



County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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FIFTH DISTRICT

AGENDA: 5/22/01

May 16, 2001

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: COOPERATION WITH CITIES ON HOUSING ISSUES

Dear Members of the Board:

On Tuesday, May 15, 2001, I attended as an observer the historic meeting of the Watsonville and Santa Cruz City Councils. This joint meeting focused on the housing crisis facing residents of our county and the Councils received presentations from staff of both jurisdictions regarding each city's housing efforts. As part of the discussion among Council Members, concerns were raised regarding County efforts in the affordable housing area and, particularly, the possible effect of the non-certification of the County's Housing Element on the efforts of the cities to develop affordable housing. The meeting resulted in the creation of a joint task force made up of two members from each City Council with the direction to prepare additional information on the housing issue and particularly to look into the County's activities in this area. The information is to be brought back to a future joint meeting for consideration and possible action.

I think the joint meeting between these two cities and, particularly, the focus on the housing crisis is an incredibly positive step and the County should cooperate with the cities both in sharing information and in developing strategies for increasing housing opportunities, especially for those residents least able to survive in the current housing market.

Board members are well aware of the County's efforts to provide affordable housing opportunities over the years. The County is the first jurisdiction in the State, and probably the country,

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where the electorate approved an inclusionary housing requirement for all newly constructed housing. Hundreds of units of housing have been developed over the years, providing the opportunity of home ownership to moderate income residents who otherwise could not afford to purchase a home. In addition, a significant number of subsidized housing units have been constructed for lower income County residents. In fact, we will be considering today just such a project in South County.

While I think the County, as well as the county's cities, could do more to encourage affordable housing in our community and, in many ways, the current crisis is an overwhelming one for any local government to respond to successfully, we do have an excellent record. However, we could do a better job of informing the cities as well as the public of the accomplishments in this area.

Moreover, there seems to be some confusion regarding the role of the Housing Element. As I understand it, the County does have an adopted Housing Element and, while it has not been certified by the State Housing and Community Development Department, this lack of certification has not prevented the construction of any affordable housing either in the County or in cities. Primarily as a result of the our redevelopment program, the County has had more than sufficient subsidy funds available to provide the necessary local financial assistance for every lower income project that has sought it. However, I think it is important that staff clarify the matter given that concerns were raised by some Council Members.

In conclusion, I think it is both desirable and important that the County cooperate with the cities within the county to expand housing opportunities, especially for our lower income residents, and to assist in other ways as well in order to reduce the burden of the current housing cost crisis.

Therefore, I recommend that the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. Direct the County Administrative Officer, in cooperation with the Planning Department and Redevelopment Agency, to prepare a report on the County's efforts in the affordable housing area, including past accomplishments, current programs, financial assistance provided and financial resources currently available, and other relevant information. This report should include a discussion of the County's Housing Element and the effects of its not receiving State certification on the development of affordable housing opportunities. This report should return to the Board on or before June 26, 2001, for consideration.

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2. Direct the Chair to write to the Mayors of the Cities of Watsonville and Santa Cruz expressing the County's willingness to cooperate with them in efforts to respond to the housing crisis and informing them that the County will forward a housing report to them in the near future.

Sincerely,



MARDI WORMHOUDT, Supervisor
Third District

MW:ted

cc: Members, Watsonville City Council
Members, Santa Cruz City Council
City Manager, City of Watsonville
City Manager, City of Santa Cruz
County Administrative Officer
Planning Director
Redevelopment Director

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