

Wednesday
Oct212009

PLEASANTON COUNCIL REZONES 32 ACRES IN HACIENDA FOR MORE HOUSING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2009 AT 7:36AM

Move aimed at settling state, affordable housing coalition court actions against city

Jeb Bing, Pleasanton Weekly Staff

The Pleasanton City Council voted 3-2 last night to rezone 32 acres of commercial properties in the Hacienda Business Park for high-density residential use although no plans for possible high-rise apartments and condominiums are yet planned there.

The vote came near midnight after a 3-1/2hour meeting where about 60 Hacienda residents either spoke against the zoning changes or expressed their opposition.

The decision, aimed at fending off a possible court decision later this fall that could find Pleasanton in violation of state requirements to provide more affordable and workforce housing in the community, would more than meet the city's share of regional housing needs to provide for at least 521 more housing units.

City Atty. Michael Roush said that if the council failed to rezone the properties, litigation by Urban Habitat and State Attorney General Jerry Brown could likely proceed in Alameda County Superior Court.

"If the court were to find that the city is in violation of the Housing Element Law, it will direct the city to come into compliance, presumably by directing the city to rezone sufficient property to accommodate the housing need," Roush advised the council.

"Moreover, the court could direct that no building permits be issued until the rezoning occurred," he added.

Still, the council's decision was not an easy one, coming at 11:30 p.m. after scores of residents of apartments and condominiums already in Hacienda objected to the rezoning. Others, including Pat Belding of Citizens for a Caring Community, affordable housing advocate and former Councilwoman Becky Dennis, and John Harvey, a board member of the Greenbelt Alliance, urged the council to approve the rezoning petitions and get on with the job of providing more affordable housing in Pleasanton.

Belding read from a list of names she had gathered who want to live in Pleasanton but can't find affordable housing. They included a teacher at Amador Valley High School who commutes daily from Tracy, a recently-discharged soldier who is trying to find affordable housing for his family, graduates of high schools here who would like to move back to their hometown but can't afford to do so and even staff managers at ValleyCare Medical Center whose adequate pay still doesn't qualify them for high-priced housing in Pleasanton.

Objections to the rezoning focused on the failure of the City Council last year to organize a task force, as it promised to do, to consider the rezoning proposals then and evaluate the needs of the Hacienda residential community that an additional 950 housing units, as proposed, would bring. The task force was supposed to determine if more parks, schools and retail stores would be required to serve a larger population. It was also intended that the task force would examine statistics offered by city staff and reviewed by the city's Planning Commission at a public hearing on the rezoning proposals Sept. 23.

Council members Matt Sullivan and Cindy McGovern voted against the rezoning proposals largely because of the refusal of a majority of the council —Mayor Jennifer Hosterman and council members Cheryl Cook-Kallio and Jerry Thorne—to delay the rezoning or condition its approval only after the long-promised task force was structured and given its responsibilities.

"For me to rezone these three properties without having safeguards in place, I can't go there," McGovern said.

Sullivan said he found himself in "a very awkward position because I have been an advocate for Transit Oriented Development longer than anyone else on this council."

"But I've also said that I wanted this to be a community process where people participate, and I'm concerned that we haven't gone that route," he added. "This council said in 2008 that we would have a workshop, task force and community participation to work through these issues and come up with recommendations. We need to honor that commitment."

Hosterman and the two other council members agreed that a task force should be established quickly, as early as next month, but that the property rezoning should take place now to meet the litigation challenges.

"Rezoning these properties doesn't mean that anything is going to be built there," Cook-Kallio said.

The properties rezoned last night include 11 acres at the southeast corner of Owens Drive and Willow Road, owned by W. P. Carey; 8.2 acres at the north corner of Hacienda and Gibraltar drives, owned by BRE, and 12.4 acres south of Gibraltar Drive and between Hacienda Driver and Willow Road, owned by Roche Molecular Systems.

The three sites are located within half a mile of the Pleasanton/Dublin BART station.

The rezoning will allow mixed-use development on these sites, including residential with a density of at least 30 units per acre with buildings up to six stories tall. The city's inclusionary zoning ordinance would require that at least 15 percent of the 950 housing units that could be built on the three sites be affordable to low and very-low households.

A second reading of the ordinance approved last night is required before it takes effect. That is expected to go before the council at its Nov. 3 meeting in time for the city attorney to include the new affordable housing numbers in his response Nov. 15 in Superior Court.

Source: http://www.pleasantonweekly.com/news/show_story.php?id=2794

ADMIN ACCOUNT | POST A COMMENT | SHARE ARTICLE
TAGGED BART, GREENBELT ALLIANCE, PLEASANTON, URBAN HABITAT,
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

READER COMMENTS

There are no comments for this journal entry. To create a new comment, use the form below.