



REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025 - 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 - 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 Karen Klepack, Commissioner David Martinez, Commissioner Johnny Rojas

Absent: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:

Jay Humphrey, thanked City staff for their continued work on the Fairview Park Master Plan Update, stating that it is a strong document that will guide the park's preservation for future generations. He also extended holiday well-wishes to the Commission, wishing them a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and said he looks forward to seeing them again after the new year.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Martinez announced that the Costa Mesa Sanitary District is accepting applications for its Citizens Advisory Committee and encouraged interested residents to apply. He also highlighted the return of the Snoopy House holiday event, noting it begins Friday evening and includes decorations, Santa, food, and performances. Additionally, he raised concerns about outdated City Council policies. Such as, procedures for General Plan amendments, FAR deviations, and the requirement for the Planning Commission to review and make recommendations on changes to the Fairview Park Master Plan. He noted that, under current policy, the Planning Commission may be seeing the Fairview Park Master Plan again unless Council policies are updated.

Commissioner Dickson encouraged residents to stay engaged by watching and participating in City Council and Planning Commission meetings, noting that doing so helps people better understand the city, their neighbors, and how decisions are made. He emphasized the importance of civic involvement despite low online viewership. He also commended Commissioner Martinez for his comments on the Fairview Park Master Plan update, particularly regarding the need for consistency with the General Plan and related documents like the Bike Plan and Active Transportation Plan. Commissioner Dickson expressed support for the Fairview Park Master Plan returning to the Planning Commission and reiterated its importance.

Commissioner Andrade expressed appreciation for City staff and her fellow Commissioners and extended holiday wishes to everyone, encouraging a season filled with gratitude.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Vice Chair Zich requested a brief discussion on Item Consent Calendar item No. 1, the unofficial meeting minutes from November 10, 2025. He complimented staff for accurately capturing his prior comments regarding Tessa, the gym on 17th Street, and his interest in seeing a list of active planning applications. He noted that he has not yet seen progress on those suggestions but appreciated that his comments were clearly reflected in the minutes and stated he would not raise the items again.

1. NOVEMBER 10, 2025, UNOFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

MOVED/SECOND: ZICH/ DICKSON

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 Klepack, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 7-0

ACTION:

Planning Commission approved consent calendar items.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. CALL TO REVIEW (PAPL-25-0004) ZONING ADMINISTRATOR APPROVAL OF A MINOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (PMCP-24-0029) FOR A NEW WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITY AT 2065 PLACENTIA AVENUE

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/DICKSON

MOTION: To continue the item to the March 23, 2026 Planning Commission meeting.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 7-0

ACTION:

The Planning Commission continued the item to the March 23, 2026 Planning Commission meeting.

2. DESIGN REVIEW (PDES-25-0002) AND TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP 2025-141 FOR A RESIDENTIAL SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION TO CREATE TWO PARCELS, EACH CONTAINING A NEW TWO-STORY DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE AND AN ATTACHED TWO-CAR GARAGE AT 2396 ORANGE AVENUE

One ex parte communication reported.

Presentation by Assistant Planner, Jeffery Rimando.

Rod J. Bear stated he read and agreed to the conditions if approval.

Public comments:

None.

Motion Discussion:

Commissioners praised the project as well designed, code-compliant, thoughtfully landscaped, and a significant improvement to the site and neighborhood. Commissioner Dickson suggested a friendly amendment regarding fencing materials, but the original motion remained unchanged. Commissioner Martinez expressed he liked the project but expressed

reservations about staff's interpretation of the Housing Crisis Act and could not support the project without confirmation it was not a protected unit. Commissioner Andrade supported the project, emphasizing the need for pathways from renting to homeownership. The discussion concluded with confirmation that the original motion stood as presented.

MOVED/SECOND: ZICH/DICKSON

MOTION: To move staff recommendations with a minor change to remove the words "or wood" to Condition of Approval 5.

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

Nays: Commissioner Martinez

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-1

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 15315 (Class 15) Minor Divisions of Land, and Section 15303 (Class 3) New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures. In addition, this project is statutorily exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.66 (Housing Development Projects); and
2. Approve Parcel Map No. 2025-141 and Design Review PDES-25-0002 based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

3. DESIGN REVIEW (PDES-25-0002) AND TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP 2025-141 FOR A RESIDENTIAL SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION TO CREATE TWO PARCELS, EACH CONTAINING A NEW TWO-STORY DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE AND AN ATTACHED TWO-CAR GARAGE AT 2396 ORANGE AVENUE

Presentation by Senior Planner, Chris Yeager.

Public comments:

None.

Motion Discussion:

Commissioners discussed a City initiated proposal to streamline small lot and two-unit split projects through a ministerial approval process, with some members strongly supporting the effort to speed housing production while ensuring compliance with state law and protection of any protected units. Supporters emphasized that small lot splits have historically been noncontroversial, make up a significant share of new housing, and could benefit from faster processing and potentially reduced fees. Opposing commissioners, however, argued that the change would improperly eliminate public notice, hearings, staff reports, and appeal rights, reducing transparency and public participation. They criticized reliance on SB 9, expressed concern about cutting the public out of local land-use decisions, and stated that the current process is not burdensome enough to justify ministerial approval. Both opposing commissioners concluded they could not support the proposal, urging City Council to consider alternative approaches that preserve public involvement.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/HARLAN

MOTION: To move staff recommendations a minor amendment to remove the words or fewer from the tentative parcel map row and table, 1320, 9c

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

Nays: Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Dickson

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 5-2

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 CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3); and
2. Recommend that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving Code Amendment PCTY-25-0007, amending Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Zoning Code) pertaining to two-unit Small Lot Ordinance projects.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. HOUSING ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION (NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE WE ALL BELONG) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Presentation by Senior Planner, Michelle Halligan and Cathy Tang Saez, Dudek.

Staff explained the study session was mainly to describe the proposed approach to rezoning Housing Element sites by creating a new section of the Mixed-Use Overlay District and invite general feedback. Staff described a new law that exempts most actions to implement housing elements from CEQA. The new law, SB 131, would likely allow the City to expedite the rezoning of Housing Element sites. Detailed amendments (including Zoning Code changes) would be presented to the Planning Commission in February. Commissioners then asked questions on key issues like whether Housing Element site property owners can opt out of residential and mixed-use standards (they can't without withdrawing from the Housing Element), what outreach was done, why Costa Mesa's buffer assumptions are higher than in other cities, and how "by-right" rules, affordability percentages, density caps, and how "no net loss" would work if sites don't build out as assumed. There was also a long back-and-forth about "sunsetting" urban plans and specific plans—staff said while the PDF urban plans be sunset, many rules must be carried into the Zoning Code because Measure Y limits changes on non-Measure K sites, and some areas are especially complex to untangle without creating nonconforming uses. Commissioners asked for clear mapping of what regulations would apply where, strong incentives (especially for deeper affordability), reduced parking mandates to lower costs and traffic, better integration with circulation/active transportation, and a practical "plan B" if the overlay approach is challenged—staff said the overlay strategy is being prepared with HCD input and provisions may adjust based on HCD guidance/case law.

Public comments:

Jay Humphrey questioned why the Measure K property list was provided only by parcel numbers rather than including street addresses, noting that this makes it difficult for the public to understand which properties are affected and suggesting the City provide both parcel numbers and addresses for clarity. He also discussed past General Plan allowances that could have supported significant housing growth without voter measures, citing a successful pre-Measure Y project as an example of for-sale housing built without a public vote. He expressed concern that current policies and in-lieu affordable housing fees incentivize market-rate rentals over homeownership. He concluded by thanking the Commission for their work and wishing everyone a happy holiday season.

Richard Huffman stated that the agenda report does a good job explaining a complex process and represents a step in the right direction, though it has some gaps. They discussed the Mixed-Use Overlay District approach, noting that while the Housing Element proposes higher-density residential zoning through overlays and specific plans, the Measure K map applies only to non-residential portions of existing overlays. As a result, some new high-density areas in existing residential zones would still require voter approval under Measure Y, which the speaker viewed positively to ensure informed community consensus. The

speaker also raised concerns about the lack of discussion regarding traffic and the Circulation Element, questioned how increased housing density would be accommodated, and suggested that voter-approved rezonings, such as potential residential use in the airport area, could be a viable and appropriate approach if supported by effective outreach and planning.

Cynthia McDonald raised concerns about the Notice of Preparation process, arguing that the short timeline limits meaningful public participation and transparency. She stated that the City is planning far beyond its RHNA requirement by rezoning for over 21,500 housing units and significant commercial development, despite acknowledging major environmental and infrastructure impacts, particularly to transportation, which she noted will not be fully addressed. She criticized Measure K for allowing broad land use changes with limited community oversight, questioned the City's housing approach as exclusionary rather than inclusionary, and said public outreach has been inadequate and unclear. She also emphasized that promised visioning under Measure K has not occurred and requested that Planning Commission presentations be posted online to comply with the Brown Act and ensure the public has equal access to information.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/ANDRADE

MOTION: To move staff recommendation.

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

Nays: Vice Chair Zich

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-1

ACTION:

The Planning Commission received staff presentation.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVE THE 2026 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING CALENDAR

Presentation by Economic and Development Services Director Carrie Tai.

Public comments:

None.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/HARLAN

MOTION: To move staff recommendation.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 7-0

ACTION:

The Planning Commission Approved the 2026 Planning Commission meeting calendar.

REPORT - PUBLIC WORKS - None.

REPORT - DEVELOPMENT SERVICES - Director Tai gave a quick update and look-ahead: the Ohio House appeal was on the City Council agenda but the applicant requested a continuance to February, so it will be heard next year; staff also reminded everyone about the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong EIR scoping meeting on Wednesday, December 10 at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers; and they noted that the first half of 2026 Planning Commission work will be heavily focused on major housing initiatives, including Neighborhoods and the Fairview Developmental Center Specific Plan, aimed at supporting a state-certified, compliant Housing Element. They closed by wishing everyone a restful holiday season and noting there's a lot of work ahead next year.

REPORT - ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY - None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:33 p.m.

Submitted by:

CARRIE TAI, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION