



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123
ALVIN JAMES, DIRECTOR

October 22, 2001

AGENDA: November 6, 2001

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

REVISED DESIGN STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE ROADS, DRIVEWAYS AND BRIDGES

Members of the Board:

On February 27, 2001 your Board gave preliminary approval to proposed amendments (Exhibit 1-A of Attachment 1) to the Grading Ordinance's Design Standards for Private Roads, Driveways and Bridges (Section 16.20.180) that would ensure that firefighting trucks/equipment can safely and effectively use the County's rural private roads, and to make the guidelines consistent with the County General Plan/Local Coastal Program (GP/LCP), and directed the Planning Department to process the amendments. On August 8, 2001 the Planning Commission considered the proposed amendments and recommended their approval by your Board (see Planning Commission Resolution – Attachment 5). These proposed amendments are now being brought back to your Board for consideration of final approval. The attached proposed Resolution (Attachment 1) gives final approval to the proposed amendments and directs the Planning Department to forward the amendments to the California Coastal Commission for their approval.

Background:

On December 14, 1999, your Board adopted a number of policy and ordinance amendments, including revisions to the rural road standards, for privately maintained roadways. Section 16.20.180 (Design Standards for Private Roads, Driveways and Bridges) of the County Code, a part of the County Grading Ordinance, establishes standards for the construction of all private roads, driveways and bridges where a Grading Permit is required (Attachment 1 of Exhibit C of Attachment 7). This section, adopted as a part of the original Grading Ordinance in 1977, had not been amended since 1984, until your Board adopted the amendment to the road surfacing standard as a part of the timber regulations (Attachment 2 of Exhibit C of Attachment 7). These revised road standards required a drain rock surface for all roads with grades between 0 and 10%, instead of the currently required baserock surfacing. This new surfacing requirement was intended to reduce the deterioration of private roads and the resultant erosion problems. Following adoption by your Board, this package of amendments was forwarded to the Coastal Commission for its review. In May 2000; the Coastal Commission adopted the revised road standards as a minor amendment.

On June 20, 2000, your Board directed Planning staff to present a report outlining the efforts the Department was undertaking to educate the public and facilitate the implementation of the recently adopted standards. Planning staff began the outreach process by first discussing the new road standards with the Fire Chiefs Association of Santa Cruz County. As a result of these discussions, Planning staff reported back in September and December 2000 that the Fire Chiefs Association had a number of concerns with the adopted road standard as well as the existing road standards in the Grading Ordinance. These included concerns about the ability of fire/emergency vehicles to negotiate roads with the proposed drain rock surfacing. In addition, the fire chiefs were also concerned that the current private road, driveway and bridge standards in the Grading Ordinance were not consistent with the County Fire Code, nor the County General Plan/LCP. Planning staff requested, and your Board granted, additional time to allow the Planning Department and the Fire Chiefs Association to complete the review of the road standards and to develop any necessary revisions prior to any additional outreach. Planning staff and the Fire Chiefs Association met on a monthly basis to address these issues and crafted amendments to the Grading Ordinance which are consistent with the County Fire Code and the County General Plan/LCP.

Road Standards

The proposed amendments to Section 16.20.180 (Exhibit 1-A of Attachment 1) modify the wording of the section for clarity and conformity with the current Fire Code and General Plan. The following table summarizes these changes:

STANDARD	CURRENT GRADING ORDINANCE	PROPOSED GRADING ORDINANCE
all-weather surface	5 inches of baserock, Class II or certain Class IV; if grade exceeds 15%, 1 ½ inches of asphaltic concrete (or 4 inches of concrete, with no sub-base); if grade Exceeds 10% and there are high erosion hazards, oil and screenings can be required	6 inches of compacted Class II baserock; 95% compaction required; if grade exceeds 15%, 2 inches of asphaltic concrete (or 4 inches of concrete, with no sub-base); oil and screen required for all other roads with grades up to 15%; all secondary access roads require 2 inches asphaltic concrete
road dimensions - width	16-foot wide for roadway, 12-foot wide for driveway (the 16-foot wide road may be reduced to 12-foot if there are environmental constraints, if turnouts (12' x 30') are provided every 500-feet and approved by Fire Chief)	18-foot wide for roadways serving more than 2 habitable structures; 12-foot wide for driveways serving 2 or fewer habitable structures (the 18-foot wide road may be reduced to 12-foot if there are environmental constraints, if turnouts (12' x 35', with approach and departure areas) are provided every 500-feet and approved by Fire Chief.);
bridges - width	16-feet	20-feet; may be reduced by fire chief consistent with Fire Code and GP/LCP
bridges - vertical clearance	n/a	14-feet
bridges - design	H-20 loading	HS-20-44 (25 ton); posted at both ends of bridge
maintenance	n/a	requires all roads, driveways and bridges to be maintained as originally constructed

The proposed road, driveway and bridge standards were based on the Policy **6.5.5** of the 1994 County General Plan/LCP (Attachment 4 of Exhibit C of Attachment 7) and the requirements of

the County Fire Prevention Code (Chapter 7.92 – Attachment 5 of Exhibit C of Attachment 7). These new road standards would only be applicable for new roads or upgrades to existing roads which require a grading permit.

As indicated in the table above, the major areas of the amendments deal with the width and surfacing of roads and driveways. The roadway widths specified in the proposed Grading Ordinance have been increased to be consistent with the minimum widths established by the General Plan/LCP and the Fire Prevention Code. These widths (18-feet for more than two habitable structures and 12-feet for two or fewer habitable structures) will allow fire apparatus to gain access to the structures in the event of an emergency while allowing residents to exit the area. The exception clause, which allows for the reduction of the 18-foot wide roadway to 12-feet (with approved turn-outs) in cases where there would be significant environmental impacts resulting from meeting the full width standard, is retained with minor modifications.

The surfacing requirement has been upgraded to require oil and screened surfacing for all roads with grades between 0 and 10%. This standard is consistent with the Fire Prevention Code definition of ‘all-weather’ road surfacing and the intent of the 1999 amendment to reduce the amount of erosion from new roads. While this will increase the construction cost of new roads (and all road improvements where a grading permit is required), the property owner and the community will benefit from the savings in long-term maintenance of the roads, the reduction in sedimentation in area streams and the improvement in fire apparatus access.

Other minor changes to the Grading Ordinance standards include changes to the standards for bridge construction, a requirement for permanent maintenance of the roadways and bridges constructed under the Grading Permit and a number of wording changes that have been added for clarity. The standards for new and replacement bridges include minimum requirements, consistent with the Fire Prevention Code, for width, weight limit and posting. These standards will insure that bridges are capable of supporting fire apparatus and allow adequate vehicular access. The maintenance requirement is a new provision to insure that property owners maintain their roads as they were constructed, thereby maintaining adequate fire, vehicular access and proper drainage.

Discussion

The road surfacing standards approved by your Board in 1999 were originally proposed to be applied to new private roads as well as to new timber harvest roads. However, the road surfacing standards, that were a part of the 1999 and 2000 packages of amendments to the Forest Practice Rules, were not approved by the California Board of Forestry. Your Board, however, approved the amended standards for use on private roads and subsequently directed the Planning Department to prepare a public information and implementation program for the new standards.

Over the past year, Planning staff, Public Works and the Fire Chiefs Association has worked together to identify and resolve a number of issues related to road access and fire safety. The proposed amendments to the Grading Ordinance are a product of this collaboration (Attachment 6 of Exhibit C of Attachment 7). The proposed amendments to Section 16.20.180 are consistent with the General Plan/LCP and are consistent with the County Fire Prevention Code.

Proposed Implementation Program

To facilitate implementation of the new rural road standards, staff proposes to conduct a public education/outreach program that includes preparation of a new "Rural Road, Bridge and Driveway Standards" brochure (to be made available on the Planning Department website and in a brochure available at the zoning counter), as well as updating the existing grading ordinance and erosion control brochures to include reference to the new standards. In addition, the public education effort will include presentations to be made at appropriate public meetings and outreach through the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District. A specific effort will be made to ensure that appropriate Public Works Department staff members are made fully aware of the new standards as well. Additionally, information on the new standards will be provided to applicants at the Planning Department zoning counter.

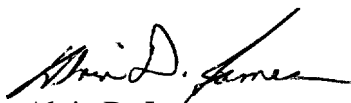
Conclusion and Recommendation

The proposed amendments have been found by Planning Department staff to be categorically exempt from CEQA and a CEQA Categorical Exemption form has been prepared (Attachment 3). The Planning Commission, on August 8, 2001, following a duly noticed public meeting, adopted a Resolution recommending approval of the proposed amendments to the Grading Ordinance's Design Standards for Private Roads, Driveways and Bridges - County Code Section 16.20.180 (Attachment 5), and the CEQA Categorical Exemption (Attachment 3).

It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that your Board:

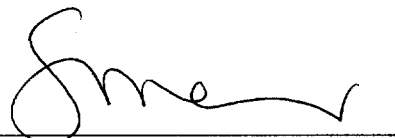
1. Adopt the attached Resolution Amending County Code Section 16.20.180 – Grading Ordinance Design Standards for Private Roads, Driveways and Bridges (Attachment 1) giving final approval to the proposed amendments; and
2. Adopt the attached Ordinance Amending County Code section 16.20.180 - Grading Ordinance Design Standards for Private Roads, Driveways and Bridges (Attachment 2); and
3. Certify the CEQA Categorical Exemption (Attachment 3); 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.

Sincerely,



Alvin D. James
Planning Director

RECOMMENDED



Susan A. Mauriello
County Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution Approving the Proposed Grading Ordinance Amendments
Exhibit 1-A: Proposed Ordinance No. ___ Amending County Grading Ordinance (County Code Section 16.20.180)
2. Ordinance Amending County Code section 16.20.180- Grading Ordinance Design Standards for Private Roads, Driveways and Bridges
3. CEQA Exemption
4. Board of Supervisors Letter from Alvin James, Planning Director, dated February 14,2001
5. Planning Commission Resolution
6. Minutes of Planning Commission Meeting of August 8, 2001
7. Planning Commission staff report
8. August 7, 2001 Letter from James Nelson, Chair of San Lorenzo Valley Water District Board of Directors

cc: Fire Chiefs Association of Santa Cruz County
Public Works Department
San Lorenzo Valley Water District
County Counsel
Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District