Submission to Written Correspondence: Housing Advisory Commission
From: Commissioner Alternate, Morlos
Date: Sep 9, 2026
Subject: County Building Code Subcommittee

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors directed staff to have the Housing Advisory Commission and the Contractor Stakeholder Group review local building codes and amendments and provide any further recommendations to the board.

For the July 2026 HAC meeting, staff issued a 31-page document listing local codes that are stricter than state requirements. During the meeting, HAC Chair Reed and Alternate Morlos (1st district) stated that before recommending any changes to building codes, industry experts should be consulted. The HAC agreed and voted to create a subcommittee to investigate: Appointing Morlos (District 1) and Commissioners Wells & Luke (District 5).

The subcommittee met and voted on narrowing focus on issues that warranted further investigation. There was consensus on the following issues warranting further investigation.

1. Wood retaining walls
2. Parking lot requirements
3. Doorway Accessibility
4. Building Appeals
5. Soils/Seismic regulations
6. Flood regulations

In addition to the above regulations, Morlos requested that three more issues, relating to repair/disaster, should also be given to staff/industry experts for feedback and considered. These issues were:

A: Roofing Materials
B: Wood foundations for use with Tiny Houses/emergency shelters
C: Shear wall regulations

The subcommittee had a split vote on A-C, and A-C were abandoned.

The building department met with the subcommittee and gave feedback on items 1-4. There is consensus that the Board of Supervisors should continue as the Building Appeals Board.

Items 5-6 (Seismic and Flood regulations) fall under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Planning Department; for these topics, the subcommittee never received information concerning distinctions between State and County codes. During research on these issues, Morlos met with the Environmental Department and was informed that the County's Soil Engineer has retired, a replacement has not yet been hired, and the County Geologist is out on maternity leave. As a result, Morlos has no recommendation, except that Soil and Flood regulations should be looked at in the future and that stakeholders should be consulted.

There is unanimous consensus within the subcommittee that the subcommittee should be disbanded.