

MINUTES APPROVED AT THE PC MEETING ON SEPTMBER 15, 2022

**PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, RICHMOND CITY HALL**

Teleconference
July 21, 2022
6:30 p.m.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

David Tucker, Chair Michael Huang Jonathan Harrison
Jen Loy, Vice Chair Masoomah Sharifi Soofiani
Bruce Brubaker, Secretary Alpa Agarwal

The regular meeting was called to order by Chair Tucker at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Tucker; Vice Chair Jen Loy; Commissioner Bruce Brubaker, Jonathan Harrison and Masoomah Sharifi Soofiani

Absent: Commissioner Alpa Agarwal and Yu-Hsiang (Michael) Huang

INTRODUCTIONS

Staff Present: Planning Staff: Andrea Villarroel, Mary Sanchez, Community Development Director Lina Velasco and Attorney James Atencio

MINUTES –

4/21/2022

5/19/2022

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Loy, Brubaker) to approve the April 21, 2022, and May 19, 2022 draft meeting minutes as presented; which carried by the following vote: 4-3 (Ayes: Tucker, Loy, Brubaker, Soofiani; Noes: None; Absent: Agrawal, Harrison, Huang).

AGENDA - None

CONSENT CALENDAR – None

BROWN ACT – Public Forum - None

STUDY SESSION

- 1. PLN22-120: Housing Element Update & Related General Plan Amendments**
STUDY SESSION to present the Environmental Justice Element’s Baseline Report and the Public Safety & Noise Element’s Emergency Evacuation Study, both of which will inform future General Plan Amendments. Various, owner; the City of Richmond, applicant Planner: Andrea Villarroel Tentative Recommendation: Receive And Provide Comments

Michael Dyett, Dyett and Bhatia, reported an Environmental Justice Element must be adopted when two or more General Plan elements are being amended after January 1, 2018. The State also mandated that information be added to the General Plan for evacuation routes and emergency preparedness in the Public Safety and Noise Element. As a separate project, the City was also updating its the Housing Element.

The goal of the Environmental Justice Element was to promote social equity and involve residents in disadvantaged communities in the decisions that may impact their lives. The components included in the element were distributive justice, procedural justice, and social justice. The State outlined eight specific factors that must be addressed in the Environmental Justice Element.

To prepare the Environmental Justice Element, staff reviewed existing General Plan policies and actions, conducted a survey of Richmond residents, conducted in-person interviews at pop-up events, prepared the Baseline Report and Environmental Justice Atlas, and formulated a proposed draft of goals, policies, and actions for the public and the Planning Commission to consider.

The key findings from the Community Profile was there was a moderate degree of neighborhood segregation by race, an increase in population of Hispanic/Latino ethnicities and a decrease in the Black/African American population. Also, there was a substantial number of children and seniors in the City as well as an income gap both Citywide and in environmental justice neighborhoods. The key finding for health inequities included a clear health equity gap that affected communities living in the central area of the City. The key finding for pollution exposure was that pollution was not equal throughout the City. The greatest exposure was to folks living near industrial areas, freeways, major roads, and railroads. Also, hazardous waste sites and lead paint exposure affect many folks in the community. The key findings for climate change and urban heat was that land surface temperatures were highest in areas where vulnerable populations were a large percentage of the population. Also, the tree canopy was generally lower in vulnerable areas and sea level rise would affect folks living in low-lying neighborhoods along the shoreline. The key finding for natural hazards found that geologic and fire threats tended to affect folks living in the northeast quadrant of the City. Also, low-lying areas in the southwest were at risk of liquefaction, flooding, tsunami hazards, and sea-level risk. The key findings for safe and sanitary housing were substandard physical housing conditions such as incomplete plumbing and kitchen facilities as well as overcrowding. Also, affordable housing choices were not well-distributed throughout the City. The key findings for public facilities and services concluded that community facilities were generally well-distributed, that the City had a good park system but park access was not equal throughout the City and that the City had improved its walkability, pedestrian safety, and public transit. The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) included many investments that would benefit environmental justice communities. Key findings for access to healthy food were that the City did not have the number of groceries that it should, some neighborhoods were not well served by grocery stores with fresh produce and the General Plan land use designation for Neighborhood Commercial seemed insufficient to attract new neighborhood food sources. Key findings for civic engagement found that the City had a robust set of Boards and Commissions to secure community input and socio-economic factors. The City also provided opportunities for civic engagement with the Neighborhood Councils and volunteer programs as well as the library provided free tools for residents to facilitate participation.

Policies and actions were proposed to address the eight goals identified in the Environmental Justice Element. For pollution and toxins, the proposal was to reduce air pollution, reduce mobile source emissions and improve regional coordination. Key actions for pollution and toxins were air pollution monitoring, a ban on coal and petroleum coke storage and handling, zoning enforcement, transportation demand management, regional coordination, and development review procedures. New policies for community health were to reduce health disparities and inequities, expand the medical facilities and services, provide protections from toxic and hazardous materials, and encourage regional coordination. Key actions to facilitate those goals included updating the database to track community health, attract a replacement hospital, provide funding for adaptive reuses, encourage partnerships and leverage resources, promote community education, provide timely notification, reporting illegal dumping, and evaluate the merits of the 311 reporting system. New policies for equitable access to food included expanding the supply of healthy sources and providing nutrition education. Key actions were to leverage resources to attract more grocery stores, provide protections for supermarkets, have healthy food displays at checkouts, provide sites for farmers' markets and urban agriculture, provide amendments to support cottage food operations, draft a list of resources on healthy food, adopt a school food program, attract more healthy food residential care providers and adopt a healthy employee program. Staff proposed new policies for climate change and urban heat. Those policies included protections from sea level rise, green streets and urban forestry, new green spaces, and the promotion of green designs. Draft implementing actions included heat reduction strategies, design standards for urban heat reduction, community outreach, implementation of the Urban Greening Master Plan, and targeting heat mitigation strategies. For natural hazards, proposed new policies included flood hazards, wildfires, emergency evacuation, and geologic and seismic hazards. Draft action included implementing the County Hazard Reduction Plan, updating the hazard maps, encouraging seismic upgrades to critical facilities, addressing dam failure risk, encouraging community input for the Wildland Protection Program, and providing community education in high fire hazard areas. With respect to safe and sanitary housing, the proposed policy was safe, healthy, and affordable housing. Additional policies and detail would be addressed in the Housing Element update. Key implementation actions included monitoring the implementation of housing programs, work with County Housing Authority and nonprofit housing providers, coordinate on environmental justice, and support the removal of lead-based paint in older homes. With respect to community facilities, proposed policies included promoting more opportunities for recreation and physical activity as well as improving access. Draft actions to achieve those goals included assessing walkability to parks and recreation facilities, addressing the needs of environmental justice communities, continuing to build out the Bicycle and Pedestrian Action Plan, promoting transportation improvements, allocating funding for improvements to correct deficiencies, and providing co-locations to facilitate access. Policies to address civic engagement and investment priorities included strengthening community capacity, refining the community outreach process, and focusing on the highest of needs. Draft actions included, but were not limited to, participating in Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), creating a new staff position focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and providing support to community organizations and partners.

Vice Chair Loy asked staff to explain what the process was. Ms. Villarroel explained after the Planning Commission provided feedback, staff would draft an Environmental Justice draft which would be subject to a public review in September 2022. Vice Chair Loy acknowledged there was overlap between the Health Element and the Environmental Justice Element. She supported having the policies and actions reviewed by the community. She encouraged Commissioners to provide a list of organizations they believed would have expertise in specific areas of the Environmental Justice Element. She mentioned there were inconsistencies in the document

regarding community engagement and working with community-based organizations. She remarked she would work with staff offline on the matter.

Commissioner Brubaker asked what data sources were used to identify underrepresented communities in the City. Mr. Dyett answered the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census data. Commissioner Brubaker inquired if the maps would be posted as interactive maps online. Mr. Dyett noted the maps would be available on the City's website as well as in the Environmental Justice Element. Ms. Villarroel remarked the maps would be posted as static maps. Commissioner Brubaker encouraged staff to explore having an interactive map but understood if that was not part of the scope of work. He wanted to know if educational attainment was evaluated and Mr. Dyett commented that staff focused on the eight factors outlined by the State. Another category that Commissioner Brubaker wanted to know about was whether pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle safety, and public safety was explored. Mr. Dyett restated that the Environmental Justice Element work only focused on the State guidelines. Commissioner Brubaker expressed concern that the City Safety Study was not going to be reviewed through the lens of environmental justice. He acknowledged that the parkway was a large source of potential pollution for several vulnerable neighborhoods. There was very little the City could do with respect to the regional transportation network. He requested that staff point out those impacts to encourage more dialog around potential solutions as a region. He asked what 311 reporting was and Mr. Dyett explained that 311 was a number that folks could call to report non-emergency activities.

Commissioner Soofiani wanted to know how the City planned to track the progress of the implementation of the Environmental Justice Element and what the overlap was between the Housing Element and the Environmental Justice Element. Mr. Dyett mentioned that the Environmental Justice Element maps would be used by the consultant who was working on the Housing Site Inventory. The references and language in the Environmental Justice Element would support and complement the other elements in the General Plan. With respect to progress tracking, a number of the actions were to keep the maps current and use existing programs to track that progress. If adopted by Council, funding for the programs and policies would be addressed through the budgeting cycle. Commissioner Soofiani suggested the Environmental Justice Element be integrated into the Housing Element in terms of analyzing the data to identify suitable sites for housing. She suggested adding a mentor program to improve language barriers.

Chair Tucker inquired if staff would review past policies and how they impacted the City's Housing Element and growth. Mr. Dyett restated that those matters were addressed in the Housing Element update. Chair Tucker predicted that many new residents may have a different outlook on the City compared to long-term residents. Mr. Dyett concurred but shared there was not enough survey data to parse that information out.

Commissioner Brubaker did not see any proposed policies to address gentrification and Mr. Dyett explained that was a specific topic discussed in the Housing Element.

Public Comment:

DORIA ROBINSON, Executive Director of Urban Tilth, greatly appreciated the presentation. She shared she has many ideas about how the City can partner with Urban Tilth to implement urban agricultural programs. She encouraged the City to include exploration of the development of warehouses and distribution centers in the evaluation of environmental justice impacts. As

businesses move into the City, the City can ensure those businesses are held responsible for their impacts.

JACOB KLIEN, Sierra Club, echoed Ms. Robinson's comments. He recommended staff explore land use policy changes for warehouses, distribution centers, and last mile mail centers. The City had a high rate of air pollution and had a history of warehousing.

Vice Chair Loy echoed Ms. Robinson's comments.

Mr. Dyett announced the next presentation was on the technical work that was done regarding emergency evacuation in the Public Safety and Noise Element. Recently bills were enacted, Assembly Bill 747 and Senate Bill 99, that required Safety Elements to be updated to include information about evacuation routes as well as identify residential areas that had only a single point of access. To address the requirements, staff mapped the hazard zones, identified the evacuation routes, identified the residential area affected, and drafted policies. Staff identified over 1,700 parcels that had a single point of access. Staff identified evacuation routes but understood that routes could change depending on the type of emergency. Staff evaluated three evacuation scenarios and those were a wildland fire along San Pablo Dam Road, a tsunami emergency that closed I-580, and closure of the El Cerrito Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station due to earthquake damage. Staff used a transportation model to test evacuation capacity on key corridors. In the case of a wildland fire, an evacuation was estimated to take between 3 hours and 15 minutes to 4 hours with folks who had transportation and 2 hours for folks using public transportation. In the case of a closure of I-580, an evacuation was estimated to take 40 minutes to 1 ½ hour for folks with transportation and 1 hour and 20 minutes for folks using public transportation. In the case of a closure at the BART station, an evacuation was estimated to take 1 hour and 15 minutes to 2 ½ hours for folks with vehicles and 3 hours and 15 minutes for folks using public transportation. Staff suggested several recommendations regarding demand, supply, and information. Staff will return to the Planning Commission with more detailed amendments to the Public Safety and Noise Element soon.

Commissioner Harrison observed there were no evacuation routes for the coastal portion of Point Richmond. Paul, Dyett and Bhatia, explained that the main evacuation routes were major arterials throughout the City as well as local roads.

Vice Chair Loy asked at what point did the City's evacuation plan have to consider neighboring cities' evacuation plans. Mr. Dyett remarked that coordination with neighboring cities had to be the central implementation task. Paul reminded the Commission that the analysis was a new requirement and some neighboring cities had not begun their planning.

Commissioner Soofiani inquired if the evacuation map could be integrated into Google Maps. Mr. Dyett stated the City's Zone Haven Program provided that and one recommendation was to make Zone Haven bi-lingual.

Chair Tucker inquired if there was a warning system in the hills and if so, he encouraged those to be mapped. Mr. Dyett commented he would explore mapping the sirens and concurred that communication during an emergency was imperative.

Commissioner Brubaker stated the likeliness scenario was an emergency happening at the Chevron Refinery. He asked if that had been evaluated. Ms. Velasco mentioned that through the County's Hazardous Materials Program, they identified worst-case scenarios. Contra Costa Health Services would also be presenting to Council at the next Council meeting their report on

the implementation of the Richmond Industrial Safety Ordinance. The effort for the required update was to identify areas with limited routes of evacuation.

Vice Chair Loy stated it was egregious not to include some information about the Chevron Refinery in all City elements.

Public Comment:

None

COMMISSION BUSINESS

2. Appoint Nominating Committee for Officer Elections

Chair Tucker anticipated there would be a vacant position on the Planning Commission soon. He appointed Commissioner Harrison, Commissioner Agrawal, and himself to be on the Nominating Committee.

Vice Chair Loy requested to not serve another term as Vice Chair.

Ms. Velasco mentioned the next meeting for the Planning Commission was to be held on August 18, 2022. The Nominating Committee must submit their recommendations to staff 10 days before the meeting. Commissioners were allowed to nominate themselves on the day of the election as well.

Commissioner Brubaker remarked he would be absent from the August 18, 2022 meeting.

3. Reports of Officers, Commissioners and Staff – Chair Tucker requested that Staff share details about the Hilltop Horizon project. Ms. Velasco shared there was a website for the project. Staff was conducting stakeholder interviews and would establish a Project Advisory Committee. The first community meeting was to be held in October of 2022.

Commissioner Brubaker provided clarification that the process was being run by the City and was an independent process from the property owners.

4. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m. to the next regular meeting on August 18, 2022.