



CITY OF MERCED ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE FOCUS GROUP

MINUTES

Merced Civic Center
First Floor Sam Pipes Room

678 W. 18th Street
Thursday, February 4, 2016
8:15 a.m.

Mission of Focus Group

Update the Zoning Ordinance to be more user-friendly and easier to understand for the Community.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairperson MAXWELL called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Ann Andersen, Kenra Bragonier, Tony Dossetti, Jack Lesch, Elmer Lorenzi, and Acting Chairperson Guy Maxwell

Members Absent: Jim Abbate, Christina Alley, Todd Bender, Adam Cox, Loren Gonella, Flip Hassett, Des Johnston, Carole McCoy, Michelle Paloutzian, Joe Ramirez, Mike Salvadori, Stan Thurston, Brandon Williams, Jim Xu and Chairperson Bruce Logue

Staff /Guests Present: Planning Manager Kim Espinosa, City Council Member Michael Belluomini, City Manager Steve Carrigan and Recording Secretary Stephani Davis

C. APPROVAL OF ACTION MINUTES

M/S LORENZI-DOSSETTI, and carried by unanimous voice vote, to approve the Minutes of January 21, 2016, as submitted.

D. ITEMS

1. Comments on Items from Joint Planning Commission/City Council Study Session on December 7, 2015 (Continued from January 21, 2016)

City Manager CARRIGAN was introduced to the Focus Group and asked questions regarding changes to the parking lot standards and solar paneling on the car ports. He also announced his Homeless Summit on February 26, 2016 asking Group Members to attend.

Secretary's Note: The item numbers below correspond to those on the December 15, 2015, memo to the Focus Group entitled "Request for Additional Focus Group meeting to Discuss Specific Items from Planning Commission/City Council Study Session on December 7, 2015."

#5-Page 120, Table 20.38-1-Off- Street Parking Requirements for Multiple Family Dwelling/Condominiums

Group Member LORENZI requested to hear City Council Member BELLUOMINI's point of view regarding his suggested change to the parking lot standards for apartment buildings in the existing Zoning Ordinance.

In this discussion continued from the previous meeting on January 21, 2016, City Council Member BELLUOMINI suggested that the number of parking spaces provided for an apartment unit should be based on the number of bathrooms in the unit. He observed that if an apartment unit has more than 2 bathrooms, it raises suspicion that there are more than 2-3 people living there who may have their own cars thus more spaces would be a necessity. Alternatively, City Council Member BELLUOMINI suggested that the new ordinance may discourage any further increase in the development of 3-4 bedroom apartment buildings, which would be a plus.

Planning Manager ESPINOSA reviewed the various options for parking ratio from her memo dated January 21, 2016.

Acting Chairperson MAXWELL brought to the attention of the Focus Group the fact that the City of Merced is currently trying to encourage less vehicle traffic throughout the City and creating an ordinance that accommodates more parking may hurt the City's initiative in the long run.

Ultimately the Focus Group came to a consensus (by a show of hands) to modify Option C to require an additional parking space for multi-family units for each additional bathroom over 3, instead of 2.

#6-Page 132, Parking Lot Standards for Car Ports with Solar Paneling

Planning Manager ESPINOSA mentioned that there are currently no proposed standards for car ports with solar paneling because it has only recently become an issue and the technology is changing rapidly. City Council Member BELLUOMINI suggested that Planning staff should develop some alternative standards and bring it to the City Council. The Focus Group agreed that the issue would require time to develop proper standards, so this item could be deferred until after the initial adoption of the ordinance.

#7-Page 165, Section 20.46.020, Design Standards for Single-Family Dwellings and Mobile Homes, C. Exterior Walls

Planning Manager ESPINOSA noted that the standards suggested by City Council Member BELLUOMINI to require street address numbers to be clearly visible on the front of homes is already in the Fire Code. Group Member ANDERSEN suggested that a reference to the Fire Code be added to the Zoning Code, and the Focus Group agreed.

#8, #9, #10, #11 and #12-Addition to Pages 167-170, Section 20.08.030 and 20.08.040

In the interest of saving time, since the suggested changes #8 through #12 were similar, these items were discussed together. The Focus Group came to a consensus (by a show of hands) that the standards suggested by City Council Member BELLUOMINI be changed to guidelines (“Shoulds”) in that they would not be strict requirements (“Shalls”), but recommendations for developers. City Council Member BELLUOMINI agreed to the change City Council Member BELLUOMINI agreed.

#13-Page 16 & 17, Tables 20.08-2 and 20.08-3 for Interior Yards

City Council Member BELLUOMINI suggested that the Focus Group go through suggested changes #13-15 individually. He indicated his proposed changes would create more livability in residential neighborhoods. The Focus Group came to a consensus (by a show of hands) not to increase the exterior yard setback in any residential zones. (It would remain at 10 feet.)

#14-Dwellings on the Ground Floor Should Have a Private Outdoor Space of a minimum of 12 feet by 20 feet

City Council Member BELLUOMINI suggested requiring a 12 foot by 20 foot area of outdoor living space on the ground floor. After a lengthy discussion regarding #14 and #15, the Focus Group came to a consensus (by a show of hands) to encourage a private outdoor space as a guideline (“should”) and to recommend a minimum size of 5 feet by 8 feet if provided.

#15-Every Apartment above Ground Floor Should Have a Private Balcony at Least Six Feet by Twelve Feet in Size

Acting Chairperson MAXWELL responded that not all families require a large amount of outdoor space, a majority of the families living in apartments may not have the same dynamic (i.e. holding big family dinners outside regularly) as others might do. Group Member ANDERSEN made a point that many children these days are used to living in an apartment with very little ability to play outside, or to have a large private yard that she and some of the Focus Group Members grew up with. She did state that providing the option of apartments that include a roomy private area to play and relax outside may improve their livability.

The Focus Group agreed that balconies would be encouraged as a guideline (“should”) instead of a standard (“shall”) and if a developer were to choose to include balconies, they should be required to be usable and not just decorative, with a minimum size of 5 feet by 8 feet.

2. **Determine Whether Another Meeting Will be Necessary**

It was agreed that another meeting would not be needed at this time. Staff thanked the Focus Group for all their time and effort on this project.

E. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Gonzalves, Secretary
Zoning Ordinance Update

APPROVED:

Guy Maxwell, Acting Chairperson
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