

# City of Capitola Special Planning Commission Meeting Minutes



**Tuesday, July 23, 2024 – 5:00 PM**

City Council Chambers

420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

**Chairperson:** Courtney Christiansen

**Commissioners:** Paul Estey, Gerry Jensen, Susan Westman, Peter Wilk

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*All correspondence received prior to 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding a Planning Commission Meeting will be distributed to Commissioners to review prior to the meeting. Information submitted after 5 p.m. on that Wednesday may not have time to reach Commissioners, nor be read by them prior to consideration of an item.*

## **1. Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance**

Commissioners Courtney Christiansen, Paul Estey, Gerry Jensen, Susan Westman, Peter Wilk

## **2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda**

A. Additional Materials Item 5A - correspondence recieved

The Deputy City Clerk announced the additional materials received for tonight's agenda.

## **3. Oral Communications**

*Please review the section How to Provide Comments to the Planning Commission for instructions. Oral Communications allows time for members of the public to address the Planning Commission on any Consent Item on tonight's agenda or on any topic within the jurisdiction of the City that is not on the Public Hearing section of the Agenda. Members of the public may speak for up to three minutes unless otherwise specified by the Chair. Individuals may not speak more than once during Oral Communications. All speakers must address the entire legislative body and will not be permitted to engage in dialogue.*

Joe Heller.

Goran Klepic.

## **4. Planning Commission/Staff Comments**

Commissioner Wilk thanked those who commented on the Municipal Code, stating that the Commission has been working on the code for years, however, the public are those who live with the code, not necessarily the body who are working to amend it. He thanked those who participate in this public process, citing a few letters received for tonight's agenda, and asked the public to continue providing their input towards this topic.

## **5. Public Hearings**

*Public Hearings are intended to provide an opportunity for public discussion of each item listed as a Public Hearing. The following procedure is as follows: 1) Staff Presentation; 2) Planning Commission Questions; 3) Public Comment; 4) Planning Commission Deliberation; and 5) Decision.*

A. Citywide Zoning Code Update

**Project Description:** Application #24-0026 for future amendments to the Capitola Municipal Code Title 17: Zoning to introduce Housing Element implementation programs and clarify

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existing standards. The future Zoning Code amendments will impact the development standards and regulations for properties citywide. The Zoning Code is part of the City's Local Coastal Program (LCP) and amendments require certification by the California Coastal Commission prior to taking effect in the Coastal Zone.

**Recommended Action:** Provide feedback to staff on zoning discussion items and preliminary draft Zoning Code amendments.

Chair Christiansen introduced tonight's Item, and Ben Noble, planning and zoning consultant, presented the staff report. He gave a brief overview of tonight's presentation, and provided a look at the past and future schedule of Planning Commission meetings, City Council meetings, and other public hearings relevant to the Zoning Code amendments and Housing Element.

The first topic of discussion was the Design Review process, which includes public noticing, the staff/committee review, and the design review criteria.

Chair Christiansen opened the public comment for the first section of this Item.

Janine Roeth.

Chair Christiansen closed the public comment and opened the Commission deliberation. Commissioner Westman asked for clarification regarding her perception of the process happening before us tonight, which is that the noticing and review process would remain similar but add a design professional consultant to the review board/committee. Associate Planner Sesanto offered clarification about the review and noticing. Commissioner Wilk asked about the compensation of the proposed design professional consultant that would be added to the review committee and Director Herlihy provided that information. Vice Chair Jensen commented on the importance of noticing in making the public aware of the proposed and ongoing development projects, and Commissioner Estey agreed, stating that this improved noticing will help neighbors have actual conversations about the projects happening around them. Vice Chair Jensen gave some advice about re-establishing the former Arch and Site Committee, and proposed ways of encouraging/soliciting local architects to participate in that committee. There was a continued discussion about the review process and general support for a review committee that includes a local architect or designer and keeps costs low for the applicant.

Commissioner Wilk criticized certain objective standards found within the code, and used section M. Landscaping of the current code found in Chapter 17.120 DESIGN PERMIT as an example. The commission engaged in a debate around these supposed subjective standards, and consultant Noble offered a pathway towards amending the code to remove subjective standards and include more objective standards where possible.

Ben Noble moved on to the next topic of tonight's Item, lot consolidation, and continued with the staff report presentation.

Chair Christiansen opened this topic up for public comment.

Janine Roeth.

Chair Christiansen closed the public comment and brought the item back for Commission deliberation. The commission discussed increasing the height limit in the mixed use zone in order to accommodate better designed mixed-use developments. The commission generally agreed to increase the height limits.

Ben Noble moved on with presentation of the next topic - replacement housing. Commissioner Estey offered a suggestion to clean up the code section and Ben Noble agreed.

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We moved to the next topic - parking. Chair Christiansen asked about the possibility of having a qualified transit center in Capitola and director Herlihy confirmed that this is a goal for Santa Cruz Metro.

Chair Christiansen opened the public comment.

Janine Roeth.

Chair Christiansen closed the public hearing and opened the commission deliberation. Commissioners, consultant, and staff engaged in a discussion regarding parking requirements in the City. Commissioner Westman was concerned about decreasing parking requirements in an area where public transit is relatively lacking. The general consensus was that where we've gotten in terms of amending parking requirements is pretty good.

Next topic - special needs housing, including emergency shelters, low barrier navigation centers, residential care facilities, transitional housing, supportive housing and employee housing.

The presentation then moved on to a general discussion of the draft zoning code amendments as well as discussion topics to come at future meetings. The commission provided their feedback to staff and requests for specific item's that they would like to discuss at future meetings.

Consultant Noble moved on to the next topic, retail cannabis establishments. The current code poses significant challenges to potential cannabis businesses in the City. The Commission was asked for their input on amending the code to expand what's allowed under current code. The commission was in agreement to expand these restrictions.

Finally, the last topic discussed was office space in commercial districts. Staff and Consultant Noble proposed a suggestion to allow ground-floor offices in the C-R zone and asked for Commission feedback. There was a discussion about the original purpose of this aspect of the zoning code. The Commission suggested supporting and making it easy for retail and local offices to establish their businesses in Capitola, in order to protect the main economic engine of the City (sales tax) and support the employment and lifestyles of local residents by providing places in the city for them to shop and to work.

Associate Planner Sesanto provided an update regarding ADU's.

Ben Nobel concluded the presentation and provided a recap of what was discussed tonight.

**6. Director's Report**

None.

**7. Adjournment – Adjourn to the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission on [DATE] at 6:00 PM.**

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The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Signed by:  
  
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