



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2025, 6:30 PM
Amedee O. "Dick" Richards Jr. Council Chambers
1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, CA 91030**

CALL TO ORDER

A Regular Meeting of the South Pasadena Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Padilla on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held at 1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, California.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair: Lisa Padilla
Commissioners: Jason Claypool, Mark Gallatin, Arnold Swanborn

Commission Liaison: Mayor Pro Tem Sheila Rossi

City Staff

Present: Roxanne Diaz, Esq., Assistant City Attorney
Alison Becker, Acting Community Development Director
Robert (Dean) Flores, Acting Planning Manager
Lillian Estrada, Administrative Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved, 4-0.

DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS

Commissioner Swanborn spoke with the City Attorney regarding the last regular meeting. Chair Padilla spoke with members of the community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Public Comment – General (Non-Agenda Items)

None.

PRESENTATION

2. Library and Community Center Comprehensive Plan – Cathy Billings

Library Director Cathy Billings gave a PowerPoint presentation. Regarding the library and Community Center comprehensive plan, detailing the project's history, goals and community engagement efforts.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS

- 3. Minutes from the Special Meeting of January 28, 2025**
- 4. Minutes from the Regular Meeting of February 11, 2025**
- 5. Minutes from the Special Meeting of February 11, 2025**
- 6. Minutes from the Special Meeting of February 15, 2025**
- 7. Minutes from the Special Meeting of February 18, 2025**
- 8. Minutes from the Special Meeting of February 25, 2025**
- 9. Minutes from the Regular Meeting of March 11, 2025**
- 10. Minutes from the Special Meeting of March 18, 2025**

The Commissioners requested clarifications to Items 3, 6, 9 and 10, leading to amendments and approval of the Consent Calendar.

Approved, as amended, 4-0.

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING

- 11. Recommendation to City Council to adopt an ordinance establishing the Camino del Cielo Overlay Zoning District, amending the Zoning Code and Zoning Map to include the Camino del Cielo Overlay Zoning District located on Camino del Cielo, making findings to support the amendments, and finding the ordinance exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Receive the Staff Report and open the Public Hearing;
2. Take public testimony and Commissioner questions; and
3. Adopt a resolution recommending that the City Council:
 - a. Find the project exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Government Code Sections 65852.21(k) and 66411.7(n) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15303; and
 - b. Approve an ordinance adopting the Camino del Cielo Overlay Zoning District and amend the Zoning Code and map accordingly.

Staff Presentation:

City Attorney Roxanne Diaz, assisted by Associate Attorney Zachary Heinselman, presented the Ordinance and Settlement Agreement, explaining the project's history and the proposed development standards.

Questions for Staff:

The Commissioners discussed the maximum 51% FAR and whether the ministerial process envisioned impacted existing trees with regard to protected trees.

Public Comment:

Jennifer Abbott, the neighbor whose home is directly across the street from the project, expressed concerns about the project's impact on her property and the neighborhood.

Chair Padilla acknowledged the Commission's receipt of two (2) written public comments, Parts 1 and 2, from the Abbotts that have been posted on the City's website.

Commissioner Discussion:

The Commissioners discussed the project's compliance with the builder's remedy, the impact on tree preservation and the appropriateness of the proposed development standards.

Questions for Applicant:

Applicant's Representative Richard McDonald responded to the Commissioners' concerns.

Commissioner Discussion (Continued):

The Commissioners expressed concerns about the project's density and the potential removal of protected trees, seeking clarification from the City Attorney. The City Attorney confirmed the project's compliance with the Settlement Agreement and the requirement for a tree report to address protected trees.

Commissioner Swanborn remarked that he wholeheartedly agrees with the Abbotts.

Decision:

Commissioner Claypool moved, seconded by Commissioner Gallatin, to approve Agenda Item Number 11, a recommendation to City Council to adopt an ordinance establishing the Camino del Cielo Overlay Zoning District, amending the Zoning Code and Zoning Map to include the Camino del Cielo Overlay Zoning District located on Camino del Cielo, making findings to support the amendments, and

finding the ordinance exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and adopting the Resolution that is in the Agenda packet.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes: Claypool, Gallatin, Padilla
Noes: Swanborn
Abstentions: None

Motion carried, 3-1.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

12. Update from Subcommittee on Height and Development Standards with Commissioner Discussion

The Subcommittee (Commissioners Gallatin and Claypool) presented an update on their work on height and development standards. They directed a robust, thorough discussion, including open space, parking, setbacks, step backs, and landscape.

The Subcommittee analyzed the Zoning Code and Downtown Specific Plan, identifying development standards that impact building heights, using a spreadsheet format to organize the analysis, with recommendations for potential revisions to development standards. The Commissioners discussed the importance of prioritizing certain development standards and the need for collaboration with the City and consultants.

Mayor Pro Tem Rossi expressed concerns about the timeline for the project and the lack of performance delivery from the consultants. The City Attorney and Staff explained the need to demonstrate progress and the challenges of delaying the height work. The Commissioners discussed the importance of reviewing the consultants' work and ensuring it aligns with the City's goals and timelines. The need for a comprehensive understanding of the project's impact on the community and the importance of objective design standards were emphasized.

13. Review of March 26, 2025 Joint Study Session Action Items

Chair Padilla and Acting Director Becker discussed the need for a thorough briefing for the new City Manager. Acting Director Becker presented a map book created by the GIS consultant to provide an overview of Housing Element sites and inventory entitled *Housing Element Sites Inventory Map*, which provides an overview of proposed locations with densities and adding an additional layer for the Housing Element to keep track of vacant Single Family Zone sites.

Chair Padilla and Mayor Pro Tem Rossi expressed the need for clear rationale behind the chosen sites for higher densities.

The Commissioners and Mayor Pro Tem Rossi discussed traffic and infrastructure on Fremont and Huntington, the historic resources on Fair Oaks Avenue and the need for interdepartmental collaboration. Chair Padilla advocated for specific changes rather than unraveling the entire Zoning Map. Commissioner Claypool supported focusing on finishing the current project before revisiting it.

Acting Director Becker discussed making changes to the density profile in a spirited discussion regarding the mixed-use overlay and housing opportunity overlay.

14. Objective Development Standards – Initiation Discussion

Acting Director Becker suggested that because the subcommittee has been so successful in the vetting process, the Commission might consider establishing a second subcommittee to work with Staff to develop the scope of work for the objective development standards project. Chair Padilla agreed to consider the proposal and outline a scope of work, including a budget for the project. The Commissioners agreed to continue the discussion at the next meeting, with a focus on moving forward with the current project and addressing specific concerns.

ADMINISTRATION

15. Comments from City Council Liaison

Mayor Pro Tem Rossi provided updates on Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass' convening of mayors regarding the 2028 Olympics where she learned about regional preparations for the 2028 Olympics and Paralympics. She emphasized the importance of planning for the games, including public transportation, temporary AirBnB ordinances and bike rental programs.

16. Comments from Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Gallatin inquired if any of the Commissioners attended the APA Conference in Denver last week. Although none of the Commissioners attended, Acting Director Becker did attend. Commissioner Gallatin has signed up to attend the online sessions next week.

Commissioner Claypool shared his experiences from his recent visit to New York where he gathered ideas for urban design and architecture for objective design standards and his plans to share them with the Commission.

Commissioner Swanborn mentioned that he, too, was in New York recently. He also wanted to thank Commissioners Claypool and Gallatin for all the heavy lifting on their work on the subcommittee.

Chair Padilla recommended a webinar by APA and AIA she watched on lessons learned from the Lahaina post-fire rebuilding on Maui, emphasizing community-led processes and the importance of feedback loops.

17. Comments from Staff

Acting Director Becker thanked the Commissioners for all their hard work tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

18. Adjournment to the Special Planning Commission meeting scheduled for April 29, 2025, at 6:00 pm

There being no further matters, Chair Padilla adjourned the meeting at 9:43 p.m.



Lisa Padilla, Chair