

PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
July 21, 2021
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs,
California (Meeting held via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Weremiuk called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Aylaian, Ervin, Hirschbein, Roberts, Song, Vice Chair Moruzzi,
Chair Weremiuk

Staff Present: Development Services Director Fagg, Assistant Planning Director
Newell, Attorney Otto, Administrative Coordinator Hintz

1. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chair Weremiuk opened public comment:

The following persons spoke in reference to Item 3A:

JANE GARRISON, stated Oswit Land Trust strongly opposes any changes to the Whitewater and Bel Air Greens parcels and urged the Commission to keep the land designations as they are. She stated the Whitewater parcel is a beautiful piece of land sandwiched directly between two Coachella Valley habitat conservation areas and the Bel Air Greens parcel will be a restored nature preserve that will benefit the community.

BETTINA ROSMARINO, Oswit Land Trust, board member, spoke in opposition of changing the land use designations for the Whitewater and Bel Air Greens parcels. She voiced concern that massive overdevelopment will occur and endanger the natural habitat if the land use designation is changed for these two parcels.

SOPHIA SOMERS, concurred with previous testimony, is new to the desert and has learned more about this ecosystem and its natural habitat. She encouraged the Commission to consider keeping these parcels as currently designated.

DIETER CRAWFORD, Community Action Association, would like to see self-help housing and homebuyer assistance programs added to the Housing Element, which allow residents to purchase homes and build equity. He noted that Desert Highland

has nearly 100 vacant parcels available for infill land development. He would like to see R-1 lots rezoned back to RGA(6) along Rosa Parks and Tramview Rd.

JOAN TAYLOR, representing the Sierra Club, the Sierra Club requests the City change the land use designation and zoning for certain mountainous sites currently designated special policy areas. She noted the I-10 site near whitewater appears partially within the conservation area and thinks it's unreasonable to create an island of intense development.

MARIBEL NUÑEZ, Inland Equity Partnership, submitted an email with detailed recommendations (some were included, and others were not) in the draft Housing Element and provided an overview of their recommendations.

BORIS GRESLEY, on behalf of the Carpenters, Contractors, Cooperation Committee, a non-profit organization committed to promoting the creation of good paying jobs, fair competition and high-quality construction in industry standards, as the City continues to discuss the proposed housing element, they hope the City recognizes that this document should also a plan for a more equitable society.

PATRICK WIESE, voiced support for previous testimony relating to the Desert Highland rezoning of the R-1 single-family to RGA(6) along Tramview Road and Rosa Parks Road to help this area grow and prosper.

AARON LEIDER, realtor, spoke in favor of protecting open space and stressed the importance of holding onto this precious land for everyone to use and enjoy.

AURELIA GONZALES, biologist in riverside county, urged preservation of the current land use designation for the Whitewater and Bel Air Green parcels.

DAVID WATSON, Oswit Land Trust, board member, spoke on the importance of keeping the Bel Air Greens parcel as open space. He said despite the property is blighted, wildlife is growing with many bird species on this site.

LAURA MENDOZA moved here about 5 years ago because there was so many open spaces in the community. She said with so much development going on it takes away from the charm of our city.

JOANNA S. urged the Commission to find a balance between development and not continuing to threaten protected species. She does not support rezoning Bel Air Greens.

There being no further speakers' public comments was closed.

2. NEW BUSINESS:

2A. APPOINTMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC) MEMBERS AS PART OF THE 2021 ANNUAL RECRUITMENT.

Commissioner Hirschbein requested staff reach the applicants that are not on this list to ensure they have not been discouraged from reapplying in the future.

Song, seconded by Aylaian to re-appoint members to the Architectural Review Committee for the following terms:

1. Tom Doczi, Tom Jakway & John McCoy to terms ending June 30, 2023.
2. Stephen Poehlein & John Walsh to terms ending June 30, 2024.
3. Dan Thompson as the alternate member to a term ending June 30, 2024.

AYES: AYLAIAN, ERVIN, HIRSCHBEIN, MORUZZI, ROBERTS,
SONG, WEREMIUK

3. DISCUSSION:

3A. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF DRAFT 2021-2029 HOUSING ELEMENT, DRAFT LAND USE PLAN AND PROPOSED BUILDOUT.

Director Fagg provided an overview on the public outreach conducted as part of the housing element update and summarized the timeframes for review of the draft and final document.

Assistant Director Newell provided an overview of the draft 2021-2029 Housing Element.

The Commission discussed and provided comments on a page-by-page basis as follows:

1. Former COD site – increase HDR and establish a mix as follows: 35% HDR, 60%MDR, 5%NCC.
2. Parking – include policy related to tailor parking to residential uses. Include related program to explore revisions to parking standards.
3. Special needs and senior housing – allow higher density.
4. Add program to evaluate ways to increase mobile home parks in the City, including re-zoning.
5. Need design standards for accessibility for new multifamily buildings.
6. Discourage apartment conversions and incentivize new apartment construction.
7. P. 155 “Other areas...” paragraph to be removed. Or alternatively, modified to indicate desire to retain these areas as undisturbed mountain where feasible.

8. P. 158 –
 - a. HS2.5 add language to identify improving maintenance of mobile home parks.
 - b. HS2.9 Strengthen language and indicate “discourage” apartment to hotel conversions.
9. P. 160 – HS3.2 modify sentence to state “Assist in identifying funding for the development...”
10. P. 161 – Delete last sentence of first paragraph.
11. P. 162 –
 - a. HS 4.2 delete “...without appropriate environmental review and approvals.”
 - b. HS 4.3 and HS 4.4 add language to exceed “Encourage and exceed where possible...”
12. Include Sustainability Commissioner Freedman comments and suggestions.
13. P. 163 AFFH – comments that this section needs additional thought. Appears too soft and needs to be expanded. Identify specific areas of town and ways to improve neighborhoods.
14. P. 165 –
 - a. HS 1.1 first bullet – add text “and available on the city’s website” to end of sentence.
 - b. HS 1.2 first bullet – add “...administrative minor modifications...”
15. P. 166 – missing programs from previous housing elements relate to financial incentives. Should look at Self Help Housing Programs, as suggested in public comment.
16. P. 167 ADUs –
 - a. second bullet, add pre-approved ADUS: “...low income households, including pre-approved ADU plans and other programs.”
 - b. Add fourth program (bullet) to establish outreach program to educate HOAs on allowing ADUs.
17. P. 167 Small Lot Housing – add program to explore upzoning R-1 zones.
18. P. 169 Historic Preservation Program –
 - a. Modify second bullet: “Continue to update the Historic Resources Survey (preferably every five years as recommended by Office of Historic Resource) and identify...”
 - b. Add third bullet to investigate opportunities to incentivize adaptive re-use for multi-family housing.
19. P. 170 Housing Rehabilitation Program – add bullet to explore ways to improve trailer and mobile homes.
20. P. 172 Neighborhood Services – Add bullet to evaluate ways to ensure multifamily and mobile home parks are included in Neighborhood Organizations.

21. P. 173 Neighborhood Safety – add language to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and allow for new developments to incorporate connectivity. Add bullet to investigate implementing Crime Free Multi housing Program to improve safety within multiunit housing.
22. P. 174 Emergency Rental Assistance – first bullet, modify sentence “Work with qualified nonprofit(s) (such as Lift to Rise) to administer...”
23. P. 179 – add text “and exceed where possible” as noted earlier relative to resource conservation.

Commissioner Hirschbein requested staff include more robust language in either the General Plan or by ordinance to protect undisturbed hillside areas, such as limit amount of grading allowed, requiring dedication of undisturbed open space, reducing number of units/acres, reducing lot coverage, prohibiting large retention basins, increasing minimum lot size and prohibiting ancillary uses. Director Fagg responded that some of the criteria may be appropriate in the land use element but advised that we already have strict density limits and if we lower density we'll have to account for the loss somewhere else in the City. Director Fagg asked that Commissioner Hirschbein provide his list of recommendations to staff for further evaluation.

No action taken. The Housing Element is required to be reviewed and accepted by HCD prior to City approval and adoption. The City will hold a public hearing prior to final adoption later this year or early 2022.

ADJOURNMENT: The Planning Commission adjourned at 9:50 pm to their regularly scheduled meeting at 5:30 pm, Wednesday, July 28, 2021, 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way.



David Newell, AICP
Assistant Director of Planning