

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR STUDY SESSION
OF THE CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE
PLANNING COMMISSION
March 5, 2014 @ 6:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
100 Avenida Presidio
San Clemente, CA 92672**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Darden called the Regular Study Session of the Planning Commission of the City of San Clemente to order at 6:04 p.m. in City Council Chambers, located at 100 Avenida Presidio, San Clemente, CA 92672.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Wayne Eggleston, Michael Kaupp, Jim Ruehlin, and Kathleen Ward; Chair pro tem Barton Crandell, Vice Chair Donald Brown and Chair Julia Darden

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Jim Pechous, City Planner
Christopher Wright, Associate Planner
Eileen White, Recording Secretary

AGENDA

A. Zoning Permit Streamlining (Wright)

This is a request to receive comments on the effectiveness and efficiency of planning procedures and get suggestions on code and policy changes that would improve customer service. The City Council has made it a priority for decisions to be made at a lower level when it would be more practical and efficient. The next phase of the Zoning Ordinance update is an overhaul of planning procedures. The Commission's comments will be used to prepare code changes that the Planning Commission will consider at a future public hearing.

Christopher Wright, Associate Planner, narrated a PowerPoint Presentation entitled, "Study Session on Zoning Permit Streamlining, dated March 5, 2014." He explained:

1. The different type and levels of review processes (staff level and discretionary hearings);

2. Issues that are important to consider in determining whether a review process should be streamlined (public concerns, potential impacts, level of public participation, public notification, time and cost, oversight);
3. How certain processes could be formalized that allow staff to refer projects to a higher level. This would allow some projects to be streamlined that usually are not of public concern, but provide the flexibility to require a higher level of review for the occasional project that may have more issues or be of concern;
4. The idea of combining applications that are similar in order to simplify the Zoning Ordinance, forms, fees, and processes;
5. That criteria will be put in the code to clarify when a project is "minor" that can be approved at a lower level,
6. Examples of projects that could likely be streamlined

Mr. Wright then presented a "Draft Inventory of Procedures" (staff report Attachment 3). It identifies the types of projects/requests that require a review process and identifies staff's preliminary streamlining ideas for discussion. Mr. Wright asked for the Commission and public to forward comments to him so they can be considered during the ordinance writing process.

During the ensuing discussion, the Commissioners, either individually or in agreement, provided the following commentary:

- Recommended for the update to formalize procedures that allow staff to "bump-up" projects to the next level of review.
- Suggested for staff to notify applicants early-on that their application can be bumped up if staff determines the application needs higher review.
- Commented that the level of public interest in a project be indicated as a reason why the project could be bumped up to a higher level of review.
- Requested clear and consistent guidelines for applicants/architects to follow from the onset of the project so that applicants are aware of what is allowed and that deviation from the code has potential to add a higher level of review.
- Commented that it is important to consider, when making code or policy changes, that quality of life is maintained in the City. The existing process and regulations have led to a great quality of life in the City and code changes should not diminish it. Instead, the goal should be to preserve, protect, and improve quality of life further, while providing quality customer service.
- Discussed the idea of including the staff waivers/ZA minutes under Consent Calendar items on the agenda to call more attention to these items.
- Commented that the City is lucky to have tenured and experienced Commissioners rather than constant turnover that is common in other Cities. The worst case scenario should be considered in the writing of

code. Meaning, San Clemente should not assume that the Commission or staff will always be very experienced. If staff is to be given more authority, there should be adequate oversight to ensure decisions are known and understood, so they can be “called-up” if there are concerns.

- Commented that decisions at the staff level need to be based on guidelines, not just staff’s discretion.

In response to comments/questions from the Commissioners, Mr. Wright noted the Draft Inventory of Procedures will be posted on line to give the public the opportunity for comment; noted staff is considering the potential to have Council review staff waivers to add more eyes to each document; and noted that streamlining should give staff more time to work on projects because higher level discretionary decisions require more staff time to prepare reports, minutes, noticing, agendas, resolutions, and exhibits.

Jim Pechous, City Planner, advised that new language in code will also define triggers for him to use in reasoning and determining when a project should be bumped up in order to ensure code is fairly applied, including avoiding decisions based on “planning lore.” His decisions will include findings and show what policies the review is intended to preserve. If the staff waiver process is applied to more projects, he noted that the staff waiver process allows conditions to be added. He directs staff members to cite findings on waiver applications when they are approved. Mr. Pechous emphasized that the City Planner makes the ultimate decision on each staff waiver. Lastly, Mr. Pechous confirm that staff is working on a historic preservation presentation for discussion at a future study session.

Mr. Wright encouraged the Commissioners to forward their comments and questions to him via email.

Report received and filed. This item is continued to the next Study Session for further discussion.

COMMISSION COMMENT: None

RECESS - Recess until 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Darden, Chair

Attest:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Pechous", is written over a horizontal line.

Jim Pechous, City Planner