

**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Santa Barbara County Planning Commission  
Michael Cooney, First District  
Marc McGinnes, Second District  
Parker Montgomery, Third District  
Joe Valencia, Fourth District  
Jack Boysen, Fifth District, Chair

DATE: October 27, 2005

RE: Update on Role of Planning Commission

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At the County's Planning Commission's August 24, 2005 workshop, the Commission's role as the "Planning Agency" was discussed. The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the Commission's desired role in reviewing, updating and implementing the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The California Government Code requires Santa Barbara County to have a planning agency (GC §65100). This planning agency may be "a planning department, one or more planning commissions, administrative bodies or hearing officers, the legislative body itself, or any combination thereof, as it deems appropriate and necessary. In the absence of an assignment, the legislative body shall carry out all the functions of the planning agency" (GC §65100). The Board of Supervisors has designated the County Planning Commission as the County's planning agency.

The Government Code (GC §65103) requires each planning agency to perform certain functions including, but not limited to, review, update and implementation of the general plan. Similar to how the Board of Supervisors meets their functional requirements, the planning agency has deferred the work efforts associated with the general plan updates to staff. The Planning Commission provides a thorough review of such updates and a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors prior to their review and action.

The purpose of the workshop was to review and consider how the Commission fulfills its role as planning agency as it relates to the long-range planning function. Staff provided the PC with a memo outlining various options to consider which included: 1) the status quo, 2) the Board of Supervisors serving as the planning agency, 3) increased coordination between the Planning Commission and Comprehensive Planning, 4) creating a new commission for oversight of comprehensive planning issues, and 5) creating a coordinating committee. (See attached memo for more detail on each of these options.)

After extensive deliberation, the Commission ultimately determined that they would not recommend that its basic role as planning agency change. However, the Commission did express that the long range planning function is one of the most important functions in the County. The Comprehensive Plan provides the guide or blue print for the future of the County and the Commission regularly reviews projects in areas of the County where the Comprehensive plan has not been updated since 1980-82 (e.g., Gaviota, Lompoc). Outdated plans do not reflect the most current land use planning strategies and provide limited guides and tools for the Commission as it considers development proposals. The Commission is interested in seeing the long range planning function prioritized by the county and the necessary resources provided to update the County's Comprehensive Plan for the entire county. This goal will be reflected in the Planning Commission's future recommendations on the Comprehensive Planning Division's work programs.

The Commission did request that the Comprehensive Planning Division coordinate with the Commission in the following manner: 1) continue to bring all Comprehensive Planning project's to the Planning Commission for review and recommendations, 2) provide briefings at project milestones, 3) present quarterly reports on the progress of the division's Work Program prior to Board receipt, and 4) work with the Commission to develop recommendations to the Board on the annual division's Three Year Work Program.

If the Board has further questions regarding this workshop please do not hesitate to contact your district commissioners or Terri Maus -Nisich at 568-3412.

Attachment