



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

#-8

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: 3rd Supervisorial Dist
Department No.:
For Agenda Of: 11/14/2006
Placement: Departmental
Estimate Time: 15 mins
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Board Member(s) Brooks Firestone, Supervisor 3rd District
Contact Info: Brooks Firestone, 568-2192

SUBJECT: Proposed Op Ed Article Related to Housing Element

County Counsel Concurrence:

As to form: Yes No N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence:

As to form: Yes No N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: Yes No N/A

Recommended Action(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

Approve the submittal of an opinion editorial containing important information about the County's Housing Element.

Summary:

Attached is a proposed copy of the proposed opinion editorial entitled "3 Principles" that I am recommending the Board approve for submittal to local media. The opinion editorial contains important information about the County's Housing Element.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes No

Fiscal Analysis:

Narrative: No fiscal impact.

Staffing Impact(s):

Proposed Op Ed Article Related to Housing Element

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Legal Positions:

0

FTEs:

0

Attachments:

“3 Principles”

CC:

3 Principles

As California's population grows, the State has responded by increasing the scope of laws that cities and counties must follow to ensure housing remains affordable.

In 1969 the California State Legislature enacted the Housing Element law. Since that time, many State housing directives have come to Santa Barbara from Sacramento and the State is increasingly determined to enforce their affordable housing mandate.

The reality facing Santa Barbara County is similar to every other local jurisdiction in California. While some cities and counties may be content to sprawl, other areas, including Santa Barbara, are not. Between 2003-2008, the State mandated that 17,532 new residences be built in our backyard. Unincorporated Santa Barbara County was assigned 6,064 units. The incorporated cities were assigned the remaining 11,468 units.

Reflecting our local values, the Board of Supervisors does not want the State dictating how we build affordable housing nor do we want the State deciding how to plan our community's future. The County has communicated this to the State for 3 years, but given the inevitability of State Housing Law, staff has continued to implement the State's mandate. Those efforts to plan for the inevitable have resulted in deep distress and righteous anger in some communities. The Board acknowledges this divide, while at the same time, understands the futility in ignoring State Housing Law.

Housing issues highlight the struggle between two forces dominating the debate over land-use policy in Santa Barbara County: the need to build more affordable housing directly challenges communities' desires to keep their neighborhoods free of dense development. Since 2002 the County has struggled to reach consensus on a housing plan that balances our preference for community-based planning with the demands of a State prescribed housing plan.

The current Housing Element, adopted by the Board in May 2006 was conditionally certified by the State in August. The County must now review the potential environmental impacts of putting our housing plan into action. County staff is working to accommodate State law while ensuring that the communities most affected by the plan have a voice during the environmental impact report (EIR) process. This EIR process serves to protect our environment from undue harm and to ensure that the range of options for implementing the housing plan remains appropriate for our community. Santa Barbara County is a beautiful place to live and the Board must guarantee that the fabric of our community is not torn apart by the land use struggle.

To not follow the dictates of law would lead to State de-certification of our Housing Element and the loss of community control over local land-use decisions. To date, no city or county has successfully fought the State housing mandate, those that have are sorry they did. Therefore, simple disobedience of the law is not an option.

As environmental review of the Housing Element commences, the Board is united behind a common concern that this State-prescribed plan should not undermine the wishes and desires of our communities. Accordingly, we offer the following **3 principles** to guide the Housing Element process as it moves forward.

3 Principles

1 – *The County unanimously embraces community-based planning. We support community-based planning as an effective tool to provide community members with an opportunity to voice their desires related to future development in creating the regulations that govern their future development.*

2 – *We are concerned that the State's mandate outlined in our Housing Element is incongruent with local Community Plans. Community planning reflects and defines our local values, whereas State law requires jurisdictions to relax standards governing height, parking, open space and setbacks to create increased residential density.*

3 – *The County understands its obligation to make decisions consistent with State Law. Once the environmental review process for the Housing Element is complete, the Board will be better informed to decide how to best reconcile local values with what the State is requiring us to do.*

What is next? First, we must realize the inevitable authority of the State. Second, we cannot condone rhetoric that interferes with good planning and thoughtful intentions. Third, we must set aside our differences and work together to create the best possible housing plan for our unique needs.

Difficult choices lie ahead for Santa Barbara County. Together, we must find solutions that respect our community values, but meet the State's expectations. If we do not, we will lose the very thing we treasure most as a community: the opportunity to shape our own future.