

APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CITY OF ALAMEDA PLANNING BOARD
MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2024

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

** Members of the public can participate in person or remotely via Zoom.*

Present: President Hom, Vice President Cisneros and Board Members Ruiz, Ariza, Wang, and Tsou.

Absent: Board Member Saheba

2. AGENDA CHANGES

None.

3. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4-A 2024-3921 *Draft Meeting Minutes - February 26, 2024*

Minutes can be found:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6607855&GUID=2867FA4B-C055-4A39-9012-4D7A124DCCC3&FullText=1>.

Vice President Cisneros made a motion to approve the February 26, 2024, minutes. Board Member Ruiz seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion carried 5-0 with Board Member Wang abstaining due to his absence at the meeting.

5. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

5-A 2024-3980

PLN24-0059 - 2401 Monarch Street - Use Permit & Design Review - Applicant: Gregor Cadman for Natel Energy. A public hearing to consider a Use Permit to allow outdoor research and development, and outdoor storage. The project also consists of Design Review for an approximately twenty-five foot tall, 5,500 square foot hydraulic test facility on the north side of Building 23 at 2401 Monarch Street. This project qualifies for a Class 32 Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15332 - infill development. No additional environmental review is necessary.

Brian McGuire, Planner II, introduced (*3:07) this item and gave the presentation.

The staff report and attachments can be found at:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6633951&GUID=67D0D8D4-A313-4135-82A3-A1BE25AA76C3&FullText=1>.

Board clarifying questions start at the 15:01 minute mark in the video.

The applicant, Natel Energy, also presented (*22:16).

Board clarifying questions continue at the 31:08-minute mark.

Public Comment for item 5A

Kenny Jinson, in person, (*41:46) Chief Technology Officer of Navier (Electric Boat Company) and Alameda resident spoke in favor of the use permit for Natel. He discussed how important the work they were doing and how Alameda has the right infrastructure for this type of work. Natel has also worked with other companies doing this type of research.

Owen Hail, in person, (*43:56) Mechanical Engineer for Natel and Alameda resident discussed how committed Natel, and its employees were to conservation. For Natel to continue that type of work and be successful they need this use permit. He discussed the benefits of the turbines Natel had created and they were fish safe. This test loop expansion would allow them to continue the good work they had done for the hydro field.

Madaline Sydick, via Zoom, (*46:26) President & CO of the Alameda Chamber of Economic Alliance, said that the Chamber supported this use permit fully. She added that Natel adds economic value and brings job opportunities to Alameda.

Todd Hickman, via Zoom, (*47:20) fully supported the cause however believed this was the wrong location. He felt that the staff's presentation was misleading and believed that the height of the addition was a violation of Fish & Game code. He felt this building would block the view of his winery and this was illegal infill and they needed to follow the 8ft height limit. He also pointed out a disturbing hum Natel causes and was worried about fish and game in the area. He also believed this would lead to a CEQA lawsuit if this were pushed to the City Council.

Kate Stir, in person, (*50:41) Vice President of External Affairs for Natel and an Alameda resident. She discussed her history of working at the point and how critical outside testing is for environmental studies and to address climate change. She discussed how she invites people to come and view the test site and asked the board to support the use permit.

Ben Ward, in person, (*53:44) Facilities Manager at Natel, discussed and shared a letter of support from Jonathon DeLong. The letter discussed the importance of studying climate change and how Alameda is uniquely affected as an island. The letter said we should get out of the way and let Natel do this important work.

Action taken for item 5A

Board discussion started at the 55:53-minute mark in the video.

Board Member Ariza made a motion to approve the application for the Design Review and the Use Permit for outdoor use with the conditions set forth in the draft resolution. With the added conditions of confirming the biological opinion of noise and height restrictions, staff would review landscaping and public/private space interactions, a screening for fish, and fine tuning the definition of what permanent storage meant. Board Member Ruiz seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion was carried 6-0.

5-B 2024-3981

PLN24-0166 - Zoning Ordinance Amendment Regarding Non-Conforming Lots, Buildings and Uses - Citywide. A proposed amendment to the Alameda Municipal Code to: 1) reinstate provisions relating to non-conforming lots that were inadvertently deleted during the most recent code update; 2) address other outdated sections relating to nonconforming uses and buildings in Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-2 Definitions, Section 30-5 General Provisions and Exceptions, and 30-20 Nonconforming Buildings and Uses, to implement the 2023-2031 Housing Element, to conform to State law, and to reflect current practice; and make a recommendation to City Council. The proposal is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3), the common sense exemption where it can be seen with certainty that the proposed zoning text amendments have no possibility of having a significant effect on the environment because they relate to legally existing uses and buildings, and a use permit would be required for expansions at which time specific impacts would be considered.

Tristan Suire, Planner II, introduced (*1:24:08) this item and gave a presentation.

The staff report and attachments can be found at:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6633952&GUID=58CACB21-41AE-493D-8316-BE7F24989D66&FullText=1>.

Board clarifying questions start at the 1:43:02 minute mark in the video.

Public Comment for Item 5B

Todd Hickman, via Zoom, (*2:09:56) discussed his concerns that these amendments do not address certain issues like view corridors. He discussed examples and discussed how this was bypassing CEQA regulations. He felt that staff once was again manipulating data that was being presented to the board.

Action taken for item 5B

Board discussion starts at the 2:15:08 minute mark of the video.

Board Member Tsou made a motion (*2:38:43) to recommend approval of Zoning Ordinance Amendment Regarding Non-Conforming Lots, Buildings and Uses – Citywide with the recommendations that were made this evening to staff. Board Member Ariza seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion was carried 6-0.

6. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

6-A 2024-3958

Planning, Building and Transportation Department Recent Actions and Decisions

Recent actions and decisions can be found at:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6633949&GUID=AF708C30-FB40-457E-BD36-6371896506BF&FullText=1>.

No decision or action was pulled for review.

6-B 2024-3959

Oral Report - Future Public Meetings and Upcoming Planning, Building and Transportation Department Projects

Manager Buckley gave an update on projects and discussed upcoming meetings (*2:41:10).

7. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

Board Member Ruiz discussed (*2:42:01) an upcoming US Housing Conference and wanted to know if Alameda was participating.

Manager Buckley discussed other conferences and what might happen.

President Hom discussed (*2:43:53) the APA annual conference in October.

8. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Tod Hickman, via Zoom, (*2:45:04) said the public should have been able to comment on item 6A & B. He also said he would be appealing both the decisions from tonight and felt that we had a serious problem with how staff were presenting facts. He was concerned there was no tracking process in place on correcting issues in the zoning ordinance. He felt that staff failed to properly notify tenants about projects.

9. ADJOURNMENT

President Hom adjourned the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

**Refers to the minute mark in the video*