



## HOUSING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

February 6, 2008

5:30 p.m.

Administrative Building Conference Room, First Floor  
701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025-3483

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### CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Lasensky called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Administrative Building Conference Room.

### ROLL CALL

**Housing Commission Members Present:** Patricia Boyle, Don Brawner, Elza Keet, Elizabeth Lasensky (Chair), Carol Louchheim, Anne Moser.

**Housing Commission Members Absent:** Clarice O'Neal (Vice-Chair).

**Staff Present:** Douglas Frederick, Housing Manager; Megan Nee, Management Analyst.

**A. PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.

### B. BUSINESS ITEMS

#### 1. Senior Housing Needs Assessment Survey and Forums Update

Housing Manager Frederick provided an update on the Senior Housing Needs Assessment project. He reported that staff held four community forums in late January, all of which were poorly attended. In addition to staff and Housing Commissioners, attendees per meeting totaled three, one, zero, and eight. He also reported that approximately 50 surveys had been submitted so far. The Commission expressed concern at the low level of interest in the forums and surveys. Housing Manager Frederick said that staff advertised the forums and surveys well. He described staff's efforts to market the forums and surveys, which included the following: placing announcements on the City's website and on Peninsula Volunteers' website; distributing fliers to local public facilities such as City Hall, Burgess and Belle Haven Libraries, the Burgess Recreation Center, the Belle Haven Senior Center, and Menlo Park Little House; working with Peninsula Volunteers to distribute fliers to Peninsula Volunteers Meals on Wheels, Rosner House, Crane Place, and Partridge Place; distributing fliers to Glenwood Inn, Avenidas, as well as several local churches; and placement of ads in both the Almanac and on Public Access TV.

Housing Manager Frederick said that staff will run another ad in the Almanac that will just talk about the surveys since the forums are now over. He said that the deadline for the surveys will probably be the end of February. Management Analyst Nee added that the new Almanac ad is scheduled to run in the February 13<sup>th</sup> issue.

Commissioner Louchheim said that the survey was emailed to members of the local League of Women Voters chapter who live in Menlo Park. She said this should be about 30 members so we may get some surveys from them as well. Commissioner Boyle asked if we can do something with the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce and Housing Manager Frederick replied yes, we can. Commissioner Moser suggested staff contact local service clubs such as the Kiwanis Club. Avenidas is holding a Housing Conference at the end of February, Commissioner Boyle suggested. Commissioner Boyle also said that she had dropped off fliers at two Menlo Park churches: Holy Trinity and Menlo Park Presbyterian. Management Analyst Nee said that they have a Seniors Office at Menlo Park Presbyterian and Commissioner Boyle said that she will follow up with them. Chair Lasensky asked Housing Manager Frederick if staff will follow up on the Commission's suggestions for further outreach and he said yes.

## 2. Housing Element Discussion

Housing Manager Frederick reported that he has been attending informational/educational meetings about the Housing Element. Commissioner Louchheim said she had heard that State Housing Element law is now requiring jurisdictions to zone for a minimum density of 30 units per acre, which is based on population levels. Housing Manager Frederick confirmed this requirement and said that Menlo Park is not likely to have this level of density. Commissioner Brawner said that Menlo Park has just one site with this level of density and it is Glenwood Inn. Due to this density requirement, Housing Manager Frederick said, the Habitat for Humanity Terminal Avenue project will not be counted towards the lower income category of the Housing Element's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers. He said that Habitat's Terminal Avenue project will not meet the 30 units per acre standard required for consideration as lower income. Chair Lasensky asked if the Derry project will meet the State's density requirement. Housing Manager Frederick responded that it will not because it is less than 20 units per acre. He said he thinks it is 19 units per acre.

Housing Manager Frederick explained that another cause for concern is the possibility that if a developer proposes an affordable housing development and it is not zoned appropriately, the City cannot deny the development proposal. Commissioner Moser asked if this means that the State can override Menlo Park's zoning regulations. Housing Manager Frederick responded no, the State's rules may say that in such cases, a jurisdiction such as Menlo Park cannot turn the developer down. Commissioner Boyle said that the law is existing and the State is trying to figure out its implementation. She also volunteered to get information on Housing Element requirements for emergency housing. She said she thinks that the Palo Alto Veterans' Administration may meet Menlo Park's requirement for emergency housing.

## 3. Joint Meeting with Planning Commission

Housing Manager Frederick said that a joint meeting with the Planning Commission would need to be a special meeting and asked the Commission what it would like to discuss at such a meeting. Commissioner Boyle said for instance does the

Planning Commission know about the Housing Element requirement of 30 units per acre? Housing Manager Frederick said that he isn't sure. Commissioner Boyle said that she is also interested in any plans to re-do the General Plan. She added that many surrounding cities are revising their General Plans, in part to address the new Housing Element requirements. Commissioner Moser said that both Planning and Housing are involved in land use and it would be helpful to have a roundtable discussion about Menlo Park land use issues. Housing Manager Frederick said that, in part due to the uncertainty surrounding Housing Element issues, he thinks it is too early to have a joint meeting with the Planning Commission. He said that the first step will be to meet with staff when we know more. He added that until that time, anyone may go to a Planning Commission meeting and speak during the public comment period. Chair Lasensky concluded the discussion by saying that the Housing Commission will revisit this issue at a later time.

#### 4. Priorities to be Represented on the El Camino Real Steering Committee

Chair Lasensky, the Housing Commission representative on the El Camino Real Steering Committee, reported that the committee held its first meeting on the previous Wednesday, January 30. She said it was a joint meeting with the City Council, which gave the committee its parameters, and added that it was well attended by members of the public. Commissioner Boyle asked Chair Lasensky if she found out if the Housing Commission can appoint an alternate to the steering committee. Chair Lasensky said that she did and that the answer is no, we cannot appoint an alternate. She added that this morning there was a mobile tour of other cities but she was unable to attend. Some of the cities included Burlingame and San Carlos, she said.

Chair Lasensky told the Commission that downtown walking tours will be held this Saturday, February 9. The walking tours will consist of North and South segments. She added that there will be a speaker next Wednesday, February 13. She said she will email meeting and event information to Housing Manager Frederick who will forward it on to the Housing Commissioners. She encouraged Commissioners to attend public meetings and events. She also reported that the committee is conducting interviews with downtown businesses and stake holders.

Chair Lasensky then invited Commissioners to share ideas or items that they would like her to take to the steering committee. Commissioner Moser said that she thought the Brown Act required that such ideas go through staff. It was determined that this was not necessary for the present meeting, however, any ideas that Commissioners would like to share after the meeting should go through Housing Manager Frederick. Chair Lasensky clarified that the Commission will not be voting on these ideas; she will only be forwarding Commissioners' individual ideas on to the steering committee.

Commissioner Moser had the following five suggestions for the El Camino Real Steering Committee:

- a). Encourage revenue generating businesses.
- b). Affordable, transit oriented housing preferably on the West side of El Camino.

- c). Trade of height for set-backs; angular placement of buildings such as the Scwab building.
- d). Create service road/alley parallel to train tracks with connections at Cambridge, Middle, Roble, and Ravenswood to provide access to parking, deliveries, etc., diminishing congestion on El Camino.
- e). Create pedestrian/bike tunnel/overpass linking Linfield area to West side.

Commissioner Brawner had the following one suggestion:

- a). For Stanford owned properties, uses should be primarily retail and/or revenue generating.

Commissioner Brawner also commented that Commissioner Moser's idea for a pedestrian/bike tunnel or overpass was proposed in 1998 and the Linfield neighborhood fought it.

Commissioner Boyle had the following three suggestions:

- a). Density and height bonuses should be given along with set-backs and some trees that gives you a visually beautiful community. Design is key.
- b). Stop wasting space and land for cars.
- c). Create a broader mix of commercial and have more mixed use development.

Commissioner Louchheim added that she liked the suggestions offered so far. She said she would like to see mixed use that includes housing. She also said that El Camino is not a good place for a whole lot of offices and to keep in mind our interest in senior housing.

Chair Lasensky thanked the Commissioners for their input. In conclusion, Commissioners suggested that another issue is public transportation to get to shopping on El Camino. Commissioner Moser commented that Menlo Park used to have a lovely bus system that went to many places including Sharon Heights.

## 5. Approval of January 9, 2008 Minutes

M/S Boyle/Moser to approve the January 9, 2008 minutes as presented; 4-0-2 with Commissioners Louchheim and Keet abstaining.

## C. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 1. Update on Housing Activity (Report from Staff)

Housing Manager Frederick reported that the California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA), the first mortgage holder, is foreclosing on a one-bedroom BMR unit at the Merrill Street development. He said that in order to stop the foreclosure process the City has brought the borrower's loan with CalHFA current. The City will then foreclose on the BMR unit itself, in order to keep it in the BMR Program and thereby preserve its affordability. He said that the City Attorney is currently looking into the foreclosure process. Commissioner Brawner asked if the City owns any BMR units

and Housing Manager Frederick said we do not. He said the BMR unit will be resold to another person on the BMR Waiting List.

2. Report from the Chair

Chair Lasensky reported that, along with Housing Manager Frederick, she had attended the recent Housing Element meeting. Commissioners Boyle and Moser added that they had also attended the meeting. Chair Lasensky said she had been surprised to learn about the State's 30 units per acre requirement. She also said she learned that Menlo Park may be able to utilize demographic data prepared by the County for the demographic part of the Housing Element. Housing Manager Frederick commented that he is not sure that the California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) will allow us to use demographic data prepared by and for the County as part of our Housing Element.

3. Commission Member Reports

None.

**D. INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Monthly Report on the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program for December 2007.

The Commissioners accepted the report. Commissioner Boyle said she found the report very informative and thanked Housing Manager Frederick for preparing it.

2. Chair Lasensky brought it to the Commissioners attention that the July Housing Commission meeting is on July 9 rather than July 2 (due to the July 4 holiday).

**E. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Nee  
Management Analyst