

Planning Commission Minutes
Regular Meeting
February 23, 2010
Martinez, CA

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Frank Kluber at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Donna Allen, Commissioner, Harriett Burt, Commissioner, Rachael Ford, Alternate Commissioner, Lynette Busby, Vice Chair, Jeffrey Keller, Commissioner, Frank Kluber, Chair, and Michael Marchiano, Commissioner.

EXCUSED: None.

ABSENT: AnaMarie Avila-Farias, Commissioner.

Staff present: Planning Manager Terry Blount
Senior Planner Corey Simon

AGENDA CHANGES

None.

Planning Manager Terry Blount reported that Commissioner Avila had called and would not be attending tonight.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Alford noted that at the Design Review Committee meeting Commissioners Killian and Farias were participating, although there could be a conflict of interest. He also questioned whether Chair Kluber had a perceived conflict since he was selected for a project by the Parks, Recreation, Marina & Cultural Commission. He commented on the joint meeting with the City Council, at which time it was mentioned that most of the Planning Commission had voted against a project; yet the Council approved it and sent it back to the Commission to determine the details. He was concerned whether the Brown Act was being properly followed.

CONSENT ITEMS

1. *Minutes of December 8, 2009, meeting.*

On motion by Harriett Burt, Commissioner, seconded by Jeffrey Keller, Commissioner, the Commission present voted to approve the Minutes of the December 8, 2009, meeting. Motion passed 5 - 0. (Commissioners Busby and Marchiano abstained; Commissioner Avila absent.)

REGULAR ITEMS

2. *Multi-Family Residential Parking Standards ZA #09-02 Public hearing to review proposed zoning text amendments to the Martinez Municipal Code Chapter 22.36; Off-Street Parking. Proposed changes include: adjusting the minimum required parking for multi-family residential development; establishing a city-wide requirement for guest parking in multi-family residential development; and modifying the design standards and use*

restrictions of driveways and garages that are used for required parking. The Planning Commission will make its recommendations to the City Council, which will consider the possible amendments at a future date to be announced. Applicant: City of Martinez (CS)

Senior Planner Corey Simon presented the staff report, discussing the need for the update and comparisons with surrounding cities.

Chair Kluber apologized for not attending the joint meeting with the City Council, especially given the need for a full update of the General Plan.

Commissioner Ford entered and was seated.

Commissioner Burt commented on the multi-family neighborhood where she lives and the gradual increase in number of cars per unit, creating parking issues. She expressed concern about variances for less than 1.5 spaces per unit and the need for adequate guest parking too. She was relieved that an exception is proposed for the Downtown Overlay District, allowing driveway parking to be counted. She was concerned also with the timing of the changes, especially since there is a project pending that is asking for an exception allowing less than 1.5 spaces per unit.

Commissioner Burt was very concerned about the possibility of tandem parking and how that will fit. Mr. Simon said the proposed code changes are not adding regulations regarding tandem parking at this time, which will give the Commission more leeway when considering projects with tandem parking. He added that most recent precedents have been to permit it.

Planning Manager Terry Blount discussed the inclusion of precautions and best practices for tandem parking. He also clarified that the 1.5 spaces requirement was only proposed for 1 bedroom units.

Commissioner Burt commented on difficulties in developments where garages are being used for storage while the residents park on the street instead. She noted a similar concern with a tandem parking allowance. Chair Kluber noted that the projects he is aware of that include tandem parking do not seem to impact the neighborhood unduly. He added that he did not see the proposed change as "relaxing standards" but rather updating or modernizing them, while allowing the Commission to work with developers.

Chair Kluber also noted a typo on page 6 of the report, in the requirements for the maintenance of garages for vehicle parking. Senior Planner Simon noted that the provision, though not necessarily enforceable, allowed the City to maintain some control.

Vice Chair Busby asked for a comparison with the parking requirements of Concord or Walnut Creek, especially near the BART station. She noted that with proximity to the station, they are able to have less parking. Mr. Simon showed a comparison chart, pointing out that only Walnut Creek allows for a reduction, within 1/2 mile of BART. The Commission expressed concern that no copy of the comparison was provided for them.

Commissioner Allen commented on the issue of tandem parking. She noted that including

language such as "free and unobstructed" would affect the use of tandem parking. She asked how the Commission would address applications that include tandem parking. Senior Planner Simon explained that unless added, no regulations would be in place and no variance would be needed; it would be a question for the Planning Commission to decide upon the review of each project proposing tandem parking.

Commissioner Allen acknowledged the existence of some circumstances where tandem parking would be acceptable, such as for single-family homes; however, in areas of multi-family housing, there are usually already parking difficulties. She stated that she would like to have it addressed at some level, perhaps with a use permit. Mr. Blount noted that it is usually multi-family housing that would need the tandem parking, not single-family. He added that in some areas where the population density is higher, tandem parking has become almost the norm.

Commissioner Allen expressed concern about the City's insufficient access to public transit, unlike in the cities cited by Mr. Blount. Commissioner Burt said she was not sure of the appropriateness of tandem parking in this area. She stated that she would support citing limitations in the ordinance itself, so that exceptions would require a use permit.

Commissioner Allen confirmed with Mr. Simon that apartments, rental units, and condos would all be considered multi-family.

Commissioner Keller asked whether a footnote could be added regarding the City of Concord standards for guest parking where a greater amount of guest parking could be required, but only where no on-street parking was available. Mr. Simon explained that such a code revision would reduce the Commission's power to enforce the requirement for guest parking, and stated that staff did not recommend including it.

Chair Kluber opened the public hearing.

MIKE ALFORD commented on the crowded parking at the proposed location for the Cascara Canyon project. He expressed concern about the lack of information given to the public. Commissioner Burt clarified that the Commission was discussing the overall parking policy for the City, not specific to the Cascara Canyon project.

Mr. Alford also commented on problems with tandem parking, noting that the cities cannot regulate the use of private garages. He expressed concern regarding the current increase in the number of cars per unit.

PHILIP CIARAMITARO asked about the proposed changes to multi-family parking allowances, as compared to the current allowances, which Mr. Simon explained. Mr. Ciaramitaro commented on a recently-built project at Berrellesa and Marina Vista. Mr. Simon confirmed that the development had sufficient parking. Mr. Ciaramitaro said he thought the proposed changes were reasonable, except for the tandem parking allowances, which he thought should not be shared between units.

Chair Kluber confirmed that the proposed tandem parking will not be shared among units.

Commissioner Burt said she thought permitting tandem parking would exacerbate the misuse of storage, with one car in the tandem place and the other on the street or in guest parking.

Seeing no further speakers, Chair Kluber closed the public hearing on the item.

Chair Kluber expressed concern about the increased sizes of vehicles and whether they would be able to fit in the garages or parking space allotted, noting that perhaps the City should address standards for garages.

Commissioner Marchiano acknowledged that thus far there is not much tandem parking in the City, though it could be a greater concern in the future.

Commissioner Ford stated that she thought tandem parking is an issue that needs to be addressed before moving forward. She brought up some areas where driveways are too narrow and streets too crowded, while there are still increasing numbers of cars per family. She acknowledged that there is a different situation in areas near public transit, but noted that Martinez is auto-dependent. She questioned too whether the proposed guest parking will be adequate. She stated that standards need to address issues facing the City now and in the future.

Chair Kluber asked Commissioner Ford what level of guest parking she would want. She stated her opinion that it should be comparable to Concord or Pleasant Hill and that .25 spaces per unit was too low.

Mr. Blount stated that requiring a Planning Commission hearing for tandem parking might be onerous. He suggested adding specific language related to tandem parking instead, such as allowing tandem only with the same unit, adequate staging area, and large enough area of the spaces themselves. Commissioner Allen agreed that standards would be helpful and said she would support tandem in a carport situation more readily than for garages.

Commissioner Allen asked how a variance could be gained. Mr. Simon said parking is ideal for allowing variances since the process allows for specific numbers and dimensions.

Commissioner Allen acknowledged that the City's code makes it difficult to get variances. Simon discussed some pre-existing or atypical conditions as opposed to "I-want" variances. Commissioner Allen brought up the difficulty of making findings. She reiterated that tandem parking would be more feasible in carport situations.

Commissioner Allen asked if prohibition could be made against storing boats or RVs in the parking area. Mr. Simon said the prohibition could be made, but it would be difficult to enforce. Mr. Blount said that the state law is pretty strict about limiting what the cities could require. Commissioner Allen said she would like more information on the possibility of creating a requirement.

Commissioner Marchiano commented on crime issues with carport areas. He stated that he would discourage the use of carports, in favor of garages or open, well-lit parking areas.

Vice Chair Busby noted that the last time parking standards were set was 14 years ago. She

stated that she would rather set standards for tandem parking, but she acknowledged the difficulty with enforcement. She expressed concern about the Commission not having enough time in one night to take all the factors into account, specifically with the increased number of cars per household. She brought up another project, at the intersection of Berrellesa and Main.

Mr. Simon acknowledged the existence of many variables and the difficulty of regulating all the different parking possibilities. He noted that the most important immediate priority for the Commission was the updating of PUDs.

Vice Chair Busby asked about the parking standards for the downtown RCD project, and Mr. Simon confirmed that it was less than the norm.

Mr. Blount said that if the Commission preferred, it could be possible to prohibit tandem parking except in single-family areas, in the Downtown Overlay areas, or as part of a PUD. Mr. Simon acknowledged that the situation might change in the future, but that for now tandem carports did not seem to be a possibility.

Chair Kluber asked for input on Vice Chair Busby's comments regarding sufficient time to discuss the changes, and on Commissioner Ford's idea about a requirement for the guest parking ratio.

Commissioner Keller asked if the tandem parking could be permitted with an increased guest parking requirement. Chair Kluber noted that the guest parking requirement would be applied independently of the existence of tandem parking.

Chair Kluber stated that he could support Mr. Blount's suggestion of allowing tandem parking only for single-family developments and downtown overlay areas.

Commissioner Ford expressed agreement with Vice Chair Busby that she would like more time to consider the issues and possibilities, given the potential impacts in both residential and commercial areas.

Commissioner Burt agreed that there should be some restrictions on tandem parking, though she noted that the City has little control over how and where people park. She noted the need for clear consistent standards for developers. She acknowledged that 2.5 spaces, though ideal, is not realistic, adding that she could support 1.5 while encouraging more spaces with larger developments and providing for adequate guest parking.

Chair Kluber said he also did not think .25 was adequate for guest parking, though he was not sure what an appropriate number would be, given the range of numbers in other cities' requirements.

Commissioner Allen agreed with Commissioners Ford and Busby that perhaps the Commission should not take action tonight. She also agreed that carports are not very secure and stated that she only suggested them in conjunction with tandem parking. She questioned whether the per-unit guest parking ratio could be reduced with larger projects, or whether the guest parking could be assigned specific to units. She also asked whether there could be some way to limit parking

to assigned spaces rather than allowing the residents to park in guest spaces.

Mr. Simon agreed that larger complexes may need fewer spaces per unit for guest parking. He acknowledged again that a lot of variables could be considered. He brought up the fact that more regulated and assigned parking could in some cases be less efficient. He discussed the difficulty of understanding the exact numbers involved in tandem parking, and how those numbers worked in conjunction with the 1.5 spaces per unit and the guest parking ratio. He asked the Commission about the potential requirements for new single-family housing in the future. Commissioner Ford noted the importance of planning for all possibilities, not just the most desirable ones.

Chair Kluber said he would like to see the issue of tandem parking addressed and the guest parking ratios increased. Mr. Blount discussed how the recommendations were developed.

Commissioner Allen suggested more information be gathered regarding the reasoning behind the requirements in Pleasant Hill and Concord, and asked how similar their situations were to those of Martinez. Mr. Blount stated that staff had not researched the reasoning behind other cities' numbers, but had based their research on the numbers themselves, staff's experience with other cities, and the transportation study for the Cascara Canyon project.

Commissioner Allen mentioned that the Commission had not been pleased with the transportation study. She requested that staff discuss with other cities when and how their guidelines had been established and if they had been successful. She also requested that staff consider economy of scale and the effects of available street parking. Chair Kluber agreed that economy of scale was a significant question, and suggested that the guest parking ratio take that into account.

Commissioner Allen also requested information about the variance process of other cities and their RV and boat allowances.

Vice Chair Busby said that from her understanding, the Pleasant Hill ratios were based on proximity to BART and were fairly recent. She stated that parking is a cause of major problems in the City, and proximity to public transit, and she would like to see how other jurisdictions view the issue.

Commissioner Marchiano stated that even near to public transit, most households in reality probably have two cars. Chair Kluber concluded that the Commission would like to continue the item to allow additional information to be gathered.

Mr. Blount reviewed the information requested: the issue of tandem parking, the reasoning behind other cities' guest parking ratios, other cities' variance processes, RV and boat requirements, and economy of scale. The Commission confirmed that they preferred tandem parking, if allowed without restricting, to be only for single-family housing.

Chair Kluber requested that more information be provided to the Commission beforehand.

Mr. Simon added the issue of assigned and unassigned parking and shared spaces.

Commissioner Keller suggested including more jurisdictions that do not have BART in the research.

Mr. Blount suggested continuing the item to a date certain (3/23).

On motion by Donna Allen, Commissioner, seconded by Harriett Burt, Commissioner, the Commission present voted to continue the item to a date certain (March 23, 2010) to allow staff time to address the issues raised by the Commission. Motion unanimously passed 7 - 0. (Commissioner Avila absent).

COMMISSION ITEMS

Chair Kluber announced his resignation from the Commission. He thanked everyone for their support and for allowing him to continue as Chair for a second year. He was also appreciative to the City for allowing him the honor of serving on the Commission.

The members of the Commission wished him well.

STAFF ITEMS

Mr. Blount announced that March 9th will be the scoping session for Alhambra Highlands. He confirmed that having four commissioners available will meet quorum requirements.

Commissioner Burt asked why the issue was so urgent now. Mr. Blount stated that there are litigation issues involved and a specific timeline that the City has agreed to. He apologized for the manner in which it came about.

Commissioner Allen expressed frustration that the Commission had initially not been told what the session was about, for which Mr. Blount apologized. She said she wanted to be sure that the Commission gets a full history of the project.

Mr. Blount confirmed that the background information would be available in the staff report for the scoping session. Commissioners Allen and Burt questioned which project the EIR was in reference to and why the Commission had not yet seen the project. Mr. Simon briefly reviewed the outcome of the previous project. Staff confirmed the information that would be available before the scoping session.

Commissioner Burt commented on the huge issue this is to the neighbors. She added that public notification is critical, and the process must be done right. The Commission briefly discussed with staff the areas and the means of notification.

Mr. Blount also discussed the General Plan update interviews to be held on Tuesday, March 2nd. The Commissioners discussed possible times for each interview.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

Chair Kluber adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m. to the next Regular Meeting, March 9, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 525 Henrietta Street, Martinez, CA 94553.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Planning Commission Chairperson

Transcribed by Mary Hougey

Frank Kluber

DRAFT