

APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CITY OF ALAMEDA PLANNING BOARD
MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020

1. CONVENE

President Alan Teague convened the *meeting at 7:01 p.m.

**This meeting was via Zoom.*

2. FLAG SALUTE

Board Member Teresa Ruiz led the flag salute.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Board Members Curtis, Hom, Rothenberg, Cisneros, Ruiz, Saheba, and Teague.
Absent: None.

4. AGENDA CHANGES AND DISCUSSION

None.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

7-A 2020-8552

PLN19-0237 - Variance - 1929 Webster Street - Applicant: Daniel Cukierman. Public hearing to consider a Variance to Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-7 Off-street Parking and Loading Space Regulations to allow the development of a vacant commercial lot without off-street parking. The lot is too narrow to physically accommodate parking stalls, drive aisles, and landscaping per the parking regulations. The project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15305, Minor Alterations to Land Use Limitations.

David Sablan, Planner III with Planning Building and Transportation, introduced the item. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4710190&GUID=9EE21EA7-EDC4-409A-9900-5A1384914044&FullText=1>.

Board Member Hanson Hom asked the applicant to elaborate on how they plan on dealing with the concerns from the manager of The Rodeway Inn about people parking in their lot and blocking their driveway.

Daniel Cukierman, the applicant, said the plan was to post signage about respect for neighbors and not parking in other businesses' parking spaces.

Board Member Ruiz asked the applicant if they had contacted the manager at Walgreens about a shared parking lot agreement.

Mr. Cukierman said he had not.

Board Member Ruiz asked the staff if they could maintain where the current curb cut is now.

Staff Member Sablan said that during the design review process they would work with Public Works.

Allen Tai, City Planner, said design review would be coming back to the Planning Board, and curb cuts would be addressed then.

President Teague opened public comments.

Kiran Patel, Owner and General Manager of The Rodeway Inn, wanted to discuss the letter he had sent addressing his many concerns about granting a variance. He believed that buses, delivery trucks, and rideshares dropping off people would cause a bottleneck on Webster. He was also concerned that surrounding businesses would have to share the burden of parking even with signage posted not to park there. He urged the board not to grant the variance and to have the applicant provide parking for their patrons.

Denyse Trepanier, a Board Member of the Bike Walk Alameda Board, urged the board to grant the variance. She applauded the business for being forward-thinking in deemphasizing the need for cars. The Bike Walk Alameda Board is so happy that there will be a social gathering place on the bike trail. This is the direction Alameda needs to go in.

President Teague closed the public comments and opened board discussion.

Board Member Ruiz believed this application did meet the intent of the variance code however she was very discouraged that the applicant had not reached out to neighbors to discuss shared parking.

Board Member Xiomara Cisneros agreed with Board Member Ruiz and thought the applicant should have reached out to their neighbors about a shared parking lot. She also understood the need to deemphasize cars and believed the variance was appropriate.

Board Member Rona Rothenberg agreed with comments concerning the curb cuts being addressed in the design review and that the applicant should have communicated with their neighbors, with all the terms and conditions of being a good neighbor. She did support the variance on the merits that were outlined.

Vice President Asheshh Saheba thought that this site would not be viable if they had to put any cars on it, it's a challenge site. He wanted to applaud the applicant for seeing the opportunities with deemphasizing cars, emphasizing bikes, and for bringing activity to the Cross Alameda Trail. He wanted the applicant to think thoughtfully about where bike parking would be and encouraged further discussions with neighbors.

Board Member Curtis encouraged discussions with neighbors not only as a good neighbor but using shared parking (Starbucks and Walgreens after hours) added flexibility to the applicant's business plan. He was in support of the variance.

Board Member Hom agreed with all the comments that had been mentioned and could make the findings for the variance. He also encouraged the applicant to aggressively practice the good neighbor policies and stay in contact with the Rodeway Inn to ensure parking doesn't become an issue. He was in support of the variance and believed this would be beneficial to the area.

President Teague was supportive of the project but was very interested to hear from Public Works during the design review to make sure the loading area will not impede traffic or block buses.

Board Member Curtis made the motion to approve the variance as submitted. Board Member Ruiz seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 7-0.

7-B 2020-8553

General Plan Update - Public Forum #4: Enhancing mobility, accessibility, and life on an island.

Andrew Thomas, Director of Planning, Building, and Transportation, led the presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at <https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4710191&GUID=30FB8832-224B-48C4-BE80-0A89586A5CA9&FullText=1>.

Amy MacPhee, from Cultivate Group, gave a rundown of the process and how long everything would take. She said the second draft of the General Plan should be available by spring or summer of 2021.

Sarah Henry, Public Information Officer, spoke about community engagement and how residents can share feedback and participate in the forum.

Director Thomas gave details about the surveys, what they had learned and ways they were trying to be inclusive.

Staff Member Henry led everyone through a survey and then read questions submitted by attendees.

Is equity defined in the plan and then how is it measured and how do we know if we are meeting the goal?

Director Thomas said this was a great question. The second draft will have a definition of equity and they are adding a section to the General Plan on how to measure equity and to ensure we are moving in the right direction.

Has the city done a survey to see how many people use a bike, what distance they bike, and what routes they use? If so, where can that information be found?

Director Thomas said they have collected that data and it can be found on the city's website under "Active Transportation Plan". They would be introducing these metrics into the Annual Review.

When the second draft becomes available will there be an opportunity for input from the community?

Director Thomas said absolutely, this is the community's General Plan. There would be a series of public meetings with the Planning Board. They would be taking comments on the second draft the entire time.

President Teague opened public comments.

Denyse Trepanier, a Board Member of Bike Walk Alameda, wanted to discuss preserving the grid and if this was something that should be included in the General Plan. She wanted the city to look at other cities that had bicycle boulevards and had diverted cars off these roads.

Cyndy Johnsen, a Board Member of Bike Walk Alameda, wanted to express her support for the vision of the mobility element.

Cameron Holland, a Board Member of Bike Walk Alameda, wanted to encourage the staff and the board to consider the needs of families moving around the island.

Chris Buckley, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society, wanted to discuss a letter the society had sent. The major concerns were about information lacking about earthquake

caused fires and water supply failures. The other point they wanted to emphasize was housing conservation.

Dodi, a resident, also wanted to address the lack of information for natural disasters. She also addressed Seniors Citizens' needs and concerns in regards to mobility.

President Teague closed public comments and opened board discussions.

Board Member Ruiz addressed the need to differentiate the speed of movement when it comes to mobility, pedestrians and cyclists are often put together but they are very different. She understood that equity is one of the goals but she was concerned by ME-6 (congestion pricing) because it punishes those that don't have more flexible working hours. She then spoke about which projects she thought would be the most beneficial. She also thought the language needed to be fine-tuned to make it less vague. She also gave her thoughts on utilities for open spaces, safety, and noise.

Board Member Cisneros thought the theme could be more specific. In ME-13 she wanted to remove the language "in areas with higher pedestrian volume", wider sidewalks should be encouraged throughout Alameda. In CC-10, she thought it should be the first and the last mile and in ME-12 it should be changed to "hovercraft". She also gave her thoughts on LU-15 and some contradictory language she saw.

Board Member Rothenberg said she would provide her comments to Director Thomas and suggested adding bullets to the timeline. She gave examples of how the language could be more inclusive and thought some of the projects would be eligible for grants and other types of funding. She saw many references to accessibility that could be broadened so that it was inclusive of the diverse population. She pointed out that if codes and regulations are cited they need to be broad enough for the document to be a living document.

Vice President Saheba thought there needed to be balance and prioritization of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. He saw an opportunity to look at things differently, such as demand management. He suggested that at certain times roadways could become bike only, this way using the same infrastructure and not be overburdened with the expense of multiple infrastructures. He saw that by converting the way the city does business it would start aligning with the way people think movement through the city happens.

Board Member Curtis found it to be a bit "utopian" in that it addressed everything for everyone and he encouraged prioritizing items and adding a budget to items. If the goal is to take cars off the road the people of Alameda need to have credibility in the program, that the transit will be on time and get them where they need to be. He stressed the need for education as well, for residents to embrace these changes they need to know what their alternatives for transportation are.

Board Member Hom also thought it would be good to identify priority projects. He agreed there should be an emphasis on bike and pedestrian improvements. He thought having a grid street system was a key way to dissipate the traffic and relieve congestion. He gave his thoughts on traffic safety and alternatives to getting on and off the island. He too was concerned about “congestion pricing” and how it would be implemented. He said he would prepare his comments and give them to Director Thomas.

President Teague also saw ME-6 “congestion pricing” as having a significant impact on equity. For ME-4, he thought they should go beyond ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). For ME-5, he thought for a long time they had failed in terms of transit to shopping centers. He talked about how the city should encourage carpooling and car-sharing. He also saw the need to create more public open space so they could legitimately reduce the required open space for new housing.

Board Member Curtis asked a question that had been sent to him about where would residents shop if every space was being turned into housing and cars were being deemphasized.

Director Thomas clarified that when they talk about building housing at these shopping centers they would not be getting rid of the shops. They would be rearranging them and maintaining the shops at these sites. He used South Shore as an example, they would just add housing to retail spaces. As for the cars, it’s also not about getting rid of the cars but balancing the transportation system.

8. MINUTES

8-A 2020-8544

Draft Meeting Minutes – September 28, 2020

Board Member Curtis pointed out a correction on page 5, paragraph 4, it should say input and not output.

Board Member Ruiz wanted a correction on her comment on page 2, she was not concerned about the drive-thru specifically but more concerned about the change in egress and ingress into the site.

Board Member Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Board Member Ruiz seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken. The minutes passed 4-0, President Teague and Board Members Rothenberg and Cisneros abstained.

8-B 2020-8545

Draft Meeting Minutes - October 12, 2020

Board Member Rothenberg wanted clarification on her statement on item 7, and she provided a more accurate statement. Then in item 11, she clarified her phone call and conversation with Staff Member Patrick O'Day and his intern and she provided the staff the accurate wording.

Vice President Saheba made a motion to approve the minute as amended. Board Member Hom seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken. The minutes passed 6-0, Board Member Cisneros abstained.

9. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

9-A 2020-8541

Planning, Building and Transportation Department Recent Actions and Decisions

No board member wanted to pull any of these items.

9-B 2020-8542

City Council staff report regarding the Association of Bay Area Government's (ABAG) Housing Methodology Committee's Proposed Methodology for Distributing the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) among Bay Area Cities and Counties.

Director Thomas explained more about this item, attachments can be found at <https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4710186&GUID=7C9AA982-6A1D-4F7A-8CA6-502755CC3B62>.

Board Member Rothenberg wanted to know if the City Council could appeal the RHNA number due to it being such a significant number.

Director Thomas answered there will be an appeal period of spring/summer of 2021. The current number is an estimate from ABAG, it is not final yet. He then explained how City Council would go about an appeal and what their argument would be.

9-C 2020-8543

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

Staff Member Tai said the next meeting would be in the second week of January, the staff had been working on an update to the Objective Design Review Standards which the board had adopted earlier in the year. Also hopefully the staff would bring forward a draft of the Parking Code Amendment for review.

Director Thomas wanted to take a moment to thank the Planning Board for their handling of this very difficult year.

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

11. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

Board Member Ruiz wanted to tell the staff and her fellow board members about Urban Land Institute, which offers three public sector programs. She went into depth about why this program would be beneficial to everyone.

President Teague wanted to know how the board could get revisions to the planning code to deal with open space, planning, setbacks, and yards to make the development of housing less restrictive.

Director Thomas said they have that direction, it's now just a matter of time and resources. He explained what the staff was working on currently.

12. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

13. ADJOURNMENT

President Teague adjourned the meeting at 8:23 p.m.