

CITY OF COTATI

MINUTES for the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission

DATE OF MEETING: Monday, August 15, 2011
TIME OF MEETING: 7:00 pm
PLACE OF MEETING: Cotati City Hall, City Council Chambers
201 West Sierra Avenue, Cotati, CA 94931

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Brady, Ford, Hancock and Ritter
Commissioners Absent: Moore
Staff Present: Parker, Harris, Pajon, Consultant Thompson and Ritchie

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. For the Regular Meeting of July 18, 2011

Motion:	Commissioner Hancock made a motion and Commissioner Brady seconded the motion to approve the July 18, 2011 minutes.
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Yes: 4 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 1

IV. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

V. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were no oral or written communications.

VI. MATTERS AT HAND

A. General Plan Update meeting #2: Housing & Open Space

Community Development Director Parker commented on the overall process and policy development. She spoke about distributing the packets earlier to allow additional time to review the information. She turned the time over to Beth Thompson and Ben Ritchie, Consultants with DeNovo Planning Group.

Beth Thompson, DeNovo Planning Group gave an overview of the topics to be covered in this presentation. These topics include:

- Guiding Principles
- Housing

- Open Space and Conservation

Commissioner Hancock confirmed with Consultant Thompson that the priorities were identified in the last meeting.

Consultant Thompson explained the process and what items they are looking to identify in this process.

Vice Chair Ritter said that his priorities include:

- housing for seniors
- affordability and location near housing and shopping

Vice Chair Ritter stated that he felt that those items were all addressed in the 2002 goals.

Commissioner Ford said that the housing goals were fine, but that transitional housing in the 2002 element seemed restrictive.

Commissioner Brady agreed with Commissioner Ford and recommended stronger implementation measures.

In response to Commissioner Ford's question on policy H11 (Housing Rehabilitation and Preservation Program), Consultant Thompson explained that the City had these funds available intermittently and on a limited basis.

Vice Chair Ritter asked if there are any issues in the housing element that have changed due to regulation changes.

Consultant Thompson said that they will make sure that the policies set in the General Plan are consistent with State law.

Commissioner Hancock stated that he wants to understand the changes between the current and new General Plan.

Consultant Thompson stated that the document will not be a redlined version due to a substantial amount of restructuring, but they will have information on previous policies.

Commissioner Ford said that he would like to see housing access to services as a larger goal.

Vice Chair Ritter asked the Commissioners if their priorities and concerns relating to housing have been addressed.

Commissioner Hancock stated that he was generally pleased with the priorities. He supports the process and understands that it has to be crafted into something that represents the framework for the City.

Consultant Thompson stated that she understands that the priorities that have been stated individually, collectively, and by the public. These items have been identified in the 2002 element with the exception of Commissioner Brady's and Commissioner Ford's concern with

transitional housing and connectivity of housing with transportation and services. These items will be addressed in the draft General Plan.

Vice Chair Ritter asked the Commissioners if they identified additional sites for affordable housing or a specific type of housing.

Consultant Thompson explained how the state reviews the availability of sites.

Commissioner Hancock said that he would like to see affordable housing close to town services. He said that generally all sites that are identified are okay for housing.

Commissioner Ford commented on the map and stated that the potential housing along Highway 116 makes it appear that we are pushing affordable housing to the outskirts of town.

Consultant Thompson explained that the map indicates where affordable housing could be located, not should be located.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 7:40 pm

Clifton Buck-Kauffman, 1039 Madrone Avenue, introduced himself and his history living in Cotati as well as his input in the last two General Plans. He expressed the importance of realizing that housing does not sustain a community and the importance of keeping Cotati rural. He thanked the Planning Commission for their service.

PUBLIC COMMENT closed 7:44 pm

Ben Ritchie, DeNovo Planning Group, gave a presentation on Open Space and Conservation.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 7:57 pm

Jenny Blaker, 8166 Arthur Street, submitted a letter dated August 15, 2011 to be entered into the record. She commented on key points regarding open space.

PUBLIC COMMENT closed at 8:07 pm

Consultants Thompson and Ritchie responded to Ms. Blaker's concerns and comments.

Community Development Director Parker stated that it would be appropriate to designate Falletti Ranch as Open Space.

Commissioner Ford stated that he wants to make sure that the uses on the Falletti property don't conflict with the definition of Open Space.

Consultant Ritchie explained that while crafting the General Plan, they can modify and customize the definition of Open Space to meet Cotati's needs.

Commissioner Hancock stated that it would be a good idea to define Open Space early on to ensure focused discussion. He said that while looking at the plan there seems to be 5 references to the central valley and northcoast region. He requested the consultant to carefully review

draft documents for these errors. He asked if they should be defining open space more specifically, as it seems to be very generic.

Consultant Thompson confirmed that it will be necessary to designate land as Open Space, identify its value to Cotati and define Open Space.

Commissioner Ritter asked about community separators and specifically how Gallo Vineyards could be protected in the future. He expressed concern about what would happen to the property if the winery were to move or go out of business. He asked if it could be designated as Open Space under either of those scenarios.

Consultant Thompson said that if lands are agriculturally developed it is best to leave them designated agricultural. She suggested including policies that would include City direction if a change of ownership occurs.

Commissioner Hancock said that he thought that the Gallo land was owned by the Open Space District.

Ms. Blaker said that she heard that the Open Space District purchased it and handed it over to Gallo.

Commissioner Hancock recommended identifying that if a property were to change owners then the City could want to change the land use designation.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 8:22 pm

Richard Sinehouse, 101 Ross Street, encouraged the Commission to have Open Space parcels next to each other instead of patches of it throughout the city.

PUBLIC COMMENT closed at 8:23 pm

Commissioner Ford asked how much influence the City has over development in the Sphere of Influence.

Consultant Ritchie responded to Commissioner Ford, explaining that legally, the County has jurisdiction. The County planning department would process a development application unless it came with an annexation request. The sphere of influence is the area that would likely be included in the city in the future. There seems to be cooperation in land use designations.

Community Development Director Parker added that the City is mandated to plan for the land uses in the sphere of influence. She said that it is important to fully evaluate lands within the Sphere during this process.

Commissioner Ford asked if, through the visioning workshops, the Sphere of Influence has been identified as the planning boundary.

Consultant Thompson explained that they will be coming back to the Commission with two maps, one with the summary of the comments they received as a result of the visioning workshops. The planning boundary has not been determined. The General Plan will not change

the Sphere of Influence, LAFCO must approve that. It is important that the Commission identifies a planning area that encompasses the current Sphere of Influence as well as area within the Urban Growth Boundary. She added that a planning area boundary will be established at the Land Use workshop.

Commissioner Ford stated that watershed boundaries make more sense as a planning boundary vs. man made features.

Commissioner Ritter asked if designating the County Yard as future Open Space can be done since it is located in the Sphere of Influence.

Consultant Thompson suggested that since the County owns the property, they should be consulted before the City requests that change.

Commissioner Ford said the current use is rural residential and it would be okay to be agriculture and rural residential.

Consultant Ritchie asked the Commission if they would consider the current land use map as effectively implementing that policy of keeping greenbelts, open space buffers and community separators. He said that this might be an item for discussion.

Commissioner Hancock said that the Sphere of Influence should follow watershed boundaries and make the planning boundary match the habitat and resources.

Commissioner Ford said that agriculture is a good community separator. He said that a belt of protected Open Space is not the right mechanism and that that the entire Laguna channel should be designated as Open Space. The focus of open space should be around natural resources.

Commissioner Hancock said that Cotati Creek is a very challenging area but it would make sense to designate this as Open Space.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 8:37 pm

Jenny Blaker said that looking at what we would like to see outside the city limits in the future, southeast of Cotati between City Limits and the Urban Growth boundary would be a good place to redesignate as open space.

PUBLIC COMMENT closed at 8:40 pm

Commissioner Hancock's top three concerns with open space are:

- Cotati Creek needs an active plan for restoration and protection
- need better water quality regulations
- habitat conservation

Commissioner Brady's top three concerns with open space are:

- water conservation program
- Laguna and Cotati Creek habitat preservation
- murals showcasing history

Commissioner Ford feels the 1998 General Plan feels like an antiquated approach. His comments include:

- focus on restoration and removing impacts rather than just avoiding new damage; be proactive
- water quality, habitat reservation and restoration
- provide for human interaction with nature in creek corridors

Vice Chair Ritter agrees with Commissioner Hancock's comments. He said that Cotati Creek is degraded. The plan should include more specific policies and remove ineffective and outdated policies.

Consultant Ritchie explained how this process works and what is brought back to the Commission at the end of the process before the General Plan is implemented.

Commissioner Hancock recommended moving from a "drain it and pave it" to a "slow it and spread it philosophy." He explained that we need to enhance and restore our resources and make them accessible.

Community Development Director Parker responded to Commissioner Hancock, stating that his concerns indicate a need to prioritize multi-use areas such as recreation, safety and water quality.

Consultant Ritchie reviewed the cultural segment of the General Plan Update.

Commissioner Ford asked what the legal requirements are with regards to the General Plan.

Consultant Thompson spoke about cultural and historical issues and how they can be strengthened.

Commissioner Hancock commented on the importance of maintaining sensitivity when working with local tribes.

Commissioner Brady asked if it would be beneficial to encourage people to apply for historic recognition.

Consultant Thompson responded, explaining that some people wouldn't want to because of the restrictions that come with a historical recognition, although there could be some funding available.

In response to Commissioner Ford, Consultant Thompson said that Cotati does not have any historic buildings on the State or Federal registers, although Cotati does have a historic landmark.

In response to Commissioner Ford, Consultant Thompson said that they could find out if any of the buildings in Table 9.1-11 are publicly owned.

Vice Chair Ritter said that Old Redwood Highway through Cotati is a historic route and could be included.

Consultant Thompson responded, suggesting that Cotati could have its own “Cotati Historical Designation,” which would recognize cultural resources.

PUBLIC COMMENT opened at 9:18 pm

Tom Scott, Oliver’s Market, recommended Prue Draper’s involvement with the historical portion of the plan.

Commissioner Ford said that Prue Draper was interviewed by the consultants in preparation for that segment of the plan.

Clifton Buck-Kauffman would like to see the General Plan focus on the importance of the cultural events in the community.

Commissioner Ford agreed with Mr. Buck-Kauffman.

VII. REPORTS BY STAFF

Upcoming Planning Commission Hearings:

September 6th

- Affordable housing project
- Master sign program

September 19, 2011

- General Plan Meeting

VIII. REPORTS BY COMMISSION

Commissioner Hancock will not be able to attend the September 19, 2011 meeting

MEETING ADJOURNED by Vice Chair Ritter at 9:22 pm

Keri L. Pajon
Planning Commission Secretary