

Citizen Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2010

Present: City Manager Dan Schwarz, Larkspur Fire Chief Bob Sinnott, Twin Cities Police Chief Todd Cusimano, Planning Director Nancy Kaufman, facilitator Ben Noble, Senior Planner Neal Toft, Contract Planner Julia Capasso, and all members of the CAC except for those listed below.

Absent: Ari Blum, Russ Brubaker, Tony Catrino, Wolf Gutscher, Jerry Hauser, Helen Heitkamp, Zachary Perry, and Jared Polsky.

1. Introductions and Announcements

Facilitator Ben Noble called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. He turned the floor over to the Planning Director for announcements. She stated that the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will host a strategy workshop on October 22 from 1-4 p.m. at the Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter in Oakland entitled "Adapting to Rising Tides." The workshop will address the potential impacts of sea level rise in the Bay and adaptation strategies. Any CAC member interested in attending should contact her for more details. Mayor Lundstrom, who is a BCDC Commissioner, added that she and Council member Kathy Hartzell would be attending and would be happy to carpool with a CAC member. Pre-registration is required for the workshop.

2. Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

3. Discussion of Additional Meeting Dates/Review of Work Plan

Mr. Noble stated that the work plan reflects the focused nature of the General Plan update, rather than a comprehensive revision. The Planning Director briefly reviewed the work plan, which was distributed to CAC members prior to the meeting, and invited questions from the CAC.

Jim Moore asked for clarification of the Station Area Grant proposal for the Larkspur Landing Area mentioned under the September 27 meeting. The Planning Director stated that the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG, the Bay Area's regional land use planning agency), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC, regional transportation planning agency) are offering grants to study station areas along the SMART rail line. This marks the third round of grant proposal requests. The City had previously not submitted a proposal because in order to be eligible the City would have needed to plan an increase in the density in the station area. However, it appears now that the grant could be used mainly to address circulation

impacts due to the SMART station (including getting from the station to the ferry, parking, congestion impacts, etc). Some study of area land uses would be included. If the City Council approves the proposal, then staff will submit it. A local match is required, so the City will need to evaluate whether the grant opportunity is worthwhile financially. The grant applications are due in November.

Mr. Moore asked how likely it is that the City would get the grant. The Planning Director responded that the money is available and she has heard that they want to give Larkspur a grant. Mayor Lundstrom confirmed this and added that she and the City Manager will be meeting with County Supervisor Steve Kinsey, who is an MTC Commissioner, this week to discuss it. The City does not want the grant if it forces a commitment to higher density in the Larkspur Landing area without addressing existing circulation issues. The City does not have the staff resources to study all the various circulation impacts that will occur with the SMART station, so a grant to do so would be advantageous. The Planning Director stated that the existing density in Larkspur Landing is close to the 20 dwelling units/acre minimum that the agencies are looking for. All the vacant land in Larkspur Landing has either approved or proposed plans, so the only possibilities for housing in addition to those projects would be as mixed use at the shopping center, the ferry site, or other commercial properties.

James Holmes asked whether the presentations and discussion listed in the Work Plan for October will address the Land Use Element. The Planning Director stated that the CAC will start looking at two areas in particular (North Magnolia Avenue and Redwood Boulevard east of Highway 101). As the City is almost completely built out, those two areas have the most potential for transition. The CAC will look at the Land Use Element during this process, but land use overlaps with a lot of the topics the CAC has discussed so far and will discuss in the future. The CAC will have the opportunity to review other parts of land use but, at this time, the City Council wants to make sure those two areas are examined. The circulation presentation in October is intended to be an information presentation about the Circulation Element, which also relates to land use.

Mr. Holmes then referred to the two to three land use alternative scenarios that the Work Plan proposes for each subarea. If the CAC reaches consensus for one scenario, would it be worthwhile to spend time developing alternatives? He suggested that multiple alternatives be an option, rather than a mandate. The Planning Director stated that in terms of the General Plan, it would be fine to have one preferred land use scenario, but that environmental review requires the City to look at alternatives. It's better to have these alternatives come from the CAC process rather than staff. Mr. Noble added that environmental review requires a "no change" alternative based on existing General Plan policies, so each subarea will have at least two alternatives.

The Planning Director moved on to discuss future meeting dates. The CAC has already approved meeting on the fourth Monday of every month from 6 to 8 p.m. Given the short timeframe of the project and the Council's request for more meetings, the CAC should decide on an additional monthly meeting day. Meeting the second and fourth Mondays would be most

practical in terms of staff time and pacing. As the Library Board meets in the Council Chambers on the second Monday of the month from 5 to 7 p.m., she has asked the Board about their feelings on the matter. Daniel Kunstler, Library Board Chair and the Board's representative on the CAC, responded that the Board decided to accommodate the CAC as best as possible. The Board meeting will start earlier at 4:30 p.m. and conclude by 6 p.m. The Planning Director thanked Mr. Kunstler and the Board, and said that their flexibility was much appreciated and that the CAC could start a little later to accommodate setup and avoid overlap of the meetings.

The CAC will meet on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from this point forward, with the second Monday meeting starting at 6:30 and the fourth Monday meeting starting at 6. The CAC will have to be flexible around the upcoming holidays. The next meetings through October will be on September 27, October 11, and October 25. When the two subarea planning groups are established at the September 27 meeting, each group will pick a time to meet. For logistic reasons, staff would prefer that the two groups meet on the same day. As several CAC members initially preferred a later meeting time, and others preferred an earlier meeting time, this might be an effective method to divide into groups. One group could meet around 4 p.m. and the other at around 7 p.m.

4. Presentations

a. Larkspur City Manager Dan Schwarz: City Budget and Finances

Mr. Schwarz presented the PowerPoint slideshow (see the City website for presentation and Q&A sheet for discussion). There are three types of revenue that relate directly to land use: property tax, sales tax, and transient occupancy tax (TOT, or the "hotel" tax). Larkspur is a property tax city: 62 percent of General Fund revenue comes from property tax. Most jurisdictions today have an opposite imbalance; usually sales tax constitutes a larger proportion of revenue because many cities have made land use decisions to increase sales tax. As the CAC talks about land use throughout the update process, they should think about how the City could promote development or facilitate different types of property changes through the General Plan, and how that could affect Larkspur.

Larkspur experienced exceptional growth in property tax revenue from 2003 to 2009, due mainly to high property turnover which triggers reassessment as there was a negligible amount of construction. Property tax, however, has flattened in the past few years and will likely be static for a while, due to the down economy. The steady growth in property taxes has, until now, masked the increase in expenditures that Larkspur has faced over the past decade because of the increasing cost of doing business. This year the City adopted a budget with a one percent deficit, requiring tapping into reserves; this situation is better than other communities but is not taken lightly. The City needs to correct structural imbalances and balance the budget, and he is working with City staff and the City Council to do so.

Larkspur's primary expenditure is employment, which will continue to increase. The City is looking at a long period of flat growth in revenues and must address this with a reduction in

expenditures. He hopes the approved developments on the few remaining developable parcels will commence, and that the community (the market) will continue to embrace the idea of a hotel at Larkspur Landing, which would increase the TOT.

b. Twin Cities Police Chief Todd Cusimano: Police Services

Chief Cusimano presented the PowerPoint slideshow (see the City website for presentation and Q&A sheet for discussion).

The number one issue in the Twin Cities is traffic and related issues, particularly congestion. Traffic officers are devoted only to traffic, balancing education and enforcement. Patrol officers are on 12 hour shifts from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. When fully staffed, there are four police officers and one supervisor per shift. Minimum staffing levels are three police officers and one supervisor.

The Twin Cities Police Authority's (TCPA) jurisdiction is split into three beats: the eastern portion of Corte Madera, a central area encompassing most of Larkspur and the western portion of Corte Madera, and the area from North Magnolia Avenue to north of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. With the minimum staffing levels, there is one officer in every beat with one supervisor. When fully staffed, the fourth officer acts as a general patrol or cover officer. The officers work in pairs, for safety reasons. The TCPA's resources can be used very quickly, as officers are spread over a large area with varying residential density. For instance, Beat Three is not as big as Beats One and Two, but it's very dense with multi-family dwellings on Spyglass Hill, Bon Air Hill, Larkspur Landing, and Skylark. The new San Clemente development in Corte Madera has averaged 40 more calls for service a month at that location. **[Clarification: Calls primarily noise and disturbances related; housing management is addressing.]** Nancy Nakai suggested that part of the SMART station grant for the Larkspur Landing area address the impact of increased residential density and traffic congestion in the station area on police and fire services.

The Larkspur ferry terminal is ranked in the top 100 by the Department of Homeland Security as a potential terrorist threat, and the TCPA receives approximately \$100,000 over the past several years to respond to any incidents. Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is also an interesting corridor; any crimes occurring in West Marin will either go through San Rafael at Miracle Mile or Sir Francis Drake. Because of this, the TCPA provides backup coverage for all agencies west of the Twin Cities.

The TCPA receives approximately 25,000 calls for service per year, which is more calls for service than all the agencies south of the Twin Cities. This is mainly due to the fluctuating population from the two shopping centers, the ferry terminal, and schools, which can increase the population by 15,000 any given day during the week. About 46 percent of calls are residential and 54 percent are commercial. Police services are split almost evenly between Corte Madera (47 percent) and Larkspur (53 percent), which is about the ten year average.

Thanks to the passage of Measure E, the TCPA's natural disaster response will be much improved. The new TCPA headquarters will be a state of the art emergency operation center and will house all TCPA services. The building will probably be a 100 year building, and Chief Cusimano anticipates that it will encourage further regionalization (and thus more cost savings), particularly of dispatch and specialty services. The TCPA was the only consolidated agency in the State until recently. The new facility should be constructed by December of 2011, with a move-in date of June 2012. The foundation will be laid this October.

c. Larkspur Fire Department Chief Bob Sinnott: Fire Services

Chief Sinnott presented the PowerPoint slideshow (see the City website for presentation and Q&A sheet for discussion).

The Department has 18 employees: two chief officers (himself and the deputy chief) and 16 engine company personnel who are split into three platoons referred to as the A, B, and C shifts. Each shift has two captains and three firefighters. An extra firefighter on the C shift is a vacation relief employee. There is one captain on duty at the main station on Magnolia Ave. with two firefighters and a two person engine company. At the Greenbrae station there is one captain on duty with two firefighters and a three person engine company.

Key issues with the main station on Magnolia Ave. include:

- 1) Engine room doors too narrow. The fire trucks carry everything they need for different types of calls and all employees by law must ride inside and belted, unlike in the old days. The trucks have become much larger.
- 2) No sprinkler system. Neither the station nor City Hall next door has a sprinkler system because of the age of buildings. This leaves them vulnerable in a fire or seismic event.
- 3) Lacks ADA access because of age.
- 4) Lacks seismic reinforcement; vulnerable to earthquake.
- 5) Has interior and exterior deferred maintenance; repairs, etc.

The Greenbrae fire station, located off Sir Francis Drake on Barry Way, was constructed in 1991. Though it is much newer than the main station, it still has deferred maintenance that needs to be addressed. The Department's total budget is \$3.8 million. Due to budget constraints, the Department is currently staffed at pre-1980 levels. Near term fleet replacement includes one fire engine and several staff vehicles.

The Department receives approximately 1,500 calls annually, which is expected to rise slightly in the future. Most calls are for medical rescue, a shift from a few decades ago when fires constituted the bulk of calls. Firefighters are now EMTs and paramedics. This can partly be attributed to people lacking health insurance, as calling 911 is an easy way to get medical assistance. People call 911 even for minor medical issues. Marin is a fire-based Emergency Medical Services (EMS) paramedic first responder and transport system. When someone

calls 911 with a medical emergency, the Department dispatches an engine and ambulance, and transfer to hospital.

Marin's response platform is a local agency structure. There are 12 independent fire agencies in Marin. However, in an emergency all agencies take a regional response approach and act as one. Training and equipment is standardized, and there is a central dispatch center, sophisticated mutual aid system, and an excellent state mutual aid system.

Many responses in this area are car crashes. Firefighters are trained to rescue people in all different situations. Fortunately most auto crashes are not fatal. When he first started, many accidents were fatal because of the lack of seatbelts, airbags, and crumple zones. There were also more DUI's. Today, most car crashes are survivable.

The most common types of fire here in Larkspur (and nationally) are dwelling fires, because that's where people spend most of their time. Dwelling fires have the highest property damage, fatality, and injury rates. Larkspur also has a very significant urban interface threat from wildfire. Hillside development (such as Madrone Canyon) puts residents at risk of wildfires and creates challenges for fire services to respond to events. A typical summer vegetation fire in Marin is usually fueled by tall dry brush and grasses and burns from a quarter to 25 acres. There is minimal property damage from a wildfire if residents prepare by clearing brush around their home and use fire resistant building materials (if possible). The Department primarily protects Larkspur but also travels across the State and other western states to provide mutual aid for major fire events.

Larkspur has an excellent gravity fed water system, with storage tanks at the top of Wilson Way, Skylark Drive, and Eliseo Drive; however, the tanks are vulnerable during a seismic event. The Department also offers great disaster preparation programs, including: the Get Ready course (3 hours); the Citizen Emergency Response Training course (18 hours; more intensive citizen emergency training); the Get Ready Marin hillside interface program; CPR and choke saving courses; and the recently launched Citizen Emergency Advisory Committee, which is the equivalent of a disaster council for Larkspur.

In the future, he anticipates that Marin fire agencies will further regionalize. The Ross Valley in particular is a perfect geographical niche for consolidation. Regionalization and consolidation could improve service levels and possibly reduce costs. Future development in Larkspur will result in increased call volume, mainly for emergency medical responses. The City's aging population will also result in an increased call volume. Aging buildings will increase fire risk. The budget is also a long-term issue, impacting staffing and equipment and building maintenance.

6. Review of Community Character Element Discussion Notes, Review of Major Points, and Wrap-Up

Mr. Noble presented highlights from the last meeting to the Committee for their feedback. He stated that the last meeting was a preliminary discussion to make sure City staff is aware of the group's key concerns, interests and opinions as the process moves forward with subarea studies and General Plan revisions.

Referring to the major Community Character points, Nancy Weninger stated that one missing "highlight" was the importance of interactions with fellow Larkspur residents, which usually happens when people are outside biking or walking. Another missing "highlight" is to preserve and enhance the walkability of the community, with sub-elements of this including safe and easy pedestrian access to locations within the City like schools or parks, and also safe and direct connections to transit whether walking or biking. Joakim Osthus agreed with Ms. Weninger and said that "livability" does mean interacting with community, outside, which we don't do inside our homes or in a car. Getting people outside and interacting with each other is important.

Bruce Friedrichs added that the discussion included encouraging events that bring schools and community together for visual and performing arts in public spaces, which should be emphasized in the highlights. Mr. Holmes asked whether the "highlights" were consensus items. He said that though allowing higher intensity of use in Downtown was a concept that was discussed, no consensus was reached. Mr. Noble said these items were not a consensus. The Planning Director stated that the CAC should be striving toward consensus at the end of these discussions in order to provide clear direction to staff. If that's an area people strongly object to, it can be removed from the "highlight" list.

Julie Leitzell asked for clarification on reaching consensus, as she thought they would be breaking into smaller groups to reach consensus on land use issues and other specific projects. The Planning Director said they would be breaking into smaller groups to study the two subareas, but the previous discussion was specifically for community character. Staff can put items that need more discussion and clarification aside, but the CAC needs to have some agreement to move along. Ms. Nakai stated that she thought it was a brainstorming session. Alice Anderson suggested classifying the "highlights" as "discussion ideas." Mr. Holmes noted that some items on the "highlights" list were consensus items, but others were not and are worth flagging for more discussion. He suggests flagging higher intensity of use for more discussions. He also thinks the points made last time are additional to the existing policies in the Community Character Element rather than necessarily a substitution. Mr. Noble stated that it is the intention to start with the existing goals and policies of the current element because they are generally good, and staff will add new ideas as directed by the CAC. The "highlights" list was a starting point for those new ideas.

Ms. Leitzell stated she was concerned that the CAC's priorities will be a list of "wouldn't it be great if" things versus a realistic list, considering the budget difficulties. The Planning Director responded that as a 20 year plan, if the CAC gets too specific the City will end up with a plan that's quickly out of date; it should be kept in mind that it is a long range plan. Ms. Anderson asked whether the City budget identifies priorities. Mayor Lundstrom responded that the Larkspur 2050 Capital Expenditure Plan prioritizes public improvements. The General Plan is a

planning framework for future decisions. The Planning Director added that the 2050 Plan is an implementation document regarding city infrastructure; the General Plan has a different purpose. There are many implementation tools including the zoning ordinance and capital improvement program.

Elise Semonian said that she sees the General Plan process as dealing with priorities. Mr. Noble stated that in his experience the most effective General Plans often contain the least amount of detail. They are a clear statement of community values and are a valuable tool in implementation down the road. The General Plan can include action items as well to guide city decisions. Thinking about the GP as constitution providing broad principles is useful. Mayor Lundstrom gave an example of a value identified through a previous General Plan process: to preserve the historic City Hall. The City Manager at the time had wanted to tear down City Hall and build a new civic center. However, the community value was to preserve it, so General Plan policies and programs have done so. Mr. Kunstler said that the actual work of the committee is not necessarily to work within the constraints right now, but to show the City what we ought to be working towards. Mr. Noble agreed and said that as a visionary document, the General Plan describes what the community wants to become and how that can be accomplished. Obviously there are constraints and impediments to realizing that vision but having those values defined is a very effective tool for decision-making as individual decisions come up.

Ms. Nakai said she found it similar to when corporations go through the vision process. The General Plan is the vision statement for the City, which will drive the mission statement and strategies. The CAC can get bogged down in minutiae of things, but the purpose is to guide specific discussions. Ms. Leitzell stated that from a practical aspect in the next 20 years, there are definite things that should happen but might not realistically happen. The City should plan what to do with the City Hall and how to pay for the seismic retrofit. Ms. Semonian stated that she is worried that if the General Plan does not plan to make the needed retrofits, they will get lost. Mr. Noble said that the City Council will need to determine how specific actions and implementation will occur based on the overall General Plan vision. Mr. Holmes reminded the group that there are other General Plan elements that address these concerns.

7. Select Committee Officers

The Planning Director stated that there have been two suggestions on this item from CAC members. Mike Folk proposed having a social get together in the Council Chambers before the next meeting. The other suggestion is to not have a chair until it's a necessity. Mr. Folk stated that after the discussion last time about Community Character, he wanted to talk more with people about a lot of interesting things brought up; time was limited, and he thought a social hour would facilitate more open discussion. Ms. Nakai questioned whether the CAC needed a chair yet.

Mr. Noble stated that the Chair is a member of the CAC who can take a step back and help staff and the facilitator ensure the process runs smoothly and may be willing to not promote his or her agenda as an individual but think more about helping the group work together successfully.

A chair is effective with a group like this. The Planning Director said that regardless of the CAC's decision about having a chair, staff does want a liaison to report to the City Council and Planning Commission on CAC activities. Those bodies have representatives on the CAC who can also report back, but it helps to have another perspective.

Mr. Holmes suggested deferring the officer selection for another meeting or two. Mr. Osthus suggested having the social hour after the next meeting. Mr. Folk added that attendance of the social hour wouldn't be mandatory. Mayor Lundstrom said that the City Council had the advantage of looking at everyone's applications which stated their skills and experience in community service and was very helpful. Mr. Osthus said they could talk about their skills and qualifications at the social hour. The Planning Director said that staff will defer officer selection for the next 2 or 3 meetings, or until the CAC feels it's appropriate. **The CAC will have a social hour in Council Chambers at the end of the next meeting on September 27, from 8 to 9 p.m.** Light refreshments will be provided.

Next meeting: September 27, 6 to 8 p.m.

The next meeting will feature a presentation by a Metropolitan Transportation Commission representative about SB 375 (a state law addressing land use and transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions) and a staff presentation on housing and the Housing Element.

Adjournment

The CAC adjourned at 8:05 p.m.