

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 10/19/04
Department Name: Planning and Development
Department No.: 053
Agenda Date: 11/2/04
Placement: Departmental
Estimate Time: 20 minutes
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Val Alexeeff, Director
Planning and Development

STAFF CONTACT: Steve Mason, Deputy Director, 568-2070

SUBJECT: Montecito Planning Commission and Montecito Board of Architectural Review Two Year Review

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

Receive and file this report on the operation of the Montecito Planning Commission and Montecito Board of Architectural Review.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 6. A County Government that is Accessible, Open, and Citizen-Friendly.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

On June 18, 2002, an area Planning Commission and area Board of Architectural Review was established for the Montecito Planning Area. Article V of Chapter 2 of the County Code was amended at that time, authorizing the Montecito Planning Commission. At that time, the Board directed Planning and Development to return to the Board after a two year period and present data on the operation of these two bodies.

Planning and Development has monitored several performance metrics associated with the Montecito Planning Commission (MPC) and Montecito Board of Architectural Review (MBAR): fiscal impacts; customer satisfaction; impact to County Planning Commission (PC) and Board of Architectural Review (BAR); and number of appealed projects. A summary of the information collected follows.

General Operations

The MPC has conducted 19 hearings, taking action on 34 projects since March 1, 2003. See Exhibits A and B for a complete list of MPC and MBAR projects. The MPC meets in the County Planning Commission

Hearing room and the meetings are televised on Government Access Television. Of the 34 projects heard, 4 were countywide projects where the MPC's action is advisory to the County Planning Commission. Staff support is provided by Board Specialists, Deputy County Counsel, and Development Review Deputy Director.

The MBAR meets bi-weekly at the Montecito Community Center. They have met 40 times and heard approximately 318 items. Exhibit B provides a complete list of projects. Notices of projects calendared for Conceptual Review with the MBAR are mailed to all properties within 300 feet and 1,000 feet for new cellular projects in residential area. County BAR projects do not receive this additional noticing, except in the Summerland and Toro Canyon Community Plan Area. Applicants pay the full cost of this additional noticing. Staff support is provided by a Board Assistant and Planner III.

Fiscal Operations

The Board of Supervisors allocated \$70,000 of General Funds for the operation of the MPC and MBAR. In Fiscal year 03/04 the cost for staff time supporting MPC and MBAR, advertising, postage, and department administrative costs totaled \$51,000. Staffing costs are slightly lower than projected due to vacancies in our hearing support section during the year. In addition, the costs to present county-wide projects to the MPC in their advisory capacity to the County PC are estimated to be \$6,000-\$8,000. These projects include the Residential 2nd Unit Ordinance, Housing Element Adoption, Zoning Ordinance Reformat Project, and the Inclusionary Housing Program. While these costs were not billed as costs attributable to the MPC, they would not have been expended in the absence of the MPC.

Community Satisfaction

Customer and community satisfaction was evaluated through the use of a survey. Every property owner, applicant, and neighbors within required noticing boundaries of projects heard by the MPC or MBAR were provided a survey. A total of 2,915 surveys were distributed. Responses were received from approximately 5% of those surveyed. The survey covered: responsiveness and clarity of direction, meeting location and facilities, noticing of the project, local ordinances and guidelines, hearing body familiarity and knowledge of community, and comparison to County PC and BAR. A copy of the survey is attached as Exhibit C.

Overall, the large majority of survey respondents were positive. Seventy two percent of survey responses indicated satisfaction with both the MPC and MBAR. The remaining 28% were split evenly, 14% were not favorable and 14% did not indicate their opinion.

In Exhibit D, detailed results for each survey question are listed. The final question of the survey is directed to those who had prior experience with the County PC or County BAR and asks if the service level was increased with the MPC or MBAR. Over 80% responded that the MPC and MBAR were providing a greater level of service.

In addition to the survey, Planning and Development's adopted budget includes two performance measures for the MPC. The first measures staff's accuracy in project noticing and the second measures appeals.

Provide accurate and timely noticing for 100% of approximately annual agenda items for the Montecito Planning Commission.

Achieve community satisfaction by providing thorough analysis and recommendations that result in 100% of decisions made by the Montecito Planning Commission not being appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

There have been no noticing errors to date. Several appeals to projects heard by the MPC have been filed. Of the 34 projects heard, 3, or 9% were appealed to the Board of Supervisors. Those projects were: *Kirsch Appeal of Hill Demo/Rebuild, Montecito Verizon Switch Station Parking Space Modification Appeal, and The Music Academy of the West Master Plan and Revised CUP*. The Kirsch and Verizon appeals were staff level approvals that came to the MPC on appeal of the staff decision. The Music Academy of the West generated widespread community interest, requiring 5 hearings at the MPC. Board of Supervisor action is scheduled for October 26, and is expected to be only a formality as a result of successful mediation of the appellant's concerns.

While over 70% of survey respondents indicated that the MPC reviewed projects in accordance with local ordinances and guidelines and, they were better served because of the MPC's affiliation and knowledge of the community, several project decisions were appealed. During this same time period, 19, or 6% of County PC and Zoning Administrator decisions were appealed.

Impact to County PC and BAR

Formation of the MPC has reduced the number of projects heard by the County PC and Zoning Administrator by approximately 10%. The County BAR has experienced a more subtle reduction in workload. Prior to the formation of the MPC the Montecito Association's Architectural Review Committee reviewed all Montecito projects and provided a recommendation to the County BAR. This recommendation allowed the majority of Montecito projects to be approved on the Consent portion of the agenda.

Mandates and Service Levels:

The formation of the MPC and MBAR is not mandated.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Salary cost for staff work on this report, and Funding for the MPC and MBAR is provided in Planning and Development's FY04/05 budget (page D-284) in the Administration cost center.

Special Instructions:

Concurrence:

None