

# Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Municipal Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors*

P.O. Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038

www.MidcoastCommunityCouncil.org

Chris Johnson . Lisa Ketcham . Dan Haggerty . Erin Deinzer . Dave Olson . Laura Stein . Claire Toutant

## Approved Minutes: Meeting on December 9, 2015, at GCSD

**Call to Order.** 7:00 PM

Councilmembers present: Dave Olson, Chris Johnson, Lisa Ketcham, Dan Haggerty, Laura Stein, Claire Toutant [Erin Deinzer arrived 7:25]

County Planner Dave Holbrook, and 3 members of project applicant team

~50 members of the public

**1. Board of Supervisors' Report:** none

**2. Public Comment & Announcements**

Steve McGrath, new General Manager for the Harbor District, introduced himself and said he is willing to attend MCC meetings & give a brief update.

**3. Consent Agenda:** approved 6-0 (Erin absent for vote).

Minutes for November 18, 2015

**4. Regular Agenda**

**a. Council Annual Reorganization** – The following new officers were nominated and elected 6-0 (Erin absent for vote). Following the elections, Chris chaired the meeting.

Chair: Chris Johnson

Vice Chair: Lisa Ketcham

Secretary: Dan Haggerty

Treasurer: Erin Deinzer

**b. (7:07) Vallemar Bluff Pre-Application Workshop (PLN2015-00380).** Proposal to construct 6 single-family residences on a 2.48-acre shoreline property with 7 parcels at Vallemar & Juliana, zoned RM/CZ.

Dave Holbrook, Project Planner: Will do written report summarizing workshop comments by topic/issue and will distribute to those who fill out County sign-in sheet. The application is not yet complete and the Applicant has the opportunity to revise the project after hearing workshop comments. Project requires Coastal Development Permit, Resource Management Permit, Grading Permit, Design Review Permit. After application is complete, next step will be Coastsides Design Review Committee hearing and recommendation. That is followed by the CEQA environmental document (Initial Study & Mitigated Negative Declaration) with 30-day public review/comment period. There will probably be two hearings at the Planning Commission, one for CEQA document, second for decision on project. Project is appealable to the Coastal Commission. Generally written comments received by County are forwarded to Renée Ananda, planner at CCC.

Owen Lawlor, Applicant (supported by 2 team members Larry Pearson, Architect, and Mark McGinty, environmental consultant):

Presentation and answers to questions:

Mainly here to hear what you folks have to say. Goal is to develop a project that is consistent with LCP and county ordinances. Regarding ownership of parcels, he is under contract representing all parcel owners. Smallest parcel is over 11,000 s/f, much larger than lots in surrounding neighborhood. Pervious paving will be used throughout, and runoff held to pre-development levels. No house is proposed for Lot C at this time. For the 3 driveways on Juliana, small bridges will cross over the drainage swale. Trees

on site are very unhealthy -- plan to keep the healthiest. Will design for largest likely earthquake at the site. Erosion report is based on most conservative erosion based on worst conditions. Irregular cliff erosion is caused mainly by runoff -- will redirect drainage to minimize loss of bluff. Goal is to keep public trail access as long as possible. Improved surface drainage could slow erosion and prolong life of trail. Agrees existing trail is very close, possibly crossing onto Lot C. Plan includes 42" grape-stake fence on west perimeter property line, but this is not set in stone. Tried to keep house size modest, ~3,000 s/f or less. Had to go taller (3 stories) because of RM zone setbacks (50' front, 20' side/back). Parking/driveways include 50-ft front setback, 2-car garages that do not face the street, 2 guest spaces that don't block garage, plus turnarounds.

Dave Holbrook re zoning density and parcel legality question: In 1986 Charnock bought 2 assessor parcels. Doesn't know ownership before that. Staff does not agree that RM/CZ zoning only allows one house on the 2.48 acre property, but prepared to do more research on the legal status of the parcels. Planning Director and County Counsel at the time of 1990 lot line adjustment decided to allow more lots. Parcel legality status is certainly not concrete.

Public Comment:

Toni Corelli, Botanist, CA Native Plan Society (letter posted): Showed slides of mapped Coastal Prairie habitat and rare plants found here including one discovered in 1901 and found nowhere else in the world. It is essential to save and protect this remnant Coastal Prairie grassland.

Lennie Roberts, Committee for Green Foothills (letter posted): This is remnant Coastal Prairie and a jewel of open space and coastline. Mature cypress trees offer winter raptor habitat. Sensitive habitat mapped by Toni is larger than in applicant's map. It doesn't matter that it is somewhat degraded -- under Coastal Act and County LCP it still must be protected. Parcel legality issues are covered in CGF letter. Coastal bluff erosion will limit the development. Estimated 50-year erosion line is an average, whereas southern portion erodes faster. Public access and visual qualities: Lot B,D,E will impact scenic views from Juliana and along the coastal trail. Hope the applicant will work with us to permanently protect the whole area on Toni's map, which will also allow the coastal trail to move inland as the bluff erodes. Offer to work with applicant and interested neighbors on revised project with fewer homes located outside that area.

James Lockhart, Moss Beach (letter posted): Reduce number of parcels as proposed by Lennie, protect Coastal Prairie as explained by Toni. Preserve trail easements. Comply with open space land use designation. Build houses on eastern portion of property.

Gail Erwin, Moss Beach: Supports points made by others. Coastal Prairie was disturbed by test well drilling 1998-2001. Rusty pipe of 3<sup>rd</sup> well, over 900 ft deep, was left open for people to throw trash until finally capped a few years ago.

Dede Histan, Moss Beach: Concur with points raised by Jim Lockhart and Lennie Roberts. Compromise of 3 or 4 houses along Vallemar would satisfy a lot of concerns.

Jack McCarthy, Moss Beach: Concur with community sentiment. Creative project, but stretches boundaries on every issue. Coastal views, access, sensitive habitat are important. Quotes MCC letter: *"Reconfiguring and reducing the number of parcels, locating the houses along Vallemar among mature cypress trees, and permanently protecting the sensitive habitats, public trail, and bluff retreat area through an enforceable restriction such as a Conservation Easement would allow advantageous use of the property without significant adverse impacts"*. Looking forward to good compromise.

George Maciel: Owns Lots B&G, would like to build and live there. Got involved with Owen in order to meet the challenges of development that would be acceptable for the community.

Ann Forrister, Moss Beach: Need compromise or we'll have a really long battle. Agrees with Lennie Roberts, Jim Lockhart, and much of what said here.

Mike Schelp, Moss Beach: Appreciates the development being considered as a whole. Need to investigate hazardous materials from past Navy presence, well drilling. Trail cannot be maintained any length of time if you put fence on property line. Site has been a great community asset -- people work on benches, bridge, having weddings. Every developed house takes away from permeable soil. Supports Lennie's proposal. Two houses is enough, with access from Vallemar.

Stephanie Sills, Moss Beach: Involved in local stewardship of the area, concerned with environment. Likes mixed neighborhood: houses old, new, large, small.

Dave Schorr, Half Moon Bay: Topic of most lively discussion in ongoing HMB General Plan update is bluff-top development -- exactly the kind of development nobody wants to see. This is an aggressive development project. If you want to make some money, scale back the project to avoid years of fight. Building is proposed right up to the coastal erosion setback line which is a literally moving target. What happens then? There will probably not be a lot of objection to having 2 or 3 houses on Vallemar.

Leonard Woren, El Granada: 6-house project makes a mockery of RM zoning -- developing it as R-1. Showed excerpts of 1976 SAM JPA contract first amendment (required by CCC) which does not allow sewer connection from parcels zoned RM. MWSD cannot legally provide sewer service to project.

Susan McCallick Case, Moss Beach: Hopes the development is done fairly for everyone. Avoid roof solar panels facing east or south due to reflection.

Carl May, Moss Beach: Bluff erosion occurs locally in large chunks when soil is saturated in extended storms. Any additional saturation resulting from development will make the situation worse. This property has rocky substrate to dissipate wave energy, but is still affected by heavy surf during king tides. Development and fenced property lines will cut off retreat for trail and rare plants.

Barbara Kossy, Moss Beach: Have been walking the trail about 18 years, and seen continual degradation due to erosion, people trampling, cypress trees moving in and taking over the prairie. Suggest compromise with 2 houses, and set up remediation for coastal prairie. Consider water gardens to capture/infiltrate runoff.

Bill Kehoe, Moss Beach: Agrees with other community members. Runoff affects Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). Sewer service/septic system is problematic. RM zoning is important -- this project is trying to make it R-1. No compromise.

Gary Naman, Moss Beach: Homes on Vallemar are all 1- & 2-story. Everyone is passionate about saving the bluff, and raptor habitat. You can see the eroding cracks in the bluff trail -- don't know how you mitigate that. Disappointed with prospect of development and hopes the special nature of this site will be taken into consideration and mitigated for.

Kris Liang, Moss Beach, CDRC community rep for Moss Beach, speaking as individual: Support Lennie's comments. Reduce to 2-3 homes, 2-story, move up to Vallemar. Be mindful of "walls of glass" that pose threats to birds. Protect dark skies.

John Sokowski, Moss Beach: Saw sign at trail re development and heart sank. Had assumed this most beautiful, easily accessible piece of Coastside was part of Marine Reserve. Reduce/restrict project as much as possible. Hate to see this beautiful piece of land removed from public access.

Lawrence Flath, Moss Beach: Prefers lower profile homes. Avoid any additional lighting.

Council:

Erin: Has never seen so many people show up on an issue in two years on Council. Project has huge impact -- people emotionally engaged. This Midcoast area calls to people. Once you've bought a home here you don't want to see the reasons that it calls to you disappear.

Dave: LCP requires 25-ft setback from the trail. Geologically, there is an unconsolidated layer under the site. Water seeps out of bluff face along distinct line. If development runoff is held on the property, that layer will supersaturate and accelerate erosion.

Dan: 27-yr resident -- cherishes these local spots.

Claire: Concerned with and questions erosion study estimate. Existing neighborhood is very diverse, everyone gets along -- this is important.

Lisa: Please stay for coastal armoring slides & MCC letter (draft posted since Sat).

Laura: Heartfelt thanks to everyone for coming.

Chris: Thanks, and appreciate respectful discussion. Cumulative effect of past development is that we're left with very small patch of coastal prairie. Concerned with cumulative effect of these 6 houses on this site.

Dave Holbrook: Meeting summary will be produced in a week or so. Will have to wait and see what applicant does next, as to project revisions or not. Can email him for questions or update. [dholbrook@smcgov.org](mailto:dholbrook@smcgov.org)

Dave Olson: Meeting summary will also be posted on MCC [Valleamar Bluff page](#).

### **Short break**

**c. (9:10) Historical Overview of Coastal Armoring to Protect Development in the Midcoast** – Lisa gave slide presentation (posted) on existing Midcoast shoreline armoring and current CCC policies prohibiting future armoring of new local development.

Barbara Kossy: Is there any move to remove that armoring? Do property owners have responsibility to clear public beach of fallen rocks?

--Lisa: County or Coastal Commission would have to make them do it. On Princeton shoreline property next to Mavericks Event Center, CCC required remediation/removal of riprap, but others took truckloads of those rocks down the street and illegally placed them on the beach in front of Romeo Packing in 2009 where they remain.

--Dave: Complaints to County/CCC have mostly not been dealt with.

Leonard Woren: Riprap always fails, at the ends, where more armoring is then needed.

Mirada Rd B&B illegally placed riprap along Medio Creek and County forced removal.

Lennie Roberts: Unpermitted riprap was removed below Ocean Colony golf course. CCC was going to force them to do it.

Dave Olson: CA Coastal Armoring Report 2015, posted on MCC site with tonight's meeting materials, makes the same points Leonard did. It was also acknowledged with Surfers Beach project that it would make Mirada West erode faster.

Stephanie Sills – Seismic activity in this area could affect Valleamar Bluff project.

Carl May: Lest everybody get too complacent about logic & good government to take care of these things, in the last couple years, CCC allowed armoring to protect expensive homes in La Jolla. With expensive homes on Valleamar Bluff, they might get permission to cement the bluffs.

**d. (9:30) Consideration of MCC comments on the proposed development of 6 houses on Valleamar Bluff (PLN2015-00380)** – (Ketcham). *Desired outcome:* Approve initial Council comments on the development proposal, considering past (1997- 2001) and current Council and community input.

Lisa presented the draft letter, posted since Saturday, which draws from research posted on Valleamar Bluff page, and two recent meetings with Lennie Roberts and group of Valleamar Bluff neighbors.

Erin: would like to add sentence from last erosion slide, which is eloquently put and says it all: *“The only way to save this beautiful shoreline is to give it plenty of space and allow it to retreat naturally.”* It's important to include the emotional investment that the community has in this issue.

Dave: likes the sentiment but not sure he could vote for it, due to *“only way”*, a prescriptive statement that facts may not support.

Lisa: Letter is addressed to the planner. Staff has to work off regulations, LCP policies.

The public workshop is the key opportunity to demonstrate directly to the applicant the broad base of public sentiment on this issue.

Public comment:

Bill Kehoe: There is no mention of sewer connection which is very important.

--Lisa feels that issue is best left to Sewer Authority and sanitary district.

Carl May: Subjective statement can be made such as, gist of community sentiment is...

Council:

Claire: would like some expression of the social/emotional importance to the community.

Laura: The letter should go as it stands.

Dave: Sees a strong reason to amend. Add sentence, "*Community has expressed strong desire to preserve this area as open space.*"

Lisa: That would be nice, but you need a buyer before you can do that. What I heard tonight was lots of requests to compromise, reduce the development.

Chris: This is the problem in trying to amend letter in real time -- accurately summarizing what happened here tonight. Supports letter as is for the purpose it was meant to serve. Let emotion have different arena -- directly from the public at the meeting.

Lisa: We asked for this workshop so the applicant could hear directly from the community, and the applicant is here listening now. The ask in the letter is, "*Reconfiguring and reducing the number of parcels, locating the houses along Vallemar among mature cypress trees, and permanently protecting the sensitive habitats, public trail, and bluff retreat area through an enforceable restriction such as a Conservation Easement would allow advantageous use of the property without significant adverse impacts.*"

Dan moved to approve the letter as written, Laura second. Dave withdrew his amendment. Motion approved 6-0-1 (Erin abstain)

Owen Lawlor (applicant): Thank you. Wish other communities had this type of forum to have this kind of useful, thoughtful discussion.

- e. (9:50) MCC support for County grant application (due Dec 18) for \$517,000 for design through construction of pedestrian crossing at lighthouse/16th St. –** (Calderón). The County recently learned that the crossing with flashing beacon at this location could not be included in the current Congestion & Safety Improvement Project. *Desired outcome:* Authorize MCC Chair to write and submit a letter of support for the grant application.

Chris: Nicholas requested this item but submitted no report and was unable to attend.

Lisa: The Final Preliminary Planning Study (PPS) released in Nov shows the preferred design for this location is Alternative 1, which is painted crosswalk with pedestrian-operated flashing beacons on each side of the road. The Congestion & Safety Improvement Project funding was applied for and approved by the TA (Transportation Authority) in 2012. At this late date, the TA says this style crossing is ineligible for this project funding. In the first set of design alternatives presented in June 2014, every Midcoast crossing was this style, with no median refuges. It would seem that none of those crossings would have qualified for this funding, which brings up more questions about this multi-year process. The County's original 2012 TA grant application stated raised median safe refuge for all crossings. The Hwy 1 Safety & Mobility Study and all MCC comment letters on this issue have supported raised median refuges for safe crossings. In considering design alternatives, unlike 2<sup>nd</sup> St and CA/Virginia, no reasonable alternative for Alt 1 was proposed at the lighthouse. This design returns us to the hazardous situation at that location before the left-turn lane was installed, forcing motorists to stop in the travel lane just past a curve, and risk getting rear-ended.

Dave: is strong proponent for crossing at that location, for Coastal Trail. Quite a few people cross there, probably one of four highest crossing points. Supports this, but also wants language in the motion to authorize the Chair to NOT write the letter if full details from Nicholas reveal something different than expected. Only alternative is a special meeting next week which he doesn't want to do.

Laura: not remembering ra-ra enthusiasm on the lighthouse crossing design, but mainly concerned now about the rushed process and lack of information.

Dave: True, community didn't say this location was top priority. County grouped it into Phase 1 based on \$3million PEER process limit.

Chris: Also doesn't like the rushed nature and lack of information, but the County is offering to do something for us. Consider the implications for MCC and the Midcoast if we don't support this application.

Erin: The person who wants this letter isn't here. There's a time limit and we're trying to figure this out without him.

Dave: Council as a whole did not envision crossing refuge at the lighthouse. There are 4 new members since this design process got underway.

Lisa moved: Authorize MCC Chair to write and submit a letter of support for the grant application. (Dan second)

Dave: amend the motion to say "authorize at the discretion of the Chair...".

Lisa: doesn't support that amendment.

Dave withdraws amendment.

Public comment: Leonard Woren: need median refuge

Laura: In terms of working with the County, I think you set a precedent – last minute, rushed decision with lack of info. We're being put in a position of doing it wrong.

Dan: Yes vote will encourage more 11th hour stuff in future. This essentially gives MCC approval for that design. We haven't seen tabulation of survey results. Not convinced this is what community wants, therefore will vote no.

Motion: Authorize MCC Chair to write and submit a letter of support for the grant application. Approved: 4-2-1 (Dan & Laura against, Lisa abstain)

**5. (10:19) Council Activity** – Correspondence received & meetings attended

**New Library** 22,000 s/f size approved by HMB City Council at meeting Dave attended. Many spoke to move the project forward, some disappointed by size reduction, others that it was still too big.

**HMB General Plan Update:** Dave attended synthesis session – As mentioned here tonight, open space is still very big issue. They abandoned transfer of development rights from PUD areas, saying it was premature to have brought it up.

**Mid-Peninsula Open Space District** is looking for citizens to be on Advisory Committee to determine how Measure AA money is spent. Application is on their website. (Dave)

**MWSD Recology rate increase** approved at meeting Erin attended – 48% increase affects ~1750 homes. 900 protest letters would have been needed to stop the increase, but only 46 were received.

**7<sup>th</sup> St fence:** Lisa reported Westerfield's conditional appeal to CCC has been officially withdrawn. DPW says after Westerfield removes the fence, DPW will install bollards, but won't give timeframe.

**CDRC:** Laura reported 3 applicant interviews are scheduled for Monday.

--Chris reported long meeting scheduled for Dec 10, starting at 11 AM, and including 2 triplexes in El Granada.

**Planning Permit applications:** Lisa summed up results of year's persistent effort to get consistent early planning referrals from County as hit or miss. For example, MCC would not have known about the Vallemar Bluff project in order to ask for Pre-Development Workshop if Lennie Roberts had not been contacted by the applicant and told Lisa about it. In order to keep a current/complete inventory of Midcoast planning permit applications, since the online permit site does not list PLN's numerically, you have to enter every permit number. Lisa did this for 2015 and put Midcoast projects into database to track.

**No-Parking Zones:** Dave reported on new applications for no-parking zones (west side Carlos in PO block, Columbus adjacent to Quarry Park, and Mirada Rd along bluff). DPW requested MCC comments by Dec 14 deadline – request received after tonight's agenda published. Dave asked for extension but hasn't heard back. Chris will follow up on status.

**7. Future Agendas:**

**Dec 23** – canceled due to holidays

**Jan 13** – Parallel Trail crossings, Sister Cities

**Adjourn** – 10:33 PM

Links:

[Meeting video by PCT](#)

[Meeting supporting documents](#)