



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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ALVIN JAMES, DIRECTOR

August 12, 2002

AGENDA: August 20, 2002

Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNTY GRADING ORDINANCE REGARDING REVISED DESIGN STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE ROADS, DRIVEWAYS AND BRIDGES

Members of the Board:

On May 21, 2002, your Board continued the public hearing on this matter in order for staff to provide, in chart form, a comparison of existing roadway standards, proposed standards and community objections and suggestions (Attachment 1). This chart was requested to assist your Board in understanding the proposed ordinance changes, the basis for the ordinance revisions proposed and the concerns of the community. Staff was also directed to assess the recommendations of Supervisor Pirie that were presented in her letter to your Board, dated May 20, 2002 (Attachment 2).

Comparison Chart

Staff has prepared a chart comparing the existing road and driveway standards of the County General Plan, Fire Code and Grading Ordinance as directed by your Board (Attachment 3). The chart also summarizes the comments received by the community members who submitted written comments (Attachment 4) or spoke at the May 21st Board meeting, and the preliminary ordinance revision submitted by Big Creek Lumber Company on May 5).

Supervisor Pirie's Recommendations

Supervisor Pirie, in her May 20, 2002 letter, recommended that your Board only take action to repeal the errant language regarding the surfacing with drain rock and replacing it with the original language of the ordinance. Supervisor Pirie further recommended that a Private Roads Standards Task Force be established to develop recommended design standards for private roads, including any necessary amendments to the Fire Code, General Plan and Grading Ordinance.

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Supervisor Pirie's recommendation to correct the wording in the Grading Ordinance as an immediate action on this matter makes sense. However, because this action would not correct the inconsistencies between the General Plan and the Grading Ordinance, staff believes that several additional minor changes to the ordinance to achieve consistency would be appropriate if your Board were inclined to proceed with Supervisor Pirie's recommendations. These include changing the width of the roadways from 16-feet to 18-feet, increasing the base rock from 5-inches to 6-inches, increasing the thickness of the asphaltic concrete from 1-1/2 inches to 2 inches and deleting the subsection on bridges. Staff has included a proposed ordinance to implement this amendment should your Board choose to do so (Attachment 8).

Staff believes that the formation of a Private Roads Standards Task Force is a good idea. The combined expertise of engineers, contractors, fire officials and other interested people should result in the development of design standards for roads and driveways which are not only technically feasible, but also reasonable given the wide range of road types and terrain in the County. Staff, however, recommends, for several reasons, that this process be deferred until the General Plan update is commenced. First, the work of the task force, if initiated now, would duplicate the review of the Fire Safety Element (FSE) that would be conducted as a part of the General Plan update. In the past, this FSE review has been conducted primarily by the fire agencies in the County in conjunction with Planning staff. Creation of a task force for the purpose of revising the FSE with a variety of professions and viewpoints represented could lead to policies and ordinances that are more sensitive to local conditions. Second, working on the private road standards during the General Plan update will allow for the integration of the recommendations into other sections of the General Plan and into the implementing ordinances.

Discussion and Recommendation

As your Board knows, the intent of this ordinance amendment was to correct an error adopted two years ago and to make the Grading Ordinance standards for private roads consistent with the requirements of the General Plan/LCP and the adopted Fire Codes for the Fire Districts in the County. These amendments have generated significant controversy. Following a number of community meetings and Board hearings, staff has prepared an ordinance that incorporates (or eliminates) the majority of the concerns expressed by members of the public attending the community meetings and Board meetings. These amendments were presented to your Board on May 7 and May 21, 2002 (Attachments 11 and 12, respectively). However, there are still concerns as evidenced by the correspondence your Board received for the May 21, 2002 meeting. Should your Board wish to proceed with these amendments, staff has included the Resolution (Attachment 6) and Ordinance (Attachment 7) from the May 21, 2002 hearing for your consideration and action.

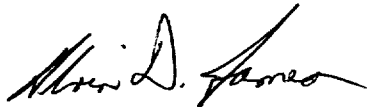
At this point, however, staff believes that the direction recommended by Supervisor Pirie, modified as discussed above, is appropriate. This would immediately fix the error in the Grading Ordinance and achieve consistency between the General Plan and the Grading Ordinance without wholesale changes to an ordinance that had not generated any controversy before this 'fix' was proposed. The review of existing roads and application of site-specific exceptions by the fire chiefs, as provided for in the Fire Code, would continue to be implemented as it has been. In addition, it is recommended that your Board commit to the formation of a task force comprised of a variety of professions and interests to develop revisions to the Fire Safety Element and the Grading Ordinance as a part of the General Plan update, planned for commencement in the next few years.

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It is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that your Board:

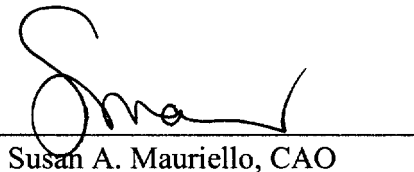
1. Adopt the attached Resolution Amending County Code Section 16.20.180- Grading Ordinance Design Standards for Private Roads and Driveways (Attachment 8) giving final approval to the proposed amendments as proposed by Supervisor Pirie with staffs modifications; and
2. Adopt the attached Ordinance Amending County Code section 16.20.180- Grading Ordinance Design Standards for Private Roads and Driveways (Attachment 9); and
3. Certify the CEQA Categorical Exemption (Attachment 10); and
4. Direct the Planning Department to transmit the amendments to the California Coastal Commission as a Local Coastal Program Implementation Plan amendment for their approval and certification; and
5. Direct the Planning Department to include in the future work program for the General Plan update the formation of a Fire Safety Element Task Force, and to return at an appropriate time to the Board with a report on the proposed membership of the task force, as outlined in Supervisor Pirie's letter.

Sincerely,



Alvin D. James
Planning Director

RECOMMENDED: _____


Susan A. Mauriello, CAO

- Attachments:
1. Minute Order, Item No. 79, May 21, 2002 Board Meeting
 2. Letter of Supervisor Ellen Pirie, dated May 20, 2002
 3. Comparison Chart
 4. Correspondence from May 21, 2002 Board meeting
 5. Letter of Bob Berlage, Big Creek Lumber C., dated May 14, 2002
 6. Resolution Approving the Proposed Grading Ordinance Amendments (May 21, 2002 version)