After initial discussions it was suggested by Luhr to set stricter limits of review based on the size of the lot and the house size being built. Using appealing features like porches or neighborhood compatibility for bonuses. Ambo said that from Staff's perspective that heightened review alone is an incentive to build smaller houses. Ream was concerned they were not listening to the Community. Johnson stated she is not sure the "Community" has spoken, but rather only a small number of people, not the majority. Woodson agreed a heightened review may be the way to go and asked Luhr what thresholds he suggested. Luhr said he didn't have those numbers tonight and Prater said it is best to present an idea to Council and to get their buy in before they set specific numbers. Johnson suggested heightened review for houses over 2500 square feet but they need to have some "teeth" that would allow them to reduce the size of the house if they felt it was necessary. Luhr wanted specific guidelines that would give them the "teeth" they needed.

Woodson asked Staff if they still have to revise ordinances to allow them to have stricter review and Staff stated they would. There is currently an emergency ordinance in place but that would have to be revised with detail of the revisions. Woodson felt there should be at least three thresholds for different size lots. Ream said he could go along with setting thresholds for stricter review.

MOTION: Luhr, Ream 2nd to set threshold or thresholds for heightened review to come before the Planning Commission.

Woodson asked to have wording added to the effect of there will be developed expectations that this threshold or thresholds of which would address articulation concerns. Luhr said he is not against that concept but is not sure what wording to use. Ambo suggested adding something like “to include some form of codified expectations”, which would give applicants some guidance as to what is an acceptable product.

AMENDED MOTION: Luhr, Ream 2nd to establish a threshold or thresholds for heightened review to come before the Planning Commission and establish expectations for acceptable development at those thresholds.

VOTE: 4 – 0

Johnson asked Staff if this would still have to go to Coastal Commission. Prater said it will but they will have a better chance to ask for a de minimus review. Woodson felt it was good to get City Council’s input.

XI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Current Planning Processing List

Projects submitted for Administrative Approval (not single-family residential unless in MCR)

1. None

XII. NEW BUSINESS – None.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Johnson adjourned the meeting at 8:56 p.m. to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting at the Veterans Hall, 209 Surf Street, on Monday, August 18, 2008, at 6:00 p.m.

Nancy Johnson, Chairperson

ATTEST:

Michael Prater, Secretary