



SAN BENITO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tim Foley Jim West *Vacant* Damon Felice Jessica French Robert Gatto Vicki Montoya Joan Moore Jason Noble Antonio Ortega George Rajkovich David Roemer Jan Saxton Franz Schneider Tom Tobias

County Administration Building – Board of Supervisor Chambers, 481 Fourth Street, Hollister, California

MINUTES FEBRUARY 17, 2011

PRESENT West, French, Montoya, Moore, Noble, Rajkovich, Schneider, Tobias, Saxton (arrived at 6:05 p.m.), Roemer (arrived at 6:08 p.m.), Gatto (arrived at 6:13 p.m.)

ABSENT: Foley, Felice, Ortega

STAFF: Director of Planning (DoP) Gary Armstrong, Assistant Director of Planning (ADoP) Byron Turner, Deputy County Counsel (DCC) Shirley Murphy, Associate Planner (AP) Michael Kelly

The special meeting commenced at 6:02 p.m.

6:00 PM ~ CALL TO ORDER

Also present at the meeting were Larry Mintier and Dan Amsden of the General Plan Update (GPU) consultant Mintier Harnish. No general public comment was given.

AGENDA

1. Approve minutes from February 3, 2011, meeting.

Mr. Noble made a motion, seconded by Ms. Montoya, to approve the minutes of February 3, 2011. The motion passed 8–0.

2. Review status of the General Plan Update.

Dan Amsden introduced the item along with a PowerPoint presentation and described the status of the GPU.

During this item, Ms. Saxton arrived at 6:05 p.m.

3. Discuss major policy issues to be addressed in the updated General Plan.

Amsden explained the village concept with visual examples. Mr. Schneider asked about the examples' sizes, and Amsden said they were about 300 to 400 dwellings. Ms. Montoya asked for geographical examples; Amsden explained that few examples at this scale are nearby, and "theme" developments like those for seniors are more likely. He said most independent villages become "new towns," and he referred to Mountain House as an example. Mr. Schneider asked whether this meant that 1,200 to 1,500 people would be the lower limit of such a development, and Amsden said yes.

Mr. Tobias referred to his participation in the Transferable Development Credits (TDC) Committee and said villages were imagined to be big enough to cross on bike. He described the village concept as having some mixed uses, some public transit linking the villages, some commercial uses (but unlike Hollister's), its own water and sewer services, and its own school, and he said a village would need to be big enough to support these attributes.

Under public comment, Ray Pierce asked about the acreage of the example projects and said that the TDC Committee had talked about hiding villages to allow the population to increase without making it visible. Discussion took place on Ridgemark.

Tony Ruiz, under public comment, gave suggestions for villages, including walkability.

Mr. Schneider asked when market-rate multiunit housing was last built in Hollister; Mr. Noble gave an answer of 2004. Ms. Moore spoke on development fees in the City of Hollister. Mr. Schneider remarked that rule changes would be needed if multiunit housing were expected to be built. Ray Pierce made reference to inclusionary housing, for which DoP Armstrong stated that County regulations had changed.

Under public comment, Scott Fuller asked for flexibility in thinking and noted that a San Benito County village would be different from a Seattle village. He remarked that density is possible without three-story buildings, that the intent of villages was to preserve agriculture through TDCs, that villages would not be the only possible way to achieve this, and that he favored openness on ways to maintain open space.

Amsden referred to an earlier point on transit and mentioned Sonoma–Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) in Sonoma and Marin Counties. He noted differences between that area and San Benito County and between that proposed system and similar infrastructure in San Benito County. He also mentioned high-speed rail and said rail transit could be considered as a policy item.

During this item, Mr. Roemer arrived at 6:08 p.m. and Mr. Gatto arrived at 6:13 p.m.

- 4. Preferred Alternative:** Make a recommendation to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on a Preferred Alternative for the General Plan, following continued discussion of community input from the January 26, 2010, community workshop.

Amsden spoke on the item. He summarized the January 26 workshop for those not present at the February 3 GPAC meeting and asked the Committee to identify the alternatives' pros and cons, to select one alternative as a starting point, to discuss modifications, and to identify additional features. Mr. Schneider stated that Alternative B was the clear preferred alternative and suggested making amendments. He made a motion to choose Alternative B as the preferred alternative; Mr. Tobias seconded the motion, which passed 10–0 with Ms. Montoya's abstention.

Mr. Tobias spoke of a special study area in the Flint Hills, which he drew on paper for the Committee. Vice Chair West asked Mr. Noble whether building was feasible in the Flint Hills; Mr. Noble noted constraints but that City of Hollister sewer connection would be possible. Mr. Tobias suggested villages could be hidden in the hills but still be in proximity to Hollister. Mr. Schneider noted local population projection of about 15,000 people for the unincorporated County and spoke of villages' potential to absorb this growth; Ms. Saxton agreed with his scenario. Mr. Tobias noted the area's proximity to the railroad and the opportunity for intermodal operations. Vice Chair West said he thought the land was physically unstable; Mr. Tobias said that the northwest was unstable, and Mr. Noble spoke of a quarry and landslides. Mr. Noble then pointed out that the development proposed by DMB was too far north for people to come to Hollister. Discussion took place, generally in favor of the Flint Hills idea.

Ray Pierce, under public comment, said the site could tie into the river parkway project.

Mr. Noble asked the consultants how the employment center at Routes 156 and 25 ended up on the map; Amsden replied that the highway's intersection was the reason. Mr. Noble then spoke about the difference between commercial "circles" and commercial "corridors." Mr. Gatto said he would like to see areas of interest around the existing market on Fairview Road, near the edge of Tres Pinos, and along the boundary of Paicines; he said he would like to see "circles" where commercial endeavors are. Vice Chair West said circles were originally placed on the diagram to provide places to draw money from others. Mr. Noble noted that the gas station in Tres Pinos is the unincorporated County's only gas station.

Mr. Tobias raised the question of development in the Dunneville area. Ray Pierce talked about the high water table and flood risk there. Mr. Tobias concluded that light commercial use would be most appropriate; Mr. Noble added that commercial uses generated less sewage. Mr. Gatto asked Ray Pierce about flood hazard in Dunneville Estates, and Pierce said that development was just outside the flood zone. Mr. Tobias asked about Route 156 at Union Road, and Pierce said that Union Road to 4th Street was available. Discussion on that location took place followed by discussion of Tres Pinos, including potential to the north and south of the town and a hotel. Pinnacles National Monument was discussed, including the effect of national-park status and attractions available at the park's west side, accessible via Tres Pinos.

Tony Ruiz gave public comment on public transit to villages and its infeasibility in remote areas. Mr. Schneider remarked that public transit usage from villages to Hollister would seem unlikely. Discussion followed on the public's shopping habits. Further discussion then took place on how to designate appropriate locations for development and how and whether to differentiate between commercial and residential uses. Mintier asked the Committee what they wanted to achieve with villages and commercial centers. Mr. Schneider said they were an attempt to capture funds from passers-through; Mr. Gatto spoke of sustainable economic growth. Mr. Tobias talked about the idea of a truck stop where auxiliary businesses could appear. Ms. Saxton talked about keeping local money in the County. Mr.

Tobias added that the County would need commercial centers that do not detract from Hollister and should not have "elite" subdivisions with their own commercial facilities. Mr. Schneider differentiated between commercial areas within Hollister; he noted the lack of vitality in Downtown and the shifting of commercial activity toward Tres Pinos Road–Airline Highway. Mr. Gatto remarked on the realignment of Route 25 out of Downtown, and Mr. Tobias said that more commercial activity in villages meant less for Hollister. Discussion followed on villages' purpose and on Downtown.

Mintier asked the Committee for appropriate areas to consider villages and to consider commercial areas (whether with or without a residential component) and referred to TDC sending areas. Ms. Saxton suggested focusing less on defining sending and receiving areas for clusters and villages and more on determining locations for commercial zoning. Mintier asked whether a consensus existed on commercial locations. Mr. Noble pointed to Shore–25 and spoke about giving an opportunity even if nothing comes to that location. Ray Pierce then spoke about different types of commercial (neighborhood, general, agricultural, etc.), opportunities for tilt-up development near the airport, and agriculture-related elements near San Juan Bautista and Shore Road; discussion followed on this topic, on encouraging more activity similar to Earthbound Farms, and on particular locations for commercial use.

Scott Fuller, under public comment, spoke on the TDC ordinance and its identification of existing zones for sending and receiving areas. He also described the term *clustered residential* on the Alternative B land-use diagram in front of the Committee as a problem because existing zoning already allowed clustering as a type of development that he believed the diagram did not intend. Ms. Saxton spoke of cluster developments' potential to pockmark fields, and Fuller talked about clustering in sending areas as an unintended consequence. He suggested *village residential* as a more appropriate name.

Mr. Gatto suggested a statement of intent for logical development to promote sustainability and expressed interest in locations that make sense for mining and industry. Discussion followed. Mr. Tobias spoke about an "onion effect" in which Hollister infill is proposed first and then village-concept development is a second option and that the City of Hollister should have buy-in with the County General Plan. Ms. Moore talked about questions on cluster development versus city/county single-family residential development and asked whether Alternative B's "clustered residential" areas shown on the diagram would result in villages or something else. Amsden responded that they would intend to save open space; Ms. Moore asked whether densities would change, and Mr. Noble said that they would not without a specific plan. Mr. Schneider asked about Alternative B's "clustered residential" areas east of Fairview Road and south of Hollister and whether they were supposed to be TDC sending areas; Mr. Tobias responded that they were but that TDCs were to be voluntary, not to change existing development rights, and to be involved when higher residential densities were proposed. Discussion followed on deterring development in some places. Ray Pierce commented that TDCs were an untested practice that would strip development rights from properties, create situations of uncertainty, and possibly reduce property values. He gave further illustration regarding property rights. Tony Ruiz then spoke on unsustainability of cluster development and the role of demographics in change across the country. Scott Fuller said that *clustering* would be confusing if it remained a designation in use and favored *residential* or *village residential*.

Mintier reiterated what had been said and asked the Committee whether they wanted to identify more specifics for the alternative or to create performance standards for development. Discussion followed on that topic. Mr. Gatto asked whether the alternative should be more general or more specific and whether to consider the center and southern areas of the County. Mintier responded that the Committee had appeared to intend not locating development locations but identifying criteria. Ms. Moore remarked that the southern areas had so many constraints as to preclude villages and that the General Plan should give a clear impression that development cannot happen in some parts of the County. Mr. Schneider gave a historical anecdote regarding Rancho Larios in which performance criteria were used with the intent of preventing the development from happening but did not succeed in preventing the project. Ms. Saxton asked whether some areas of the County labeled "clustered residential" could be designated for both sending and receiving areas. Mintier remarked that he was not hearing a sufficiently clear consensus to create a recommendation. Vice Chair West said that the Planning Commission would be continuing this conversation, and the GPAC would not be coming to a complete agreement, with the exception of the Flint Hills. Mintier said that he and Amsden could frame the Committee's concerns and present a package to the Planning Commission. Discussion followed on spheres of influence, on leapfrog growth, and on making a recommendation.

Vice Chair West moved to accept Alternative B as the preferred alternative with the changes of including additional commercial opportunities at intersections, studying the possibility of village-concept development in the eastern Flint Hills, and not using the term *clustered residential* on the preferred-alternative diagram; Mr. Gatto seconded, and the Committee approved the motion 11–0.

5. **Review Committee bylaws:** Discuss and consider recommending a revision to the Committee bylaw requiring approval of a majority of the entire Committee membership for motion passage.

Mr. Noble made a motion to amend the Committee's bylaws from the statement "All acts of the Committee shall require the presence of a quorum and the affirmative vote of a majority of the total membership" to read, "All acts of the Committee shall require the presence of a quorum and the affirmative vote of a majority of the membership in attendance." Schneider seconded the motion. Ms. Saxton suggested that having a majority vote might not be desirably sufficient if the number of members voting is especially small. The motion was approved 10-1.

Amsden describe the next steps of the GPU process and spoke about the coming Planning Commission and Board meetings on the GPU. He also spoke on the GPU's environmental review and the drafting of the General Plan itself. DoP Armstrong noted the major milestone of the GPAC's decision this evening.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m. to the special meeting of March 17, 2011.

Minutes prepared by Michael Kelly, Associate Planner. Attest: Byron Turner, Assistant Director of Planning.