



City of Sebastopol
Incorporated 1902
Planning Department
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PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING OF: **May 25, 2021**

UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF May 25, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The notice of the meeting was posted on May 20, 2021.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Fritz called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Fritz read a statement on meeting protocols.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Fritz, Vice Chair Oetinger (departed early, excused), and Commissioners Fernandez, Douch, Lindenbusch, and Kelley
Absent: None
Staff: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 11, 2021

Members of the Commission amended the minutes.

Vice Chair Oetinger moved to approve the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Fernandez seconded the motion.

VOTE:

AYES: Chair Fritz, Vice Chair Oetinger, and Commissioners Fernandez, and Kelley

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: Commissioners Douch and Lindenbusch

ABSENT: None

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA: None

5. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None

6. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS OR PRESENTATION(S):

A. EDEN HOUSING PRESENTATION – Eden Housing is an affordable housing developer and operator based in Hayward, California. They have partnered with cities throughout the Bay Area, including communities in Healdsburg, Petaluma, and Marin. Susie Criscimagna, Director of Real Estate Development and Nick Randall, a Sebastopol resident, will present.

Director Svanstrom provided an introduction.

Mr. Randall and Ms. Criscimagna presented.

The Commission asked questions of Mr. Randall, Ms. Criscimagna, and Director Svanstrom.

Chair Fritz opened public comment.

Tor Allen commented:

Have you considered all electric, net zero design strategies in your developments of late? I have noticed that other affordable housing developers are doing so and discovering the economic benefits of doing that. Also, here in Sebastopol, we have a climate action resolution and goals towards reducing emissions. I am curious about your experience with, specifically, all electric, no gas, net zero type of strategies in your current or upcoming projects.

Ms. Criscimagna responded:

We do have a few projects now in our pipeline that are either just starting construction or will be starting construction in the next year that are going to be all electric. It is a new foray for us. In the most recent past, in the last 10 years, or more, we would heat the water with gas but pretty much not have gas used in any other way, and we would have the cooking done with electricity. Now we are looking into all electric. It does not require too much of a change. It requires maybe slightly larger electric rooms, utility spaces, and slightly different equipment. As an industry, we are getting a little bit better understanding what it means to totally electrify, and we are seeing it starting to happen on our projects. We are doing a large-scale rehab project in East Palo Alto where everything is going to go all electric. We have a new construction building in the city of San Jose that is going to be all electric and we are excited about it too because of the good effect it will have on the greenhouse gas emissions for the project.

Mr. Randall commented:

Parenthetically, I will just mention that Eden has been a national leader in essentially green building and green implementation and management of affordable housing. We have had a robust green strategy for 30 years now. I do not know what percentage of our properties are supported by solar, but it is a relatively high percentage. We have a whole department in the company that is devoted to the green initiative.

Mr. Allen commented:

Thanks, a follow-up question to that. There is terminology. When you say all electric, you could mean all the appliances and no gas heating, but you may or may not have solar. The net zero implies that you have solar on site. It also reduces resident bills. There is

something to do with the equation of well, if you are reducing their electrical/utility bills, that they can afford a little bit more on the rent side which can help you pencil out the economics of your project. Is that a factor, or not really?

Ms. Criscimagna commented:

The rents that we are charging are usually set by the State, and really, they are set by HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) at the Federal level and are filtered through the State. Having a more efficient building does not necessarily reduce the rents that our residents are paying. It is more that the project becomes financially feasible so that it can exist, in a way, because of the cost savings that come from energy improvements or the lower operating costs. We charge rents based off of the set amounts that the State requires, and we provide a utility allowance as well.

Director Svanstrom shared the following question that she received from a Mr. Adams through Zoom chat:

This is a question about housing for the homeless. Mr. Randall indicated that you are were in the process of strategic planning. California, including Sonoma County, has a crisis of homelessness, which has become a public health crisis. Most cities simply rent hotel rooms to address this problem, but that is expensive and not sustainable. What major innovations do you think will help solve this permanent housing for the homeless problem in a systemic way? Such as, overcoming the high cost of labor, land, and materials, as well as time to build, permitting, zoning, etc.

Mr. Randall commented:

Eden is focused on longer term solutions to homelessness, as opposed to short-term, and temporary fixes. We do have properties that have a certain number of units that are designated for one program, or another, related to homelessness. I think the number of units specifically targeting the homeless is someplace in the neighborhood of 700-800 across our portfolio. I do not remember the number; it is always going up. In the Mill District project in Healdsburg, there is a set aside of 10 units for homeless. Eden's piece of the overall answer is the housing first approach which says, get people off the street with an address in a permanent supportive housing unit where they can receive services and have a sense of place and home for the long-term in this process, then they can graduate back into society as a whole. We are not in the business of doing temporary housing except in extreme cases where we have backed into it.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Fritz closed public comment.

Chair Fritz thanked Ms. Criscimagna and Mr. Randall for their time and presentation this evening and concluded the item.

Ms. Criscimagna and Mr. Randall thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present and answer questions.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

A. Appointment of Planning Commissioner to Zero Waste Subcommittee

Commissioner Lindenbusch moved to appoint Commissioner Fernandez to the Zero Waste Subcommittee as the Planning Commission liaison.

Commissioner Douch seconded the motion.

VOTE:

AYES: Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Fernandez, Douch, Lindenbusch, and Kelley

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Vice Chair Oetinger

Chair Fritz asked for subcommittee updates.

Luke Lindenbusch, Commissioner

The Climate Action Committee is meeting tomorrow. A couple of items that will be discussed include, a gas station upgrade proposal update and a process discussion of how to handle a potential ban on new gas stations, and we are also looking at a proposal to make our City's SmartMeter policy consistent with State law. That will take up the bulk of our time tomorrow. Working groups are still under way with a variety of activities. Our Chair, Kenna Lee, presented to the City Council at last weeks meeting on some of the happenings of the Committee itself and that will become somewhat of a recurring quarterly report from a handful of select committees in the City. I am not sure if the Planning Commission will be subject to that, but the Climate Action Committee certainly will. There are still several openings on the Climate Action Committee (one youth member, one environmental justice or equity member, and one business owner). There is also an opening for the Design Review Board and of course an opening for the Planning Commission. That is my update.

Paul Fritz, Chair

The Design Review subcommittee met last week for the first time. We are starting to kick that off. No real action yet. It was an introductory meeting where we talked about what we are going to be doing. Hopefully, in the next coming months we will have something to report.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Fritz concluded this item.

8. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Fritz adjourned the meeting at 8:28 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 08, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.