

APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CITY OF ALAMEDA PLANNING BOARD
MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2021

1. CONVENE

Vice President Teresa Ruiz convened the meeting* at 7:00 p.m.

**Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361, codified at Government Code Section 54953, Planning Board members can attend the meeting via teleconference.*

2. FLAG SALUTE

Board Member Hanson Hom led the flag salute.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Vice President Ruiz and Board Members Curtis, Hom, Rothenberg, Cisneros, and Teague.

Absent: President Asheshh Saheba

4. AGENDA CHANGES AND DISCUSSION

None.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

7-A 2021-1418

Public Hearing to consider a Resolution Recommending that the City Council Approve Alameda General Plan 2040.

Director Thomas, Director of Planning, Building, and Transportation, introduced the item.

The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5187688&GUID=3C349A03-37F7-4F71-8A92-E90F13DBB8AA&FullText=1>.

Vice President Ruiz opened the board clarifying questions.

Board Member Hom asked for a summarization of the substantive changes to the General Plan that had happened since June.

Director Thomas discussed the number of revisions they had received and how they had integrated those changes. He said most of the concerns and changes had revolved around housing. He discussed some of the biggest changes and the issues that were being addressed.

Board Member Rona Rothenberg thanked the staff for all their hard work. She suggested that staff review the comments and suggestions from the Alameda Architecture Preservation Society (AAPS) and incorporate them if they were relevant.

Board Member Xiomara Cisneros also thanked the staff as well for their hard work. She wanted to confirm that the “Housing Growth Opportunity Areas” in the General Plan wasn’t final.

Director Thomas explained how the Spotlights in the General Plan worked. In that Spotlight, they were trying to see where most of the growth in Alameda would be over 20 years. That map was not inclusive of all the sites they will need to consider for the Housing Element.

Board Member Cisneros asked for clarification on where information and plans for bicycle boulevards had gone.

Director Thomas discussed how the staff had thought about that term and how it should be defined once it was adopted. They had backed away from ME-7 and focused on Slow Streets.

Board Member Alan Teague asked how changes they made would be presented to the City Council. He suggested how the changes could be presented to the council.

Director Thomas answered that they would like to bring the board’s recommendations to the council and have the council adopt the General Plan with those additional changes but he was open to Board Member Teague’s suggestion.

Vice President Ruiz asked for clarification between The General Plan and the Housing Element, for the board’s and the public’s benefit. These are two living documents and she wanted to assure the public that the General Plan could move forward while the Housing Element was still being considered.

Director Thomas agreed and discussed the differences between The General Plan and the Housing Element and the unique work that went into both of them. He also discussed the difficult and important work that would be needed for the Housing Element, under state law it needed to be completed by this time next year.

Vice President Ruiz opened public comment.

Zac Bowling was very happy with the General Plan as it exists now. However, he disagreed with some of AAPPS's suggestions on language changes and the Alameda Citizens Task Force (ACT) request to change the language around Article 26. He fully supported the staff's recommendation to approve the General Plan and send it to the City Council.

William Smith, a resident, appreciated how the General Plan addressed equity in housing needs. He gave his thoughts on what was making affordable housing difficult in some areas. He also gave his thought on SB-9 and how Alameda should address those needs.

Christopher Buckley, AAPPS, discussed a letter they had sent and commented on LU-15B. He thought a clause should have been deleted and called that to staff's attention. He also called out some typos and errors and questioned the use of the word "native" for tree removal. He discussed better wording for the tree removal section.

Betsy Mathieson, a resident, thanked Director Thomas for explaining the differences between the General Plan and the Housing Element. She thought having a spotlight on housing growth areas was premature.

Vice President Ruiz closed public comment and opened board discussion.

Board Member Curtis said this plan showed great work and was well laid out. He suggested changing or toning down the language about Article 26 on the Spotlight on page 49. He thought as it was written now it distracted from the plan.

Board Member Hom agreed that this was an excellent document. He was very impressed with the public review period that took place during the pandemic. He agreed with the minor amendment from AAPPS to remove the word "native" in regards to tree preservation. Other than that he was fine with how the document currently stood.

Board Member Rothenberg concurred with her fellow board members and also agreed with Board Member Hom about the comments from AAPPS about the trees. She also suggested that staff consider Board Member Curtis's comment about the Spotlight on page 49 and Board Member Cisneros's comment about the Spotlight on page 50. These were only suggestions and she was ready to support the plan in its current draft.

Board Member Cisneros thanked the public for their comments and participation. She discussed the Spotlight on page 50 and that she was tying it to closing to the Housing Element and was fine with keeping it as it was. She was also amenable to editing the Spotlight on page 49 but that it needed to be factual. She then discussed the use of the word "character" as one of the four themes. She considered it a provocative word with a certain connotation to it and could be used against some of the other goals.

Board Member Teague thanked everyone who participated in this and he was proud to have his name on it. He suggested to drop “by maximizing” on page 30, he believed it gave it a larger scope. His other idea was to just change the word “constructed” to “allowed” and that would include existing property. He called out LU-17 Action A, it was an amazing action and critical to how they would move forward. He also appreciated that a Main Street at Alameda Point was included. He also appreciated the updates to Historic Preservation. He then gave suggestions for rewording the Spotlight on page 49. He also gave wording suggestions for the Housing Growth Opportunities section and agreed with the word changing for the tree preservation. He then discussed low-stress bikeways and felt that ME-21 Ferry Parking Management needed some adjustment. He wanted City Council to receive an updated version and not a red-line version.

Vice President Ruiz thanked everyone for their heroic effort on this. She discussed the Spotlight on page 49 and agreed with Board Member Cisneros that they needed to state the facts regarding Article 26. She also echoed Board Member Curtis about the wording being divisive. She discussed the trend of people living in multi-family housing by choice and not economic reasons, so they need to remove the stigma against multi-family housing. She wanted the language to be more inclusive. For tree preservation, she suggested “non-invasive” plants. She then discussed the use of the word “character” and asked Board Member Cisneros if she had any other suggestions.

Board Member Cisneros suggested balance. She also discussed her issues with the word character in depth.

Director Thomas explained how they had broadened the theme of the word character in the General Plan and that many of the comments discussed Alameda’s unique character.

There was a discussion on the use of the word “character”, its pros and cons, and if there was another word that worked. Board Member Curtis felt that character worked well and Board Member Teague did not like the word balance. Board Member Rothenberg agreed with Board Member Teague and Curtis.

Director Thomas then clarified the notes and comments that he was hearing from the board. He wanted to make sure he understood what the board wanted to see changed.

Board Member Teague made a motion to approve the General Plan with the following changes: In LU-15-B, change the word “constructed” to “allowed” and change the word “maximizing” to “optimizing”. In regards to the Spotlight on Article 26, the “therefore section” be deleted and instead be changed to “the city must either repeal this article or mitigate its impact through mechanisms like the multi-family overlay and density bonus to gain the ability to eliminate disparities and burdens provide affordable and fair access to housing and social-economic opportunities to historically underserved and underrepresented populations”. On page 50, change the word “these” to “some”. On page 71, change the word “native”

to “non-invasive”. On page 97 about the ferry terminal, strike from the documents “such as rebates on needs-based parking passes”. Board Member Hom seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 6-0.

7-B 2021-1419

A Public Workshop to Review and Comment on the Draft Housing Element Update to accommodate the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for the Period 2023-2031 in Compliance with State Law.

Vice President Ruiz recused herself from this agenda item and yielded the chair to Board Member Rothenberg.

Director Thomas introduced the item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5187690&GUID=5F160E3A-308F-4586-AC17-656E73493D12&FullText=1>.

Board Member Rothenberg opened public comments.

Zac Bowling gave his thoughts on upzoning residential areas. He believed the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers were too high not to do that. He also discussed that they had to get the Navy Cap removed from Alameda Point.

Betsy Mathieson, a resident, discussed Alameda’s history and how past decisions were affecting us now. Certain neighborhoods had become denser and transportation needs had affected housing needs. She spoke strongly about protecting historic neighborhoods.

William Smith urged the board to make the Housing Element more equitable. He discussed past issues that Alameda had faced and how important public engagement would be. He added that there needed to be concrete provisions to further Fair Housing.

Dolores Kelleher discussed the proposals that had been given by AAPS to prevent upzoning and density increases to reach our RHNA numbers. She wanted to see more action on these proposals and wanted to know what had been to contact the Federal Government about removing the Navy Cap at Alameda Point.

Christopher Buckley, AAPS, discussed a 7-page letter the society had sent and said they were still reviewing this document. The society had major concerns mainly with upzoning the R-2 & 6 zones. He discussed ideas that AAPS had, such as looking at shopping centers for housing.

Josh Geyer discussed the importance of housing and how Alameda needed to do more. He was very much in favor of putting housing in parking lots but they still needed to put

housing in other places, such as the Gold Coast. He said the only way to address Alameda's past is to reverse those policies that had stopped housing.

Board Member Rothenberg closed public comment and opened board discussion.

Board Member Curtis asked about the number of units Alameda was responsible for.

Director Thomas said it was somewhere between 1-2%, Alameda's RHNA was 5,353 units. He then explained the failed appeal of that number, all the appeals from Alameda County had been denied.

Board Member Curtis asked about the removal of the Navy Market rate Cap and said getting that removed should be a top priority. He wanted to know what it would take to make that happen. His point was that removing that cap would buy flexibility for the city.

Director Thomas said that staff had heard that request from the community and the council loud and clear and that process had already begun. The Community Development and Base Reuse Department had started that conversation with the Navy. He discussed the other agencies that staff had reached out to for help on getting the cap removed. He made it very clear though that as great a housing opportunity as Alameda Point was they could not put all 5,000 units on the point, they have to spread it out over the whole city. He said that getting the Navy to respond was going to take work from their state and federal representatives, regional partners, and all levels of government from California to Washington D.C.

Board Member Hom discussed the goals for sections one and two. He highlighted the goal to end homelessness and wanted prevention to be added to the actions. He also gave his thoughts on the Fair Housing analysis, the need to upzone residential districts, and ways to utilize shopping centers for housing. He also gave his thoughts on negotiating with the Navy about the cap and agreed it would take political pressure to get the Navy to respond.

Board Member Cisneros asked about SB-9 if the Housing Element complied with that. She also brought up SB-10 and how to get some of ADUs to count toward lower income.

Director Thomas explained that was something they were still working on and discussed how SB-9 would affect Alameda and what was already allowed in Alameda. He then discussed ways to incentivize homeowners to deed restrict their ADUs for lower-income.

Allen Tai, City Planner, discussed how other cities were encouraging homeowners to build ADUs by making the permit process easier and even waiving fees. Some cities required the units to be deed restricted for affordable housing for 3-5 years.

Board Member Teague discussed how Alameda's RHNA should be in the first paragraph on page 5. He then asked questions about table 2 and why low and very low were rolled together.

Director Thomas explained the table and that it was a Housing and Community Development (HCD) choice. He then further explained what state law allowed for very low and low income.

Board Member Teague asked about fees and the list of developers. He then asked for an update about HCD's response to Article 26 and wanted to know if the Housing Element Subcommittee was still needed. He also recommended having a list of alternative sites for sites that were not approved. He then discussed existing buildings and how important it was to know what they currently had and that they needed a section on removing barriers to development.

Director Thomas broke down how fees had changed and what to expect by the end of the cycle and explained the list was a list of developers who were ready to develop Alameda Point once allowed. He then gave an update from HCD, he said they were swamped but he was continuing to reach out to them. He was also very much in support of keeping the Housing Element Subcommittee. He pointed out sections that highlighted ways to remove barriers to development.

Board Member Rothenberg wanted it to be well laid out for the public and suggested some rewording and how to make the tables more clear. She also suggested making more references to the Spotlight sections so people knew what tied together. She thought this was a great start.

Vice President Ruiz rejoined the meeting.

8. MINUTES

None.

9. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

9-A 2021-1416

Planning, Building and Transportation Department Recent Actions and Decisions

Recent action and decisions can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5187683&GUID=7A9F9F72-1813-4B97-BE2C-71B0289C3D0F&FullText=1>.

No items were called for review.

9-B 2021-1417

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

Staff Member Tai announced that there were 3 more meetings scheduled for the calendar year. He quickly polled the board members about their availability around the upcoming holidays.

Director Thomas said the November 22nd meeting would mostly be zoning issues and could be moved to the December meeting.

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

11. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

None.

12. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Ruiz adjourned the meeting at 10:15 p.m.