REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026 - MINUTES

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG – Commissioner Dickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL
Present: Chair Jeffrey Harlan, Commissioner Angely Andrade, Commissioner Robert Dickson, Commissioner David Martinez

Absent: Vice Chair Jon Zich, Commissioner Karen Klepack, Commissioner Johnny Rojas

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA: None.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Martinez announced several upcoming community events, including the Costa Mesa Sanitary District Eco Expo, a Chamber breakfast discussing Measure C, a Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue open house at Fire Station No. 4, and the Ketchum-Libolt Park playground ribbon-cutting.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. AUGUST 17, 2026 UNOFFICIAL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/DICKSON
MOTION: Move the item.
The motion carried by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Martinez
Nays: None
Absent: Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Rojas

Recused: None
Motion carried: 4-0

ACTION: The Planning Commission approved the minutes.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. **CITY OF COSTA MESA NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE WE ALL BELONG PROPOSED ZONING CODE AMENDMENT, ZONING MAP UPDATE, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF CITYWIDE MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS, AND REPEALING OF URBAN PLANS (PCTY-26-0004); AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS OF THE COSTA MESA GENERAL PLAN: CIRCULATION, COMMUNITY DESIGN, LAND USE, NOISE, AND OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION (PGPA-26-0002); AND AMENDMENTS TO THE NEWPORT BOULEVARD SPECIFIC PLAN (PSPA-26-0003), NORTH COSTA MESA SPECIFIC PLAN (PSPA-26-0004), AND ONE METRO WEST SPECIFIC PLAN (PSPA-26-0005); CERTIFY FINAL PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, ADOPT FINDINGS OF FACT, STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS AND MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM PURSUANT TO CEQA (CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING**

   Presentation by Senior Planner Michelle Halligan along with representatives from Dudek, City consultants.

   Commission questions and discussion:

   The Commission discussed flexibility in the Mixed-Use Overlay District (MUOD) regarding permitted uses, housing densities, and storage requirements, as well as potential CEQA implications of removing greenhouse gas mitigation measures. Staff clarified façade break standards and confirmed that the Commission could recommend an alternative motion to staff's proposed resolution.

   Public comments:

   Cynthia McDonald, Costa Mesa resident, expressed concerns that the proposed amendments prioritize development capacity over community priorities, including traffic, parks, infrastructure, affordability, and neighborhood character. She urged the Commission to support Alternative B, limiting the proposed changes to Housing Element sites while meeting the City's housing obligations.

   Jay Humphrey, Costa Mesa resident, expressed concerns about population growth, insufficient open space, building heights, and impacts on community

character. He urged the Commission to balance State housing requirements with the community's expressed priorities and needs.

Elizabeth Hansburg of People for Housing Orange County supported staff's recommendations, emphasizing the need for greater building heights and flexibility to make housing development feasible on both Housing Element and non-Housing Element sites.

George Sakioka thanked staff and the Commission for their extensive work and responsiveness to public input and encouraged moving the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong documents forward to the City Council.

A Zoom caller criticized the proposed changes to Measure K and the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong process, expressing concerns that they favor developers over residents. She urged greater emphasis on affordable housing, homeownership, parks, trees, and open space.

Zoom caller Betsy Dunmore supported the proposed changes, stating they would provide more housing opportunities and make development easier, while noting that increased development capacity does not mean all potential housing would actually be built.

MOTION: Commissioner Dickson moved to recommend Alternative B as the preferred alternative, limiting the proposed General Plan, Zoning Code, Objective Design Standards, and applicable Specific Plan amendments to Housing Element sites.

Motion failed due to a lack of a second.

Commissioner Martinez provided a new motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Andrade.

Commission comments after the motion:

The Commission discussed amendments to the MUOD, including greater flexibility for permitted uses and open space requirements. Commissioner Martinez withdrew Amendment No. 11 from his motion following discussion with the seconder concurring. Chair Harlan and Commissioner Andrade expressed support for staff's efforts, while Commissioner Dickson raised concerns about limited public review and extending the standards to all Measure K sites.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ANDRADE
MOTION: Move staff's recommendation with the following modifications:

1. Incorporate Attachment 3 amendments and the following selected Attachment 2 amendments:
    - Include: Nos. 1-6, 8-11, 15, 20-21, 28, and 31
    - Nos. 29-30: Use staff's alternative façade standards, including removal of the façade hierarchy section under No. 30.
    - Exclude: Nos. 7, 12-14, 16-19, 22-27, and 32
2. Direct staff to correct grammar, spelling, numbering, and other minor errors.
3. Include the provided Planning Commission attachment analyzing proposed changes (Attachment 2) in the City Council staff report so the Council receives the same information provided to the Planning Commission.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Martinez
Nays: Commissioner Dickson
Absent: Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Rojas
Recused: None
Motion carried: 3-1

ACTION: The Planning Commission adopted a resolution recommending that the City Council take the following actions, including:
1. Certify the PEIR and MMRP for the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong Zoning Updates and Housing Element Implementation.
2. Amend the General Plan, including the Land Use, Circulation, Community Design, Noise, and Open Space and Recreation Elements.
3. Amend the Zoning Code and Zoning Map, establish citywide multifamily residential and mixed-use Objective Design Standards, and repeal the Urban Plans.
4. Amend the Newport Boulevard, North Costa Mesa, and One Metro West Specific Plans.
5. Incorporate Attachment 3 amendments and the following selected Attachment 2 amendments:
    - Include: Nos. 1-6, 8-10, 15, 20-21, 28, and 31
    - Nos. 29-30: Use staff's alternative façade standards, including removal of the façade hierarchy section under No. 30.
    - Exclude: Nos. 7, 11-14, 16-19, 22-27, and 32
6. Direct staff to correct grammar, spelling, numbering, and other minor errors.
7. Include the omitted attachment/information in the City Council staff report so the Council receives the same information provided to the Planning Commission.

2. DESIGN REVIEW, TENTATIVE TRACT MAP NO. 19412, AND DENSITY BONUS (PDBR-25-0001) FOR A 21-UNIT SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT 396 EAST 21ST STREET

Three ex-parte communications reported. Commissioner Martinez and Commissioner Andrade visited the site and Chair Harlan spoke with the applicant.

Presentation by Senior Planner Victor Mendez.

Commission questions and discussion:

Commissioner Martinez and Chair Harlan sought clarification on the distinction between density bonus waivers and concessions and the legal criteria for denial. Staff confirmed that the applicant requested only waivers and that the findings for denying concessions did not apply. Commissioner Martinez also questioned certain waivers, including front setback parking.

Commission and applicant discussion:

Peter Zehnder, applicant, stated that he has read the conditions of approval and agrees to them as currently amended.

Commissioner Dickson sought assurance that the project's architectural design would be maintained. Commissioner Martinez questioned the previous redevelopment proposal and the placement of the affordable unit. Commissioner Andrade encouraged additional affordable housing opportunities, while the applicant cited financial and development challenges.

Public comments.

Heather Cuperman, Costa Mesa resident, expressed concerns about parking, traffic congestion, and pedestrian safety, requesting sidewalk improvements, additional safety measures, and parking mitigation during construction.

Moren Dolan Galves, neighboring resident, expressed concerns about construction noise, duration, environmental impacts, and disruptions to residents, as well as housing affordability and anticipated market-rate home prices.

Christy Gritzmocker, nearby resident, expressed concerns about increased density, traffic congestion, and pedestrian safety near schools, urging the Commission to consider existing conditions before approving the project.

A nearby resident and commercial real estate broker expressed concerns about the project's density, limited open space, and neighborhood impacts, recommending fewer units despite its attractive design.

Cynthia McDonald, Costa Mesa resident, expressed concerns about architectural compatibility, limited open space and landscaping, the loss of affordable housing, and the location and quality of the proposed affordable unit.

Elizabeth Hansburg supported the project, citing the need for diverse housing options, adequate garage parking, and increased housing opportunities to support families, schools, and the community.

A nearby resident acknowledged the need for housing but expressed concerns about density, parking, traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, and whether traffic studies adequately considered peak activity hours.

Commissioner questions and discussion continued:

Commissioner Martinez sought clarification on parking, landscaping, and construction requirements. Commissioner Dickson questioned the City's authority under state density bonus law, while Commissioner Andrade raised pedestrian safety and traffic concerns. Staff clarified project requirements, legal limitations, and allowable density.

Mr. Zehnder acknowledged traffic and density concerns, noting that the proposed 21-unit development would replace the former 28-unit mobile home park. He emphasized the site's proximity to schools and parks, which could encourage walking and reduce vehicle trips.

Commissioner comments after the motion:

Commissioners Martinez, Harlan, and Dickson expressed support for the project, citing its design, affordable housing opportunity, and compliance with state law, while acknowledging neighborhood concerns. Commissioner Andrade emphasized traffic safety, parking, and code enforcement issues and encouraged additional affordable housing opportunities.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/HARLAN
MOTION: Move staff's recommendation.
The motion carried by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Martinez
Nays: None
Absent: Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Rojas
Recused: None
Motion carried: 4-0

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 CEQA Guidelines section 15332 (In-Fill Development Projects); and,

2. Adopt a Resolution to taking the following actions:

   a. Design Review: Approve the Design Review for the development of the project including 21 dwelling units with a maximum height of 2 stories/31 feet, five inches;

   b. Tentative Tract Map No. 19412: Approve the Tentative Tract Map to subdivide the property into 21 single-family residential lots; and

   c. Density Bonus: Approve the density bonus request which will provide one very-low income unit, three density bonus units, and associated waivers for the development.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

1. **PUBLIC WORKS REPORT –** City Engineer Yang announced the completion of the Adams Avenue Safety and Mobility Project, upcoming Walk to School Day events, and the October 12 ribbon-cutting ceremony at Ketchum-Libolt Park.

   Commissioner Dickson requested a 10-year report on residential traffic citations to assess enforcement trends. Staff agreed to coordinate with the Police Department.

2. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT –** Director Tai encouraged residents to report illegal dumping through the City's 311 system, provided updates on the modified Fairview Developmental Center Specific Plan, and announced upcoming City Council hearings and the October 12 Planning Commission meeting.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT:

1. **CITY ATTORNEY REPORT –** Assistant City Attorney Preziosi provided an update on SB 1187, which amends SB 77 regarding translation requirements for public meetings. He explained that public agencies are no longer required to provide certain translation accommodations, including space for interpreters, use of personal translation equipment, or translated agendas and related website resources. He clarified that agencies may still voluntarily provide these services.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:59 p.m.

Submitted by:

CARRIE TAI, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION