



**REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION  
MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2025 - MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER** - The Regular Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Assistant Director Scott Drapkin at 6:03 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG** – Assistant Director Scott Drapkin led the Pledge of Allegiance

**OATH OF OFFICE FOR NEWLY APPOINTED PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

Assistant Director Scott Drapkin opened for Public Comment.

**Public Comment:**

Russell Toler endorsed Jeff Harlen for Chair, citing his experience, civility, and ability to keep meetings focused. He recommended David Martinez for Vice Chair, highlighting his dedication, research, and hands-on community involvement. Toler praised Martinez's proactive leadership, referencing his walkability study in SoBECA to improve pedestrian safety. He compared Martinez's approach to Councilmember Arlis Reynolds, emphasizing his productive problem-solving over social media debates. Toler concluded that both nominees would be effective leaders for the Planning Commission.

Brenda Green, City Clerk gave the oath of office to the new and reappointed Commissioners.

**ROLL CALL**

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

Absent: None

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

**Public Comment:**

Jim Fitzpatrick congratulated the newly appointed commissioners but criticized the inefficiency of past meetings, stating they take too long and lack sufficient agenda items. He emphasized the need for experienced leaders with parliamentary skills to ensure meetings run smoothly and productively. Fitzpatrick stressed that commissioners should

receive agendas earlier to allow better preparation and public engagement. He expressed strong support for Jeffrey Harlan and other experienced candidates, urging the commission to prioritize efficiency and public interest over personal preferences in selecting leadership.

Jimmy Vivar welcomed the new commissioners and emphasized that selecting a Chair and Vice Chair should be about balance, professionalism, and collaboration, rather than just policies. He expressed strong support for Commissioner Zich as Chair, citing his experience as Vice Chair and leadership qualities. Vivar also endorsed Commissioner Andrade for Vice Chair, praising her knowledge, skills, and balanced approach. He concluded by wishing the commission good luck in their decision-making.

## 1. Selection of Chairperson

Commissioner Martinez made motion to Nominate commissioner Harlan for Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Johnny Rojas.

Commissioner Robert Dickson made a substitute Motion to nominate Commissioner Zich for Chair. Motion failed due to lack of second.

**MOVED/SECOND:** Martinez/Rojas

**MOTION:** Appoint Commissioner Harlan as Planning Commission Chair

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Harlan, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: Commissioner Zich

Absent: None

Abstained: None

Motion carried: 6-1

## 2. Selection of Vice Chairperson

Commissioner Klepack made motion to Nominate Commissioner Zich for Vice Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Johnny Rojas.

**MOVED/SECOND:** Klepack/Rojas

**MOTION:** Appoint Commissioner Zich as Planning Commission Vice Chair

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Abstained: None

Motion carried: 7-0

The Chair Called for a break at 6:20pm.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 6:26pm

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

### **1. TESSA Update Presentation**

Presented by Mr. Dan Inloes, Economic Development Administrator.

The Planning Commission discussed the TESSA permitting system, focusing on efficiency, accessibility, and improvements. Commissioner Martinez suggested implementing features similar to Los Angeles' ZIMAS system to provide better zoning and state law eligibility overlays, which staff confirmed as a future possibility. Concerns were raised about permit processing times, with staff explaining that delays trigger an internal escalation process to supervisors, and that a 30% efficiency improvement was measured since TESSA's launch, though it does not account for permit type. Commissioners also questioned who primarily uses the system, with staff confirming a mix of contractors and property owners. Commissioner Dickson highlighted usability issues, such as difficulty finding the login page via Google, while others stressed the need for clearer public-facing performance metrics to reduce unnecessary status inquiries to staff. While the commission acknowledged TESSA's improvements, they urged further refinements in automation, user guidance, and accessibility to enhance the permitting experience for both applicants and city staff.

#### **Public Comment:**

Speaker one, shared concerns about permit processing issues with the TESSA system, emphasizing that their feedback was not a criticism of staff but rather the process itself. They reported that six out of six permits they recently pulled were not fully closed out, with three nearly leading to lawsuits and two risking property insurance loss. They were informed that approximately 400 permits remain unclosed, and the backlog may be even larger. Additionally, they highlighted that pulling a kitchen remodel permit in Costa Mesa takes around six months, compared to just one month in neighboring cities for a more complex permit. To address these inefficiencies, they proposed creating a task force of frequent users and staff to identify and resolve process issues.

Jim Fitzpatrick praised the commissioners' questioning but criticized the TESSA system for its inefficiencies and lack of essential information. He expressed frustration over poor communication, delayed responses to inquiries, and a lack of innovation in resolving bottlenecks. He noted that TESSA did not automatically update data from the previous system, forcing manual corrections, and argued that the system remains insufficient for business needs, leading to unnecessary public

records requests. Highlighting severe permitting delays, they cited an example where a 225-square-foot ADU permit took a year to approve, questioning how the city expects to meet housing goals. They urged officials to engage heavy users in a discussion to address process failures and streamline critical application steps.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS – MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:**

Russell Toler bid farewell to the Planning Commission, expressing gratitude to staff and fellow commissioners for their collaboration. He emphasized that the next four years will be critical as the city embarks on rezoning efforts that have been in discussion for years. He urged the commission to embrace change proactively rather than letting state mandates dictate Costa Mesa's growth. He assured them that he will remain engaged and continue sharing his ideas as a public commenter.

### **PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

Commissioner Rojas thanked Adam Ereth for his leadership and Commissioner Toler for his contributions and diverse perspectives. He also expressed solidarity with those affected by the recent fires in Southern California, noting his personal connection to the region. Rojas extended his thoughts and best wishes to those impacted, particularly in Los Angeles.

Commissioner Klepack welcomed the new commissioners and expressed excitement about serving alongside them. She thanked former Chair Ereth and Commissioner Toler for their leadership and support when she joined the commission. Klepack also expressed enthusiasm for the new leadership and the diverse perspectives they bring to the table.

Commissioner Andrade expressed enthusiasm for continuing to serve on the Planning Commission and for the future of Costa Mesa.

Commissioner Martinez announced upcoming city events, including a special City Council meeting on the Fairview Park Master Plan and the Talbert Park Master Plan community meeting he recently attended. He noted that multiple park planning efforts are underway and encouraged public participation, providing an email for feedback on the Talbert Regional Park Master Plan. Martinez welcomed the new commissioners and expressed gratitude to former Vice Chair Toler for his guidance and support when he first joined the commission.

Commissioner Dickson expressed enthusiasm for returning to the Planning Commission and working with his colleagues. He emphasized the diversity of Costa Mesa and how differing perspectives and collaboration contribute to a strong city. He highlighted the experience of Chair Harlan and Vice Chair Zich, recognizing their backgrounds as former city council members and long-serving commissioners. Dickson recalled a past statement about local control over development, stressing that the city must proactively shape its future rather than allow the state to dictate growth. He concluded by looking forward to productive discussions and decision-making on the commission.

Vice Chair Zich echoed Commissioner Dickson's sentiments about the diversity of the community and commission, expressing excitement for the next four years. He emphasized the importance of public engagement, stating he is disheartened when public attendance is low and encouraged when more residents participate. He hopes for greater community involvement in commission meetings to ensure a broad mix of perspectives is considered beyond election cycles. He concluded by appreciating his colleagues' comments and looking forward to working together.

Chair Harlan expressed gratitude to former Chair Adam Ereth and Commissioner Toler, praising their dedication, leadership, and contributions to the commission. He specifically highlighted Ereth's ability to run efficient and respectful meetings and Toler's thoughtfulness, knowledge, and creative ideas. Harlan thanked his colleagues for their confidence in electing him as Chair, noting that while he is comfortable in the council chambers, he looks forward to getting to know his fellow commissioners better. Emphasizing the importance of development and housing issues, he reaffirmed his commitment to running efficient meetings while ensuring that commissioners can also maintain work-life balance.

#### **CONSENT CALENDAR:**

##### **1. December 9, 2024 Unofficial Meeting Minutes**

#### **MOVED/SECOND: Zich/Andrade**

**MOTION:** Approve the Consent Calendar Item.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: None

Abstained: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Dickson

Motion carried: 5-0-2

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

The Chair called for a short break at 7:54pm.

The Chair called meeting back to order at 8:03pm.

#### **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

##### **1. PRESENTATION PERTAINING TO THE UPDATE OF THE CITY'S ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) PROVISIONS TO CONFORM WITH RECENT REVISIONS TO STATE LAW**

Presentation by Mr. Chris Yeager, Senior Planner.

The Planning Commission and staff discussed the impact and details of the proposed ADU ordinance, noting that ADUs made up one-third of new housing units approved in the city last year. Commissioners inquired about permitting delays, how often ADU applications fail to meet city requirements, and whether the city has gathered feedback from builders—staff confirmed that while feedback is received, it has not been formally solicited. The discussion also covered state vs. local regulations, with staff explaining that Costa Mesa’s ADU requirements are in some ways more permissive than state law, such as allowing greater structure heights and waiving certain parking requirements. Commissioners raised questions about specific ordinance sections, including Junior ADUs, live-work unit conversions, and the sale of ADUs as separate properties, with staff confirming they are reviewing legal and policy implications of new state laws like AB 1033. The Commission also discussed pre-approved ADU designs, with some advocating for prefabricated ADUs to be pre-vetted to streamline approvals. Staff stated they are working on gathering more data on ADU affordability and rental uses to help meet state-mandated housing goals (RHNA requirements). Overall, commissioners supported increased ADU flexibility but stressed the need for clearer processes, faster approvals, and more public awareness to make ADU development more accessible.

**Public Comments:**

Call in user, emphasized that ADUs are investments rather than purely family-use housing, as most homeowners build them for rental income. They supported reasonable building standards to ensure ADUs blend with existing homes, citing concerns over poorly designed units in Mesa Del Mar that disrupt neighborhood aesthetics. The speaker also noted the high costs of ADU construction, especially with prefabricated units, and pointed out challenges with county sewer approvals and Mesa Water Department records as hurdles to development. They urged the commission to maintain strong design standards to preserve the character of Costa Mesa while managing inevitable growth.

**OLD BUSINESS: NONE.**

**NEW BUSINESS: NONE.**

**REPORT - PUBLIC WORKS - NONE.**

**REPORT - DEVELOPMENT SERVICES - NONE.**

**REPORT - ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY - NONE.**

**ADJOURNMENT AT 7:43 PM**

Submitted by:

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SCOTT DRAPKIN, SECRETARY  
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION

DRAFT