

PATTERSON IRRIGATOR

Inclusionary housing change tabled

MAY 3, 2018

By: Jenifer West



Collishaw, Crowd- Tom Collishaw, far left, stands near the podium during the Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, April 26. Collishaw, President and CEO of Self-Help Enterprises, attended the meeting to address a proposed reduction in inclusionary housing. The item has been tabled indefinitely.

The Council Chambers last Thursday night was packed with people upset about a proposed change to the city's Municipal Code that would have reduced the mandated inclusionary housing requirement from 15 percent to five.

The possible change was removed from Thursday's agenda, and, according to City Manager Ken Irwin, will remain so indefinitely.

Impact on market rate housing

According to the staff report, the item was brought forth for consideration because of city officials' concerns that the current 15 percent requirement "can drive up the cost of market-rate housing, or make the development of housing in Patterson less competitive as compared to surrounding cities."

The report indicates that city staff has looked at other jurisdictions in the area and noted that other cities have also made commitments to include inclusionary housing, but have not acted on them.

The report indicates that the city is currently the only city in the county that has a citywide inclusionary housing requirement, which puts it at a disadvantage for attracting market rate housing.

Self-Help Enterprises President and CEO Tom Collishaw disagreed with that view, however. "I think that the staff report is very lacking in this issue," he said. "In my reading, it suggests that... the City of Patterson has been at some competitive disadvantage with other communities because of this ordinance, and that's somehow thwarted development of market rate housing opportunities, which I just don't think stands up."

City bungles process

The standing-room-only crowd had turned out to voice concerns that the proposed change would have endangered the affordable housing in the Walnut Avenue and North First Street area that some in the group are currently in the process of applying for through Self-Help Enterprises.

City officials were apparently concerned about the public's reaction to the move, as they had taken the somewhat unusual step of arranging for a Sheriff's deputy to be present at the meeting.

Aware that the item would likely be removed from the agenda, Self-Help Enterprises President and CEO Tom Collishaw attempted to address the issue during the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting (when anyone can speak to a governing body regarding an item that is not on the agenda), as did Patterson Progressive Alliance member Shivaugn Alves.

(Alves actually approached the podium twice: once to urge the commission to allow an opportunity for members of the audience to be heard, and a second time to point out that two of the commission members' terms had expired, and no interviews had been held to reappoint or replace them.)

Chairman Ron West deferred to Deputy City Attorney Robin Balar at that point.

Balar advised the group that public comment on an item that is on the agenda is not allowed during this portion of the meeting.

However, when the item was later pulled, no public hearing was opened, and no public comment was allowed at that point, either.

Reached by phone earlier this week, Collishaw said, "We were there to say a few words during the public comment period. But... they would not allow public comment, because it was on the agenda. But then, when they got to the agenda item, they removed it. I think the frustrations that some people had... who were very interested in the item, was that they were promised a moment to say something, but then they never really got it."

West also was not happy with the way the issue was handled.

"The meeting was not like our (typical) meetings. It was surprising, and extremely disappointing," West said via email. "(It was) surprising to everyone, including me, when City Staff informed us that the item was being removed from the agenda. It was obviously disappointing to everyone who was there for it. I was looking forward to finding out who was there and what their concerns were."

"If they were applicants for the already-approved and under-construction Self-Help Housing development, a proposed change in future projects should have no impact whatsoever on them. If someone told them otherwise," West added, "that is beyond disappointing... That is not how we do business in Patterson."

"I look forward to full future discussions about our entire housing supply issue," he wrote.

Collishaw ultimately expressed appreciation that the item has been pulled, to allow for more community dialog on the issue.

"Actually, we wanted to thank the city for pulling back on this short timeframe, in favor of a more robust community discussion about this issue... That's what we took the postponement to mean, that they recognized that there was broader interest than they had anticipated," Collishaw said, noting that the item had originally been placed on the City Council meeting and was pulled.

"They initially put it on a city council agenda... and pulled it from there, and then placed it on the Planning Commission and then cancelled that. So, we want to take this in good faith that they want to have a stakeholder discussion about it," he said.

That discussion may not be needed for some time, however.

Issue spills over to City Council meeting

Tim Robertson, executive director of the North Valley Labor Federation, expressed support for the original 15 percent inclusionary housing mandate during the public comment period of Tuesday's City Council meeting.



Standing room only- A standing room-only crowd packed the Council Chambers for the Planning Commission on Thursday, April 27. The group was there to oppose an amendment to a city ordinance that would have reduced the required inclusionary housing in Patterson from 15 percent to five.



M. Donoso, R. Segoviano—Activist Miguel Donoso, center, talks with School Board member Ryan Segoviano, in maroon shirt, talk in front of City Hall after discussion regarding possible changes to the inclusionary housing requirement during the Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, April 26.

“I wanted to be on the record for myself and my organization, that we oppose repealing or amending this. But I also wanted to raise some concerns about the process of the planning commission, meaning specifically that people were not allowed to comment,” he added.

“My understanding was that people asked to comment during the non-agenda public comment period and were told, ‘no, that’s on the agenda; you’ll have to wait,’ and then, as the agenda started, that (item) was then removed from the agenda, so people were (not) allowed to speak at the time that it was supposed to be on the agenda because it was no longer there.”

“The effect was that the people that were there to speak out in favor of the ordinance, which was on the agenda when they walked in the door were not allowed to do so. And that’s something that’s of great concern,” he said “I would like to make sure that there’s as robust a public

communication, or a public debate over this as possible,” Robertson added.

Deputy City Attorney Doug White responded, “Just for the record, the item was pulled from the agenda, and we do not have any amendment to the inclusionary housing ordinance that’s currently up for debate. Any (change) would have to go through a public hearing process, where it would be vetted through the public, both through the Planning Commission and through the City Council. At a minimum, you would have three public hearings, and a period in which it would go,” White said, the latter presumably referring to the timeframes required for the public meetings that would need to be held.

Still, White defended the decision not to allow public comment, saying that, as the item was pulled from the agenda, there was nothing for the public to comment on.

Local activist William Hoffnecht expressed concern that Planning Commission members whose terms were up two months ago were still on the commission. White pointed out that there is a “rollover clause” in the Municipal Code, which allows commission members to remain in place until new hearings could be held. Hoffnecht countered that the Municipal Code limits such rollovers to one month, and urged the council to address the issue.

In wrapping up the topic, White said, “I think we’ve heard people’s comments about allowing dialog in the future, and I will certainly advise Mr. Baral, who was covering the meeting, to... do that.”

“(The item) was removed for consideration; no action could be taken at that time. It is not clear whether or not it will ever come back, and in what form it will.”

“I agree... that even when you pull something, if people want to comment on it, give them the opportunity so that they don’t feel alienated,” White said. “With that being said,” he added, “the whole public policy behind it is the reason that you come and comment: that there’s something that’s being considered.”

“I do want to assure you and the speakers we’ve heard that I will communicate to Mr. Baral that it will be our policy going forward that on items people are given the opportunity to talk, whether it’s legally required or not.”

Changes to proposed mini golf project

The Planning Commission approved a change to the site plan for the proposed miniature golf and family fun center on Annamarie Avenue. The change was needed to accommodate an increase in building size requested by the property owner.