



MINUTES
CITY OF NORCO
PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 2820 CLARK AVENUE
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

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1. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 p.m.
 2. ROLL CALL: Chair Wright, Vice-Chair Jaffarian, Commissioners Harris and Newton. EXCUSED ABSENCE: Hedges
 3. STAFF PRESENT: Senior Planner Robles, and Executive Secretary Dvorak. Derek Bingham, Hogle-Ireland Consultant.
 4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Vice-Chair Jaffarian
 5. APPEAL NOTICE: Read by staff.
 6. HEARING FROM THE AUDIENCE ON ITEMS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA: None.
 7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes of August 27, 2008

MOTION: M/S Jaffarian/Newton to approve the minutes of August 27, 2008 as written.
AYES: Harris, Jaffarian, Newton, and Wright
ABSENT: Hedges

MOTION CARRIED
 8. CONTINUED ITEMS: None
 9. PUBLIC HEARINGS: None
 10. BUSINESS ITEMS: None
 11. CITY COUNCIL: Received and filed.
 - A. City Council Action Agenda dated September 3, 2008
 - B. City Council Minutes dated August 20, 2008
 12. PLANNING COMMISSION: Oral Reports from Representatives on Various Committees/Commissions: None
 13. STAFF: Current Work Program: PC Newton:
 - Staff still has not reported on the A-1-20 lot coverage report. Staff has never called him for his input into what the PC wanted to see.

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- Vice-Chair Jaffarian: Requested again that staff report back on the status of the closed-down/unfinished construction next to Circle K on Fourth Street. Additional concerns were possible fire hazards because the construction is on the property line and backs up to two agricultural uses.
14. OTHER MATTERS: Review of the City of Norco Draft 2008-2014 Housing Element. Recommendation: That the Commission commences review of draft to be scheduled as a public hearing for September 24, 2008. (Alexa Wyneken, Derek Bingham, Hogle-Ireland)

Senior Planner Robles introduced Derek Bingham from Hogle-Ireland. She noted some corrections that were passed out to the Commission tonight that would change certain areas of the Housing Element. Those areas would be corrected before the public hearing on September 24, 2008.

Mr. Bingham presented the highlights of the staff report on file in the Planning Division. He said the Housing Element, required to be updated every five years, is one of seven State-mandated General Plan elements but the only one subject to mandatory review by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The Element examines housing needs for the residents, creates and guides Norco's housing policy, and identifies locations to accommodate Norco's Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA). He explained how the housing need of 949 units was reached by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). He pointed out that Norco is not required to build all 949 units, but is mandated to provide opportunities for such development. At this time, Norco has been credited for 97 units so opportunities need to be provided for the other 852 units distributed among each income category by year 2014.

Of the seven sections of the Element; Action 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 are the major policy actions. Norco is required to identify a zone(s) where transitional housing and emergency shelters will be allowed by right without conditional use permits or any other discretionary permits, thereby forcing a review/revision of our zoning code.

Mr. Bingham noted that seven sites listed in the report could accommodate 661 units, leaving 191 units remaining to meet RHNA requirements. These units need to be accounted for in order to get State certification.

Questions:

Chair Wright asked if Hogle-Ireland had done this type of work for Norco before. He asked if the report was boiler-plated because some of the data does not seem current, such as in addressing foreclosures. He asked when was the last time our Housing Element was certified.

Mr. Bingham said this was the first time Hogle-Ireland has worked on the Housing Element. He said Norco's Housing Element has never been certified. This was not a boiler-plated document; instead Hogle-Ireland documented the effectiveness of the last housing element and also worked closely with the County of Riverside in order to come up with this draft.

PC Newton asked for more detail on transitional and emergency shelters.

Mr. Bingham said California Senate Bill 2 passed this year requires that transitional housing be permitted in a designated zone. There is only one year to come up with these shelters, but they need to be permitted outright.

PC Newton asked if his house burned down, could he move a mobile home onto his lot.

Mr. Bingham replied no, that transitional housing is meant, for example, for women shelters, someone homeless for a few days to a few months. Emergency shelters usually are for shorter time periods such as cold winter shelters for the homeless. A natural disaster would call for emergency shelters.

Vice Chair Jaffarian referred to page 65, noting that Norco has very little vacant land and asked how much Norco could be required to use for RHNA requirements.

Mr. Bingham said the State needs to see an effort before granting any leeway. All Norco can do is submit the Housing Element as review is done on a case-by case basis.

PC Harris asked how the public hearing would be publicized.

SP Robles explained there would be the normal publishing of the notice and posting of the notice in five places. As this has a City-wide effect, there would not be individual mailings.

PC Harris asked if the seven property owners have been notified that their properties are potential sites for development in order to reach multi-family or other housing.

Staff replied they were not and added that these are all vacant lots. Discussion followed, with Chair Wright noting the City is not dictating to the property owners; the owners would have to want to participate.

PC Harris noted that Site 2 is no longer owned by Caltrans as stated in the report. He reiterated he wanted these property owners involved early on.

Mr. Bingham said these sites were identified as being usable and shows Norco is making an effort in addressing housing needs. If HCD says the 178 units are needed in order for the document to be certified, they will have to be built. The PC will see a revised element that will go through HCD certification, although some compromising might be needed.

There was discussion on a Planned Development (PD) overlay zone that would provide opportunities for this kind of housing while requiring such housing to be compatible with the existing or potential development of the surrounding areas. This would need to be brought back at another meeting.

PC Newton reminded the Commission that all the adult-oriented businesses were zoned for a particular area and might be one of these seven sites. However, it was noted with all the restrictions placed on those businesses, that site might never be used that way.

PC Newton asked about senior housing being tagged for Site 4. He thought Norco was maxed out on senior housing, which he supports. He does not support low-income "sheets over the balcony type of housing. He said attorneys will come in and say Norco's Housing Element allows this type of development.

SP Robles reminded the Commission this was conceptual as to what it could be. She said the City could require a study as to whether more senior housing was needed.

Mr. Bingham noted that town homes and condos are possibilities; low-income housing does not have to be high-rises. One possibility is offering incentives to developers to set aside a certain number of units for low-income housing. The character of Norco needs to be kept in mind. The Housing Element is not a set of formal policies or actions, and without the development of the PD zone, it will be hard for Norco to maintain control of the types of units needed to get certified.

PC Newton said that it seems that a deal has been struck to allow low income housing at Second and River, and asked if the Housing Element could be skewed to allow this.

Vice-Chair Jaffarian said the very first point is our animal-keeping policy. Developers could not build something that would contradict the existing housing in Norco. Despite what attorneys would say, the very first thing is maintaining the core policies. Lot sizes and other rural amenities would protect Norco from taking something, such as high-density units, that the City does not want to take. The City does not have to accept anything on these lots that would so affect the animal-keeping lots. He noted twelve residences back up to the parcel at Second and River. Some other sites have six residences adjacent to them. PC Jaffarian noted Norco has protection in this document but it still doesn't mean Norco won't be sued.

PC Newton asked how many families are allowed to live in a single-family home.

Mr. Bingham said three people per household the threshold, but there is no control. Section 5 discusses overcrowding.

Vice-Chair Jaffarian said related to transitional and emergency housing, the element does not identify a site and he does not want to create a document in contradiction to itself. He questioned how does the City do transitional and emergency shelters and how does the City find these properties.

SP Robles said that does not need to be identified in the Housing Element. The ordinance that comes later will do that. HCD gives a year to identify the sites. She added that only the fair share housing sites need to be identified.

PC Harris again asked that the owners of the seven lots be contacted and sent a copy of this draft. Discussion followed and the Commission decided to just notice the owners of the seven sites for now, not the surrounding property owners.

PC Newton noted on page 10 that this is all boilerplate wording as Norco does not have code enforcement.

PC Harris questioned if the Commission was just going through the motions on this document. He said a lot of cities are not certified.

Chair Wright questioned what has changed since the last Housing Element.

PC Newton asked for a list of the cities that do not have certified Housing Elements. Hogle-Ireland will have that list for the meeting on September 24.

15. ADJOURNMENT: 8:00

Respectfully submitted,

Alma Robles
Senior Planner

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