



REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MONDAY, May 12, 2025 - MINUTES

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

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Jefferey Harlan, Vice Chair Jon Zich, Commissioner Angely Andrade, Commissioner Robert Dickson, Commissioner Karen Klepack, Commissioner David Martinez

Absent: Commissioner Johnny Rojas

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS: None.

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

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Klepack announced that May 17 is Love Costa Mesa Day and encouraged participation in volunteer projects throughout the City. She noted that a hosted lunch will follow the event.

Commissioner Andrade recognized May as Mental Health Awareness Month and highlighted a collaborative community event on May 31 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. featuring art therapy, hosted in partnership with IKEA, Hoag Mental Health Services, Orange County United Way's 211 hotline, and the local nonprofit Artist Safe Spaces. The free, family-friendly event will offer resources, prizes, and opportunities for engaging in mental health conversations.

Commissioner Dickson announced that Victoria Elementary School will host its Spring Fling event on Friday, May 17. He also highlighted the upcoming Love Costa Mesa Day, noting the City Council's recent discussion of the event, which will include participation from local restaurateurs and offer a great opportunity for community involvement.

Commissioner Martinez reported attending Cyclolrvine on May 3, noting high community turnout, and expressing optimism for Costa Mesa's future Pedestrian Safety Festival, which is included in next year's CIP. He also attended the Songs in the Canyon event at Canyon Park with Council Member Reynolds, where they discussed the city's pre-approved ADU program and encouraged its timely rollout. Martinez shared that the OCTA Board voted to remove the Garfield-Geisler bridge from the Master Plan of Arterial Highways. He announced a Community Preparedness Town Hall with Emergency Services Manager Dulce Hines on Thursday, May 15, at 5:30 p.m. at the Balearic Community Center. Lastly, he recognized the City Council's proclamation of May as National Bike Month, reflecting on her personal commitment to daily biking and advocating for safer, more accessible streets for all residents.

Vice Chair Zich commended Commissioner Martinez for his sincere advocacy and welcomed the members of the public in attendance. He also requested that staff begin including a simple, receive-and-file report listing all open planning applications—such as address, applicant, and date received—as a regular item on the consent calendar.

CONSENT CALENDAR: None.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. DESIGN REVIEW (PDES-24-0007), TENTATIVE TRACT MAP 19313, AND DENSITY BONUS AGREEMENT FOR A 6 UNIT SMALL LOT ORDINANCE DEVELOPMENT AT 215 AND 223 MESA DRIVE

The Chair announced the applicant requested a continuance and called for a motion.

Commissioner Martinez made a motion. Seconded by Commissioner Dickson.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ DICKSON

MOTION: to continue the item to a future date.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Zich, Commissioner Andrade,
Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Rojas

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

2. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT PA-23-05 FOR A NEW PRIVATE SCHOOL (K-12) WITHIN AN EXISTING CHURCH (MESA VERDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH) AT 1701 BAKER STREET

One ex-parte communication reported by Commissioner Martinez.

Justin Arios, Associate Planner presented the item.

Discussion ensued regarding several conditions of approval related to a proposed school use. Questions were raised about the enforcement and purpose of the mandatory video training for drivers, which staff confirmed would be managed by the applicant and serve as a preventative measure to reduce neighborhood circulation impacts. Clarification was requested on the right-turn-only signage, which will be permanent but is intended to apply primarily during school hours. It was also confirmed that students will not be permitted to drive. Concerns were expressed about the proposed circulation pattern and whether entry from Baker Street would be prohibited; staff explained the plan is designed for right-in/right-out movements, with drop-off only and no entry from Baker. A condition restricting off-site use of the parking lot without prior approval was discussed, with staff noting it was intended to manage future changes while allowing for existing agreements. Questions were also raised about the lack of a confirmed school tenant, and staff indicated that the site is being prepared for a future operator. Additional comments requested flexibility in conditions to allow occasional events and clarified the intent of staff arrival times to avoid conflicts with student drop-off, suggesting updates to ensure the conditions are practical and not overly restrictive.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing.

Discussion ensued between the Commission and the applicant regarding various operational, logistical, and planning aspects of the proposed school use. The applicant clarified that while no tenant has been identified, the proposed maximum enrollment of 120 students across all grade levels is meant to provide flexibility, with the actual school likely being much smaller. Circulation patterns were discussed, particularly access and drop-off routes, with the applicant confirming that parents would be directed to follow a designated path for student safety and traffic flow. Commissioners raised questions about signage enforcement, drop-off times, coordination with the existing preschool, and ongoing off-site parking agreements. The applicant confirmed they are amenable to conditions of approval as written, though open to revisions—such as limiting right-turn-only signage to weekdays. They also addressed concerns about potential nighttime events, school hours (with classes generally running 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.), and the possibility of offering scholarships. The discussion included potential collaboration with nearby

schools and clarification that the preschool does not follow the same circulation plan due to the age of students. Overall, the applicant expressed flexibility and appreciation for staff support throughout the process.

The Chair opened for Public Comment.

None.

The Chair closed Public Comment.

The Chair closed the Public Hearing.

The Chair called for a motion.

Commissioner Martinez made a motion. Seconded by Vice Chair Zich.

Discussion concluded with broad support for the project and motion. One commissioner confirmed visiting the site and noted the location's suitability and integration with nearby institutional uses. Commissioners expressed strong support for educational choice and flexibility in the proposed school's grade levels and structure. There was consensus to amend Condition #11 by removing the word "all," allowing for flexibility in staff arrival times without being overly restrictive. Commissioners emphasized the importance of not unintentionally limiting future school operations through overly specific language. Personal experiences with the site and similar schools were shared, highlighting the potential for successful operations in residential areas. Commissioners encouraged the applicant to consider ways to make the school accessible to more families in Costa Mesa, such as through scholarships or income-based options, to ensure educational equity.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ ZICH

MOTION: to move staff recommendation with the following changes:

1. Condition 11 was amended to remove the word "all," allowing flexibility in which staff are required to arrive by 7:30 a.m., specifically those necessary for implementing the circulation plan.
2. Condition 12 was clarified to specify that the right-turn-only restriction applies only on weekdays.
3. Condition 20 was updated to allow nighttime activity in the play yards only with authorization from the Director of Development Services.
4. Condition 25 was revised to state that any additional off-site uses of the parking lot require prior authorization from the Director of Development Services

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Rojas

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

The Chair explained the appeal process.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. GENERAL PLAN CONFORMITY RESOLUTION FOR THE CITY OF COSTA MESA ONE-YEAR (FY 2025-26) AND FIVE-YEAR (FY 2025-26 TO FY 2029-30) CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Director of Public Works Raja Sethuraman presented the item.

During the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) discussion, commissioners engaged staff in a detailed review of funding sources, project prioritization, and alignment with the General Plan. Questions were raised about why the guaranteed \$10 million from One Metro West was not included in the plan while the pending \$12 million bond was, with staff clarifying that only received funds are programmed. Commissioners also pointed out inconsistencies in how project categories were listed and recommended improvements for clarity and organization. Sustainability emerged as a recurring theme, with concerns over the absence of environmental projects in the near term; staff explained that many projects already incorporate sustainability principles, and future efforts will be guided by the forthcoming Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). Commissioners highlighted several General Plan policies related to pedestrian safety, transit access, open space, and community amenities like gardens and interpretive centers, asking how current projects support those goals. Staff confirmed that sidewalk and street improvements are prioritized based on inspections, with 20% of the city's sidewalks evaluated each year, and that funding for major trail lighting replacements, such as on the Joann Street bike path, is still being sought. Concerns about deferred maintenance and street-level issues were echoed, with calls for a more proactive, cohesive approach to addressing visible infrastructure needs. Staffing capacity was discussed, with staff noting that while the team is solid, consultant support is used to help manage large-scale or unexpected projects, including a recent \$15 million state grant. Commissioners expressed support for improved pedestrian and bicycle safety, especially for families, and reinforced the need

for investment in under-resourced areas like the Westside, including exploring opportunities for pocket parks and increased green space.

The Chair opened for Public Comment.

Speaker 1 urged the Commission to support consistent funding for the West Side Park Development project, noting that previous CIPs included annual allocations, but the current plan shows no funding for the next five years. They highlighted that the Parks Commission recently recommended setting aside \$250,000 annually for this purpose and asked the Planning Commission to reinforce that recommendation to City Council. The speaker emphasized that fulfilling this General Plan goal is overdue and could be funded through the Park Development Fund.

Larry Quarter, spoke about his ongoing concerns regarding the park's maintenance and funding. He noted past frustrations with lack of funding for basic improvements like trail markings and signage, and emphasized his belief that Fairview is a preserve, not a traditional park. He asked whether the Commission could help direct resources toward long-requested improvements and expressed interest in further engaging with the City to support Fairview Park's stewardship.

The Chair closed public comment.

Commissioner Martinez asked for clarification on the purpose and process of the resolution regarding General Plan Conformance. Staff explained that the resolution is a required Planning Commission determination under state law to confirm that the Capital Improvement Program aligns with the General Plan. While it is not a recommendation to the City Council, the Council will be notified of the Commission's action through the upcoming budget review process.

Commissioner Dickson made a motion seconded by Chair Harlan.

Commissioners expressed support for the motion to find the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in conformance with the General Plan, while acknowledging the limitations of the Planning Commission's scope in prioritizing specific projects. One commissioner emphasized the importance of civic engagement and directing feedback to City Council, particularly regarding long-standing community concerns such as Fairview Park and West Side Park development. Another noted the tension between verifying alignment of proposed projects with the General Plan versus questioning why certain General Plan goals—like community gardens—lack corresponding projects, suggesting future CIP documents include specific references to General Plan policies. A commissioner clarified that while the CIP is compliant,

improvements such as increased investment in West Side parks would better reflect the General Plan's intent.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ ZICH

MOTION: to move staff recommendation.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Rojas

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

REPORT - PUBLIC WORKS - None.

REPORT - DEVELOPMENT SERVICES - Scott Drapkin, Assistant Director of Economic and Development Services, announced his departure to become the Community Development Director for the City of Encinitas, marking his final Planning Commission meeting in Costa Mesa. Commissioners and staff praised Scott's professionalism, leadership, and significant contributions over the past four years, including work on key projects like the housing element, Fairview Development Center, One Metro West, and the city's inclusionary housing ordinance. Several commissioners shared personal gratitude for his guidance, responsiveness, and steady support, while Director Carrie Tai commended his ability to manage complex assignments, lead staff, and serve as a role model within the department. Scott's legacy was described as one of collaboration, problem-solving, and integrity, and he was warmly wished continued success in his new role.

REPORT - ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY - None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:08 PM

Submitted by:

CARRIE TAI, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION