

APPROVED MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
CITY OF ALAMEDA PLANNING BOARD  
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2020

1. CONVENE

President Curtis convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

2. FLAG SALUTE

Board Member Cavanaugh led the flag salute.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Board Members Curtis, Cavanaugh, Hom, Rothenberg, Ruiz, Saheba, and Teague.

Absent: None.

4. AGENDA CHANGES AND DISCUSSION

Board Member Teague asked to hear item 9-B first. There was no objection to the request to change the agenda.

**\*9-B 2020-7600\***

Andrew Thomas, Planning, Building and Transportation Department gave an update.

The staff report and attachments can be found at:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4291099&GUID=6FB51018-6468-41C7-B729-6F43F52CA453&FullText=1>.

Board Member Saheba said changes are primarily to materials and that the overall massing and fenestration are not changing. He said the changes are minor and he did not have a problem with the staff decision.

Board Member Rothenberg concurred with Board Member Saheba's comment.

Board Member Teague said he did not object to the staff decision.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

**7-A 2020-7602**

*Planning Board Study Session to Discuss Article 26 of the Alameda City Charter*

Council Members Daysog and Knox White explained the work of the City Charter Subcommittee and what they were asking of the Planning Board. They thanked the board for their efforts.

Board Member Teague said Measure A has two independent items: limiting construction to single family homes and duplexes, and limiting density. He asked speakers to address the elements specifically.

Director Thomas gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at: <https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4291100&GUID=A9953CA6-B565-451C-B946-0613DD5BC3C0&FullText=1>.

Board Member Horn asked how multi-family housing has been approved in recent years in spite of Measure A.

Director Thomas explained how state housing and density bonus laws apply to properties identified in Alameda's Housing Element. He explained how the Regional Housing Needs Assessment is calculated, distributed, and evaluated by state officials.

President Curtis asked if safety concerns such as evacuation or emergency response times are factored into housing decisions.

Director Thomas said that if the Fire Department said a project would create a direct safety issue, then there would be justification for denying a project.

President Curtis opened public comment.

Jerry Schneider said we are already doing our part and supported defending Measure A.

Dolores Kelleher said the conclusions in the staff analysis were not well supported. She supported evaluating Measure A in a larger context in a more balanced way.

Kevin Kearney said repealing Article 26 would have many financial and quality of life consequences. He said there needs to be a better plan in place before considering eliminating Article 26.

Shannon Whitley said repealing Article 26 could lead to the loss of historic homes. He said anytime we build more homes they are expensive homes and won't help those looking for housing.

Conchita Perales said staff does not live in Alameda and therefore does not care about Alameda's issues. She called the housing built before Measure A was passed ugly rat-boxes.

Katherine Saxby said we need to wait and see what happens with newly approved development and changes in state law before considering changes to Measure A. She said all the development is on the West End and not equitable.

John Galloway said the City should create a data model of the city to run simulations on new development and its impacts.

Margie Siegal said infrastructure needs to be addressed before increasing density. She said none of the new multifamily construction in Oakland is affordable for the black community and causing gentrification.

Dorothy Freeman said Measure A preserves historic homes and Alameda's character. She said Measure A is being used as a scapegoat for Alameda's problems.

Steve Slauson supported preserving Measure A. He said we are already doing our fair share.

Grover Wehman-Brown said the housing crisis is a safety issue. They supported removing Article 26 because of its impacts on the housing crisis and said we need dense housing.

Bradley Potts said many properties have been grandfathered into being allowed to have many units on their property which is not fair to other homeowners who do not have that right. He said he wanted to have in-law units to keep family close by. He wanted to see Measure A modified or eliminated.

Betsy Mathieson said Alameda has a diverse housing stock. She said Article 26 preserves low income units and repeal would lead to displacement and gentrification.

Karen Lithgow said Alameda's well preserved Victorians are a valuable asset to the city that need to be preserved. She said there is no room for more cars that new units would bring and decried the mid-century apartment buildings as "rat boxes" that ruin neighborhoods. She said homebuyers are already diverse and we do not need to change our laws to make Alameda more diverse.

Sharon L-S spoke in favor of preserving Article 26.

James Snider asked what the rush is given we do not know the impacts of already approved units.

Paul Foreman said the staff evaluation was not neutral and he disagreed with the conclusions.

Karen Boutilier said that we cannot fill police vacancies because of the cost of housing, which creates a safety issue. She said we need to pay staff more or build more housing. She criticized the bullying of staff by some commenters.

Ken Gutleben said we do not have sufficient egress in Alameda. He said we do not have an emergency water supply which could lead to another Paradise. He supported Measure A.

Jim Smallman says he has restored many Victorian homes in Alameda and supports Measure A. He said we should study the issue more and develop reasonable changes to Measure A.

Ellen Paisal said removing Measure A from the protection of the Charter would be dangerous.

David Burton said Measure A is a blunt tool that has had unintended consequences. He said we should adapt in order to build the city we want to have.

Joy Malloy said Measure A prevents problem solving. She said she would like to be able to convert her home into multiple units for financial purposes and to provide space for potential caretakers and adult children.

Laura Thomas, President of Renewed Hope Housing Advocates, said Measure A has had discriminatory effects and needs to be changed.

Christopher Buckley, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society, said we need a more rigorous analysis before considering changes to Measure A. He said Measure A is a firewall that protects the city. He said the white population of Alameda has dropped significantly since Measure A was implemented.

Trish Spencer said Alameda is a unique island. She disagreed with the suggestion that Measure A is discriminatory. She opposed changes to Measure A.

Kathleen Mertz, speaking in a personal capacity, said Measure A has outlived its useful life. She said Article 26 should be excluded from the City Charter and we need to adapt.

William Smith said we should embrace housing and eliminate the ban of multi-family homes from the City Charter.

Doug DeHaan spoke in favor of preserving Measure A. He said the staff report was not balanced.

Jay Garfinkle compared staff to President Trump's staff and suggested we could end up with Alameda being a giant Ghost Ship scenario. He said we need a different process to consider Measure A.

Ruth Abbe said Alameda needs to welcome more Alamedans to town in order to meet our climate goals. She said she supported modifying Article 26.

Lynette Lee said she agreed with the staff findings and recommendations. She supported modifying or repealing Measure A in order to build more affordable housing.

Christy Cannon said she felt intimidated by the crowd showing their emotions. She said we need more affordable housing. She said Measure A needs revision to be looking forward to housing needs and climate change and well as addressing preservation concerns.

Jonathan Soglin addressed the affordable housing crisis. He said Measure A is a blunt tool when we need surgical precision.

Nancy Gordon said adding ADUs is very costly and renting rooms in single family homes is more affordable. She said the rent ordinance is responsible for making the rental crisis worse.

Elizabeth Greene said blaming Measure A for Alameda's housing problems is dishonest. She supported the AAPS letter.

Carol Gottstein took issue with the assertions in the staff analysis. She said disabled people are vulnerable in an emergency and she would not feel safe on an upper floor in multi-family housing.

President Curtis closed public comment.

Board Member Teague said there would be no density limit on the C-C district if we repealed Measure A. He said we have passed many ordinances since Measure A to protect neighborhoods. He said the ban on multi-family housing is a barrier to affordable housing. He supported putting Article 26, Section 1, which limits construction to only single family homes and duplexes, on the ballot for repeal. He said the 2,000 square foot limit is more complicated and should not be taken lightly given state laws against downzoning. He suggested altering the density section by area to spread out the growth to different parts of the island to ease the stress on the island's infrastructure.

Board Member Rothenberg said she would support the preservation board's letter to study the issue along with the review of the General Plan.

Board Member Hom said he sees the benefits that Measure A provided to the island. He said times have changed and we have a serious housing crisis and climate change problems. He said Measure A is a one size fits all solution. He said density can be misleading because of the size of the units. He suggested FAR standards or form based codes that might encourage smaller, more affordable units. He said there are many resident profiles not represented in this room that need to be included in this process.

Board Member Ruiz asked people to not make personal attacks when speaking on this issue. She said as an architect it is strange to see land use regulation in the City Charter. She expressed interest in how infrastructure challenges were handled at our peak population in the 1940s. She said Article 26 may not have had the intent of being an equity barrier, but multi-family housing supports increased affordability. She agreed that Article 26, Section 1 could be removed. She suggested identifying appropriate historic districts and letting other areas increase density if they choose.

Board Member Cavanaugh said California is changing drastically and the state is taking over and we need to make a plan for the future.

Board Member Saheba said we can model the future we want to have or be forced into a position we have to accept. He said we have many more elements today to help preserve the character of neighborhoods than when Measure A was passed. He said the diversity of the housing stock makes Alameda an interesting place to live and loosening the restrictions on multi-family dwellings would help alleviate the pressure. He said focusing the density into specific pockets creates problems.

President Curtis said that if we have a comprehensive General Plan governing different zones, then all we need to do is modify Measure A to comply with the General Plan. He said the fear is that the Council will change the General Plan to upzone areas the public does not want it to.

8. MINUTES

None.

9. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

**9-A 2020-7601**

*Planning, Building and Transportation Department Recent Actions and Decisions*

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

11. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

None.

12. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Janet Gibson gave a history of Alameda from her experience. She said there are many homes in Alameda that have value.

13. ADJOURNMENT

President Curtis adjourned the meeting at 10:31 p.m.