

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LANCASTER PLANNING COMMISSION

April 27, 2015

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CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Vose called the regular meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

INVOCATION

Vice Chairman Randy Hall.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Vose.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners, Coronado, Harvey, Malhi, Terracciano, Vice Chairman Hall, and Chairman Vose.

Absent: Commissioner Cook.

Also present were the Assistant City Attorney (Jocelyn Corbett), Planning Director (Brian Ludicke), City Engineer (Michelle Cantrell), Associate Planner (Chuen Ng), Assistant Planner (Chris Aune), Assistant Planner (Randie Davis), and Recording Secretary (Joy Reyes). There were approximately 4 people in the audience.

Continued Discussion of Potential Water Conservation Measures – New Construction

Chairman Vose opened the meeting at 4:02 p.m. to continue discussion from the previous regular meeting on the Potential Water Conservation Measures for New Construction.

Brian Ludicke stated that he and Chairman Vose will present to the City Council a report on the Planning Commission's deliberations and recommendations on these measures. He has prepared an additional memorandum that summarizes staff's perspective on the proposals for the Commission's consideration.

Chairman Vose noted the Commission did not have sufficient time to review the written report and the communication received from Tom DiPrima of KB Homes. The Commission took a few minutes to read the reports.

Brian Ludicke indicated the highest potential savings of water is not in new development where drought-tolerant landscaping is already available, but in existing homes that have turf. However, he reminded that the Commission was tasked with reviewing conservation proposals for new development. Staff's proposals are as follows:

Requirement to Use Recycled Water

- Explore the potential for new developments to utilize recycled water.
- Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council the adoption of a policy requiring the use of recycled water for new projects when feasible; however, allow evaluation of individual projects and the application of the requirement by the appropriate approval authority when warranted.

Prohibition of Turf/Lawns for New Residential Construction

- Establishing a complete prohibition on the use of turf in new residential development could easily be accomplished by an ordinance modification. The City's current landscaping requirements in the Municipal Code (LMC) limits turf to a maximum of 30% of the landscape area in residential developments.
- This proposal is highly dependent on the ultimate action regarding the use of on-site greywater systems. For example, the City may choose to allow some turf, if a homeowner has a greywater system, so that there is an on-site use for the greywater produced.

Requirement for Residential On-Site Greywater Systems

- Most important of the three proposals for the Commission to consider.
- The memorandum provides a summary of information Bob Hitchner presented at the last meeting, as well as staff's discussion with the Building Industry Association (BIA) and Tom DiPrima on cost, capability and availability on a commercial basis; these systems are not widely available commercially.
- Access to onsite greywater systems would be difficult if an existing home is not dual-plumbed; retrofitting it after it is constructed is not feasible. The cost to dual-plumb a house, and provide the necessary electrical connections and structural modifications to the house foundation (necessary if the recycling tanks are installed into the ground adjacent to the house) and make it "recycle ready", is approximately \$1,500.
- Primary use of this recycled water is irrigation.
- A mandate for increase in cost could potentially affect market viability of housing.
- The City may consider offering modified incentives for dual-plumbing through the Better Built Home program.

Chairman Vose briefed the Commission on his recent visit to the onsite greywater systems project in El Dorado Hills.

Brian Ludicke indicated that if the City were to eliminate turf/lawn for new residential development, allowing some provisions for homeowners who install onsite greywater systems would provide them the irrigation (recycled) water for turf, as opposed to using potable water.

Chairman Vose posed the question on whether homeowners with installed greywater system would still be required to meet the 36% water conservation proposed by the State of California.

Discussion ensued on the Better Built Home program.

Addressing Commissioner Harvey's question, Brian Ludicke stated a new home buyer would have to pay upfront for dual-plumbing, as this is not recognized in the appraisal process as an added value to the purchase of the home.

Commissioner Terracciano commented there is no industry standard for plumbing and electrical for these systems. He provided a brief overview on the different types of realty financing and the appraisal process.

Chairman Vose opened that one way to reach the conservation mandate is for the City to consider programs that offer incentives for conservation in existing homes. He stated statistics show that existing homes use 50% more water than new construction.

City Engineer Michelle Cantrell indicated that the City Park, the University Center, and the Kaiser facility are connected to the greywater systems.

Guest speaker Christine Rangel, Building Industry Association representative, acknowledged Tom DiPrima's (KB Homes) correspondence on this subject, and reiterated the point of this discussion is to conserve water, as Chairman Vose had indicated. She voiced concerns from the BIA on the proposed permit and planning fees, and added that it is not economically viable for the builders. Christine Rangel addressed some of the issues raised by the Commissioners.

The Commission deliberated on each of the three proposals. The following key issues were discussed:

- Does it make economic sense for any mandate to builders on new constructions?
- Recycled water not used for irrigation or other on-site uses is discharged to the sewer system.
- On home financing, the less down-payment money the consumer places, the more the bank scrutinizes the appraisals.
- Impact fees and other miscellaneous government fees can affect cost of new homes.
- There is no significant gain in water conservation by prohibiting turf, and this is dependent upon the mandate of dual-plumbing for installation of greywater systems.
- Better Built Home Program and other incentive programs in place.

Commissioner Coronado left during the meeting and was absent for the votes.

It was moved by Vice Chair Hall and seconded by Commissioner Harvey to include a statement of policy for individual projects for use of recycled water to be reviewed on a case by case basis. Motion carried with the following vote (5-0-0-0-2):

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| AYES: | Harvey, Malhi, Terracciano, Hall and Vose. |
| NOES: | None. |
| ABSTAIN: | None. |
| RECUSED: | None. |
| ABSENT: | Cook and Coronado. |

Speaker Alisha Semchuck inquired on the level of treatment for the greywater systems recycled water, to which Acting Chief Building Official Warren Bennett responded.

It was moved by Commissioner Harvey and seconded by Commissioner Malhi to *not* mandate dual-plumbing for installation of greywater systems in new constructions.

AYES: Harvey, Malhi, Terracciano, Hall and Vose.
 NOES: None.
 ABSTAIN: None.
 RECUSED: None.
 ABSENT: Cook and Coronado.

It was moved by Vice Chair Hall to prohibit installation of turf/lawns on the front and back yards for new constructions, allowing only xeriscape. Motion failed with a lack of second.

Brian Ludicke stated an analysis was prepared by the Assistant City Attorney Jocelyn Corbett, at the request of former Public Works Director Robert Neal, with regards to water conservation in existing homes. This analysis along with a report will be presented to the City Council at their next meeting. Further discussion on the Better Built Home program ensued.

Commissioner Harvey expressed that the Commission did not recommend creating additional regulatory barriers that could prohibit growth in the City.

DIRECTOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

None.

COMMISSION AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR - NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Vose declared the meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m., to the Special Meeting for Agenda Review on Monday, May 11, 2015, at 5:30 p.m., in the Public Safety Conference Room, Lancaster City Hall.

JAMES D. VOSE, Chairman
 Lancaster Planning Commission

ATTEST:

BRIAN S. LUDICKE, Planning Director
 City of Lancaster