



REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MONDAY, JULY 28, 2025 - MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER - The Regular Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Chair Jeffrey Harlan at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG - Vice Chair Zich led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Jeffrey Harlan, Vice Chair Jon Zich, Commissioner Angely Andrade, Commissioner Robert Dickson, Commissioner David Martinez, Commissioner Johnny Rojas

Absent: Commissioner Karen Klepack

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:

Cynthia McDonald urged the Commission to uphold accountability and transparency, especially considering recent allegations involving city leadership. She emphasized that silence from officials erodes public trust and that clear justification for decisions is essential to good governance.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Martinez asked planning staff for an update on when the ADU template plans will be available, noting that the website's timeline of "early 2025" has passed. He also raised a concern that the City Council may have made a major amendment to the Victoria Place project, which could require Planning Commission review under Municipal Code Section 13-29(h)(2). Finally, he promoted upcoming community events and expressed appreciation for the strong public support shown toward the Latino community in response to recent comments.

Commissioner Dickson shared his appreciation for the city's summer events, especially the open house and concerts in the park, encouraging the public to attend. He mentioned volunteering at the fair and praised the concerts at the Pacific

Amphitheater. Lastly, he suggested gathering public feedback on the TESSA system to address any user frustrations more proactively, based on his own experience and improvements after working with staff.

Commissioner Andrade highlighted an upcoming job fair on July 30 at the new Goodwill on Harbor Boulevard, encouraging local residents to attend for potential on-the-spot job offers. She gave a big shoutout to IKEA for hosting the annual Newport-Mesa backpack drive and partnering with Costa Mesa Unidos and Councilmember Arlis Reynolds to collect community donations for students and families in need. Andrade encouraged the public to participate by donating essentials and nonperishable items at IKEA to support struggling families across the city.

Vice Chair Zich expressed concern about a recurring approval condition that allows residential infill projects to raise the finished grade by 30 inches and then add six-foot walls, resulting in excessively tall and unattractive barriers. Using the Miraval developments in Mesa Verde as an example, he showed slides of walls reaching over 10 feet high, with unsafe sidewalk conditions and unfinished block surfaces. He urged the Commission to address this issue in the upcoming code revisions to prevent similar situations in future projects.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. JULY 14, 2025 UNOFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ ZICH

MOTION: to approve Consent Calendar.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Klepack

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

ACTION:

Planning Commission approved consent calendar items.

-----**END OF CONSENT CALENDAR**-----

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT PCUP-25-0007 TO OPERATE AN ANIMAL KENNELING FACILITY WITH ANCILLARY VETERINARY SERVICES ("PRICELESS PETS") AT 126 EAST 16TH STREET

Presentation by Assistant Planner Jeffery Rimando.

Public comments:

Cara Stewart voiced strong support for the staff recommendation to improve shelter operations for Priceless Pets. She emphasized that the current facility cannot meet contractual requirements—particularly 24/7 veterinary care and shelter space—which limits both animal welfare and public service. Stewart advocated for separating the adoption center and shelter to enhance care, volunteer experience, and preparedness for a possible rise in surrendered animals due to economic pressures.

Matthew Carver expressed appreciation for Miss Price's mission but raised concerns about the proposed shelter's impact on his adjacent mental health facility. He explained that the center is a sanctuary focused on counseling and meditation, where peace and quiet are essential. His main concern is the potential noise from 50 dogs in a metal building with minimal sound insulation, which could disrupt the therapeutic environment for the clients.

Steve Schweimer voiced strong opposition to the proposed Priceless Pets kennel, citing major noise and environmental concerns for the 60 families living just 75 feet away. He criticized the lack of an acoustic study in the staff report, noting that kennel noise can far exceed the city's legal limits and that the vague soundproofing conditions provide no measurable safeguards. Schweimer urged the Commission to deny the CUP or, at the very least, adopt the specific noise-reducing conditions outlined in his submitted exhibit, emphasizing the lasting impact this facility could have on surrounding residents.

Motion Discussion:

Commissioners expressed shared concerns about potential noise and parking impacts from the proposed kennel but acknowledged that the project is located in a general industrial zone, where louder uses are allowed by right. They emphasized that the conditions of approval—particularly those related to noise mitigation—are strong, and the city has both a contractual interest in the facility and the tools to address noncompliance if issues arise. Overall, the Commissioners felt the operator has a positive track record, the facility serves a critical community need, and any future problems can be addressed through code enforcement and potential permit review.

MOVED/SECOND: DICKSON/ ANDRADE

MOTION: To move staff recommendation with one modification to Condition of Approval Number 8 to add "including clearly defined sound attenuation methods to ensure compliance with the city's noise standards."

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Klepack

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

ACTION:

The Planning Commission adopted a resolution to:

1. Find that the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 (Class 1) Existing Facilities; and
2. Approve Conditional Use Permit PCUP-25-0007 based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

2. A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL GIVE FIRST READING TO AN ORDINANCE TO AMENDING TITLE 13 OF THE COSTA MESA MUNICIPAL CODE PERTAINING TO MINOR TECHNICAL UPDATES

Presentation by Assistant Planner Caitlyn Curley and Froylan Garcia

Staff clarified during the presentation that the Amendment of the Shared Parking Requirements (Item No. 11) was not under consideration at this meeting. Specifically, staff stated: "Staff recommends the Planning Commission continue the Amendment of the Shared Parking Requirements (Item No. 11) to the August 25, 2025, Planning Commission Hearing." Therefore, the Planning Commission's scope of discussion and action did not include shared parking.

Public Comments:

None.

Motion Discussion:

Commissioner Martinez made a motion to approve the proposed zoning code updates with two modifications: (1) revise the group counseling parking requirement to four spaces per 1,000 square feet, and (2) clarify that the fencing regulation applies to residential zones without requiring a six-foot wall beyond the front yard setback. In addition, the Commissioner initially included several broader items for future zoning code consideration, including: eliminating minimum parking requirements; amending the definition of "density bonus" to align with state law; updating references to reflect a seven-member City Council; correcting formatting in Table 13-3.2; allowing valet parking through Minor Conditional Use Permits;

replacing “palm trees” with “palms”; removing “meandering sidewalks” as a multifamily amenity; and requiring drive-thru uses within pedestrian priority zones to obtain Conditional Use Permits.

Commissioners expressed concern that these additions exceeded the scope of the noticed agenda. Legal counsel and staff confirmed that such items must be brought forward through a separately noticed Planning Commission item. Following this discussion, Commissioner Martinez amended the motion to remove the broader items. Staff further noted that while these ideas may be revisited in the future, broader zoning reforms will need to be phased in over time due to limited staff capacity and the department’s current priorities, including the Housing Element and the Fairview Developmental Center Specific Plan. The Commission ultimately supported the motion with the two modifications and expressed interest in revisiting broader policy topics in a future study session.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ HARLAN

MOTION: To move staff recommendation with the following modifications:

1. Group Counseling Parking Requirement - Updated to require four parking spaces per 1,000 square feet.
2. Fencing Regulations in Residential Zones - Modified to remove the requirement for a six-foot block wall beyond the front yard setback in residential zones.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Klepack

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

ACTION:

The Planning Commission adopted a resolution to:

1. Find that the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.174 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15282(h), and
2. Recommend that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving Code Amendment PCTY-25-0001, amending Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Zoning Code) pertaining to minor technical updates.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

REPORT - PUBLIC WORKS - Mr. Yang reminded the Commission that an e-bike safety course will be held at Estancia High School on August 7 during the back-to-school registration event, led by Public Works staff and their consultant. A second course will be offered by OCTA on August 13 during another registration event. He concluded with no further updates.

REPORT - DEVELOPMENT SERVICES - Ms. Tai provided updates on several topics. She explained that the release of ADU prototype plans is delayed due to timing issues with local architects, but the plans will be posted for public use once approved. She clarified that changes made by the City Council to the 220 Victoria Place project—such as adding a pedestrian barrier and adjusting architectural orientation—were minor and did not warrant returning to the Planning Commission. She also announced outreach events for the “Neighborhoods Where We All Belong” rezoning initiative, with a citywide kickoff on July 30 and neighborhood-specific events in August and September. Lastly, she noted that Development Services will host a Climate Action Plan pop-up at the concerts in the park on August 6 to gather community input.

REPORT - ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY - None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:06 p.m.

Submitted by:

CARRIE TAI, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION