



HOUSING COMMISSION MINUTES For the Meeting of March 6, 2002

CALL TO ORDER

Mickie Winkler called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Administrative Building Main Conference Room.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Steve Bliss; Mickie Winkler, Vice-Chairperson;
Mary Ellen Murphy; Clarice O'Neal; Jane West

Members Absent: Wendy Brooke McPherson, Chairperson

Staff Present: Donald de la Pena, Director, Housing and Redevelopment
Gretchen Hillard, Housing and Redevelopment Manager

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS None

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Three applications have been received for the vacant position. A list of Housing Commissioner contact information was circulated for updating.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of February 6, 2002 Minutes The February 6, 2002 Minutes were approved as written. (M/S Winkler/Murphy 5-0)
2. Discussion of anti-predatory lending initiative by Robert Jones, Executive Director, EPA CAN DO.

Robert Jones and Sheila Burks introduced themselves. Robert Jones described a new initiative, the Community Home Ownership Program, which is aimed to assist homeowners who are victims of unscrupulous lenders who cause people to lose their homes. The program will provide financial literacy training and new, friendlier loans for victims of predatory lending. California Bank and Trust, a new bank in East Palo Alto, as well as CalFed will be lending partners. They are fine-tuning the course outline and marketing program. There will be a kickoff on April 1, to which the Housing Commissioners are invited. Sheila Burks described FannieMae's support for this pilot program.

The Commissioners directed staff to develop a memorandum in support of the initiative, and voted to support a proclamation for the initiation of the program.
(M/S Bliss/West 5-0)

3. Discussion of Council Action on Oak Grove Plaza.

The Commissioners discussed the City Council decision not to approve a contract to prepare an RFP for a developer for Oak Grove Plaza housing, in effect terminating the project. The Commissioners complimented Steve Bliss's presentation, but observed that the Council members appeared not to respond to it. One Commissioner observed that the target group became too narrow when the incomes were restricted to only 50% to 80% of median income.

Another noted that the opposition was mostly property owners, with some business owners, and that there was only one speaker in favor. Another suggested that it would have helped to point out that most other cities have developed some affordable housing in their downtowns.

4. Discussion of Alternative Sites and Approaches for Housing

The Commissioners conducted a discussion using a one-page outline that included "Options to Consider." It was observed that finding another site was difficult, and was a task under the preparation of the Housing Element. Finding another site and adjusting the zoning ordinance to encourage development of more housing were both considered desirable. Two options were considered less desirable, increasing the number of BMR units required and funding purchase of existing apartments to be rented at rates low to moderate income households can afford. The latter one was considered less desirable because it does not produce new units.

D. INFORMATION ITEMS

Two newspaper articles on Oak Grove Plaza housing, two newspaper articles on the San Mateo County Housing trust fund, a brochure entitled, "Belle haven Continues to Get Better" and memorandum from Assistant City Manager Audrey Seymour entitled "Bayfront Park Feasibility Study" were distributed to the Commissioners. An information flyer about University Park, a planned development including affordable apartments south of the downtown in Palo Alto was circulated.

1. Monthly Report on Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program for January 2002

All funds in the program are committed. County staff is investigating reimbursing funds when the City deposits them into a construction loan account at Washington Mutual, rather than waiting until they have been expended to the contractor. This would cover all the committed loans to date.

2. Minutes of Housing Loan Advisory Committee Meeting of February 27, 2002

Three loans were approved, plus the first Peace Officer Mortgage Assistance loan is in escrow.

E. ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m. by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Hillard
Housing and Redevelopment Manager