

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CITY OF LOS ALTOS, HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022 BEGINNING AT
7:00 P.M. HELD VIA VIDEO/TELECONFERENCE PER EXECUTIVE ORDER N-29-20**

Per California Executive Order N-29-20, the Commission will meet via teleconference only. Members of the Public may call (650) 242-4929 to participate in the conference call (Meeting ID: 146 374 2409 or via the web at <https://meetings.ringcentral.com/j/1463742409>) Members of the Public may only comment during times allotted for public comments. Public testimony will be taken at the direction of the Commission Chair and members of the public may only comment during times allotted for public comments. Members of the public are also encouraged to submit written testimony prior to the meeting at PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov. Emails received prior to the meeting will be included in the public record.

ESTABLISH QUORUM

PRESENT: Chair Doran, Commissioners Ahi, Bodner, Roche, Steinle

ABSENT: Marek and Vice-Chair Mensinger

STAFF: Interim Planning Services Manager Golden and Associate Planner Liu

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Planning Commission Minutes

Approve minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 7, 2022.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Roche, seconded by Commissioner Bodner, the Commission recommended approval of the minutes from the April 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

The motion was approved (5-0) by the following vote:

AYES: Chair Doran Commissioners Ahi, Bodner, Roche, and Steinle

NOES:

ABSENT: Mensinger and Marek

Discussion

2. SB9 Joint Commission Subcommittee

STAFF PRESENTATION

Associate Planner Liu presented the staff report recommending Planning Commission establish a subcommittee to further evaluate the SB9 single-family residential standards.

COMMISSION QUESTIONS OF STAFF

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

Chair Doran closed the Public Comment period and Commission discussion proceeded.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Commissioner Ahi

- Questioned that if a joint subcommittee of Design Review Commission (DRC) and Planning Commission (PC) would be feasible since the philosophies between the DRC and the PC for SB9 are very different. He considers SB 9 an opportunity to provide an incentive for housing while DRC may not favor those incentives.
- Stated there are specific PC related scenarios such as double street frontage and street width that have not been looked at should be further evaluated.
- If the city is more restrictive, the state will come down on us.

Chair Doran

- Expressed that Commissioner Ahi is on the right track because the PC might have different views on SB9 than the DRC.

Commissioner Steinle

- The Council might have a reason to have both commissions have at least one meeting together as SB9 is one of the fundamental debates in the city. We should at least try to meet together as the PC's review is about land use and subdivisions and the DRC's job is the design of the house, even though both commissions may have a difference in opinions.
- Asked how much Los Altos residents can do through SB9 with the limited tools and resources since a majority of lots in the city are not normal in the city.

Chair Doran

- Asked Interim Planning Services Manager Golden how it would work if the PC did not have another public meeting with the DRC.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden answered that they would not necessarily have to have a joint meeting if the commissions decide to proceed separately. The Council directed staff to meet with commissions at least one study session and bring back their feedback. There was not specific action that the Commissions must meet together. The joint meeting was a recommendation from staff as staff thought there could be some collaboration between the two commissions. If there are some reconsiderations about how to move forward both together or separately, the PC can decide which way and staff will bring take any feedback to the Council.

Commissioner Roche

- Asked the Interim Planning Services Manager Golden where the original joint commission recommendation was from?

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden reinstated that the recommendation was from staff as staff thought there were some opportunities for both commissions to collaborate and bring back the feedback to the City Council.

Commissioner Bodner

- Has seen this come up with every new state law housing legislation that is passed.
- There are two thoughts on ways to approach these. One is protecting what we have now and finding ways to work around these state requirements and others that want to see how expansive they can build.
- We could present our thoughts on SB9 and have two different recommendations from both Commissions and give it to the City Council to choose the right direction with the advice of the City Attorney.

Chair Doran

- Asked for the Commissioner Bodner's clarification on whether she suggests they meet separately from the DRC, or we should all meet together with the DRC.

Commissioner Bodner

- Her suggestion is that if PC would meet with the DRC together. Each Commission should clearly identify their position, but she's not sure if it is possible to come to a happy medium.

Commissioner Ahi

- Disagreed with copying and pasting the R1 zoning standards to apply to the SB9 standards. It should be a new zone with new development standards.
- There are fundamental things that need to be discussed and not copied and pasted because the standards are not going to be able to be met by all lots.

Commissioner Steinle

- Agreed with Commissioner Ahi and sees SB9 as a hybrid.
- This is an opportunity for both commissions to work together as the first step and then present their different opinions to City Council.

Chair Doran

- It is hard to meet in a small subcommittee because you get very biased opinions with limited people.
- Would like to have an open public meeting to debate the hard issues and then present it to the City Council.
- Asked Steve if this was the right format to have the discussion.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden answered that there is no right or wrong pathway to move forward because the Council is just asking for their feedback. Again, it was staff's recommendation to meet in a subcommittee even if they choose just to discuss it among this commission. Small working groups can be more dynamic in scheduling meetings and making them public via virtual meetings and being transparent. Then the decision can be brought back to the full commission for a final recommendation to the City Council. It could also be put on another agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Ahi

- Suggested having SB9 on the PC agenda and giving PC's redlines on the proposed SB9 standards and sending them to City Council. Have the DRC do the same and Council can see the differences.

Chair Doran agreed with this idea.

Commissioner Bodner

- Asked staff if any cities have developed the standards already so we don't need to reinvent the wheel.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden said unlike other development standards, SB9 is interesting because the adoption allowed for the preservation of the City's existing characteristics based on the current design review findings and not by creating new more restrictive design standards. They are really objective design standards to further the existing goals.

Commissioner Steinle

- Noted that the adoption of the standards need to be in line with what SB9 exists to do. That is why the two commissions look at it differently.

Commissioner Ahi

- Bottom line is that a subdivision that the PC would normally see, they would no longer see.
- A lot is about how to fit the homes in with subdivision-related standards.

Chair Doran

- Suggested the PC do their own session regarding SB9 separately, redline the document after coming to an agreement, and sharing that with the DRC document to bring to Council. Not in favor of a subcommittee and should instead have all the Planning Commissioners meet together to discuss the key points and move forward.

Commissioner Steinle

- One other alternative, but he did not recommend, is having a Saturday retreat for the two Commissions to meet together.

Chair Doran asked if the PC would receive public comments during this process.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden said that are intent is to make this process as transparent as possible, so if members of the public want to provide feedback they can. If not a subcommittee, the item will be open to the Brown Act.

Chair Doran asked about the outlook on future meeting agenda items.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden answered that the draft Housing Element and a number of multi-family projects are coming forward, so it is hard to project a meeting date.

Chair Doran suggested making the SB9 standards a regular agenda item.

Chair Doran asked if a motion needed to be made.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden answered that the PC could reconsider a different way to move forward and provide input on more of the land use issues aligned with the goals of this commission, but not redlining each section of the adopted objective standards.

Commissioner Ahi said redlining may be too strong of a word. It would be adding their suggestions to the SB9 standards, providing their recommendations and point of view, but still in keeping with the framework of what already exists.

Commissioner Steinle confirmed that the PC can make recommendations on land use policy application to help shape our city and the Council's discussion.

Commissioner Roche agreed that both commissions have different purviews on SB9. Each commission should work on its own area and address them and provide to City Council. Don't know why they need to make redlines or comments unless some proposed regulations would overlap with the other commission's purview.

Char Doran asked if the next meeting agenda is light, if SB9 could be put onto the next meeting date.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden suggested a motion on how they would like to move forward.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Steinle, seconded by Commissioner Roche, the Commission recommends reconsideration of the decision to form a subcommittee and discuss the SB9 Standards with the DRC subcommittee and to agendize the SB9 Standards on the next available meeting per staff for discussion with the full Commission.

The motion was approved (5-0) by the following vote:

AYES: Chair Doran and Commissioners Ahi, Commissioner Bodner, Roche, and Steinle

NOES: None

ABSENT: Mensinger and Marek

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Commission Roche asked about City Council meeting assignments.

Interim Planning Services Manager Golden said he would look into how the rotation has been done in the past years.

Associate Planner Liu clarified that if there is an item that goes before the City Council that also went before the Planning Commission, they would like to have a PC representative at that meeting in case they have questions on the recommendation for the project.

Commissioner Bodner went over the protocol for Commission representation at the Council meetings from previous years.

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Doran adjourned the meeting at 7:59 PM.

Steve Golden
Interim Planning Services Manager