
Gaviota Coast Planning Advisory Committee

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES MEETING No. 22

***Wednesday November 10, 2010
Vista de Las Cruces School Auditorium***

Meeting No. 22 Called to Order: By Chair Kimbell at 6:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call

GavPAC Members Present: Baer (arrived after roll at 6:32), Boise-Cossart, Bowman, Kimbell, Lloyd, McGinnis, McKenna, Van Leer

GavPAC Members Absent: Feeney, McNabb, Tautrim

County Staff Present:

David Lackie, Long Range Planning Division Supervising Planner

Brian Tetley, Long Range Planning Division Senior Planner

Katie Haldeman, Long Range Planning Division Assistant Planner

2. Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda: None

3. Administrative Briefings

Staff: The Board of Supervisors (BOS) was briefed on the responses and comments received from the informational sessions on the California Coastal Commission's (CCC) proposed Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) modifications during their November 9th hearing in Santa Maria. They appointed Supervisor Farr and Supervisor Wolf as representatives of the BOS to attend and provide testimony as appropriate at the November 18, 2010 Coastal Commission Meeting. The BOS authorized Supervisor Farr to work with Staff to draft a revised letter, for execution by the Chair, expressing the serious concerns of the County regarding the proposed modifications. This hearing was continued until December 14, 2010 so that the Board of Supervisors may provide direction to the Planning and Development Department as to how it wants to proceed should the CCC take final action at their November 18, 2010 hearing.

Staff has also created a separate webpage for the Visual Resources Subcommittee, which is accessible from the main Gaviota Coast Planning Area webpage.

Deliberations: Chair Kimbell said 30-35 people provided public comment regarding the proposed LUDC modifications, and that most expressed opposition to the modifications. Chair Kimbell will be at the upcoming CCC hearing in Santa Monica to convey the same message as he did at the BOS hearing. Chair Kimbell feels the BOS continues to support the GavPAC and its process.

Public Comment: None

4. Meeting Minutes from Meeting No. 21 on October 27, 2010

Deliberations: Bowman requested the minutes be amended to show that she abstained from voting on approval of the minutes due to her absence from that meeting.

Public Comment:



Mike Lunsford: Revise his comment from page 1 to read . . . “the County should cooperate with the CCC’s attempts to interpret and enforce the Act. The bigger issue is the relationship between the GavPAC process and LUDC and how one affects the other with separate CCC approvals.” Revise his comment from page 4 to read “. . . compensating requirements/restrictions such as requiring land to be put in conservation easements, so that granting such entitlements will not drive up agricultural land prices.”

ACTION: Bowman moved, seconded by Van Leer and carried by a vote of 7-0, with 1 abstaining due to absence from that meeting, to approve the minutes with modifications.

5. Discussion of Existing Resources & Open Space Policy

Deliberation: Staff explained the County’s existing natural resources policy approach, including 1) Preservation of natural features and native vegetation, to the maximum extent feasible; 2) Specific protection for wetlands, coastal dune habitat, and stream and creek corridors; 3) Conservation Element guidance and; 4) Environmental Guidelines and Thresholds Manual

Public Comment: None

6. Consideration of Resource Stewardship & Open Space (RSOS) Preferences for the Gaviota Coast

Deliberation: Chair Kimbell inquired about the frequency with which the County updates Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) boundaries/maps. Staff explained that ESHA in the Coastal Zone has remained static. The ESHA overlay is part of the County’s Local Coastal Plan (LCP), so changes to ESHA boundaries require an LCP update. Lloyd reminded the committee that ESHA mapping efforts and associated boundaries only give approximate locations and are not high resolution. Site specific analysis, as required for some development projects, provides more accurate mapping resolution.

The County defines ESHA the same way in the coastal and inland areas, however different buffering and disturbance criteria are applied in each area. ESHA is primarily limited to riparian areas, but can also include native grasslands and other habitats in the County.

The Committee deliberated on different RSOS issues identified in the public workshop and subsequent meetings. The Committee wants to take a holistic approach to watershed planning (issue RSOS-2). Baer stressed the need for a watershed based approach to planning, including potentially having different policies for each watershed that serve the needs of the community within that watershed. The steelhead trout were suggested to be used as an indicator (totem) of watershed health and water quality.

McGinnis mentioned that species can move between watersheds and suggested using buffers around physical characteristics of an area as an approach for watershed protection. McGinnis stressed the importance of having a long range vision for the Gaviota Coast.

McKenna suggested a policy approach based on the paradigm of ‘thou shall not impair/degrade the watershed’ and if improvements/development were to be done on a property, then a comparable enhancement or protective measure for the watershed shall be applied. Lloyd and Boise-Cossart also support McKenna’s policy approach for watershed protection.

Fundamental existing and proposed RSOS policies could be enhanced through supporting the formation of voluntary watershed councils. Formation of a council can be difficult when multiple landowners, each with different resources on their property,



occupy a watershed. Van Leer said it is time consuming, expensive and often not even feasible to obtain baseline water quality and aquifer data for a watershed. Conducting ongoing water quality monitoring is also difficult. Boise-Cossart site specific concerns for how best to improve the watershed. She is concerned about project development and ongoing practices that can harm the watershed, including the allowed use of Round-Up and pre-emergence chemicals and manure being dumped into creeks.

Staff stated that through permitting, the County implements Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and other local and state agency standards to protection water quality. In the past, community plan policies have not been couched in a watershed approach. Many aspects can inform which components of a watershed will be addressed through policy.

Chair Kimbell asked about having something akin to a development agreement with a voluntarily created watershed master plan. If the plan raised the level of environmental protection above baseline regulatory requirement, when it came time to conduct a project analyzed in the master plan, could the analysis of that development tier off the master plan and be more of a more ministerial action?

In regards to inland ESHA determinations, the Goleta Community Plan Update does not extend ESHA boundaries onto agricultural lands, and instead uses a riparian corridor overlay. McGinnis mentioned that Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) aerial mapping could be a way to develop a baseline of natural resources, as LiDAR is currently being used to create detailed maps of the Amazon rainforest. Chair Kimbell believes the definition of ESHA for inland area uses undefined terms, in particular the use of the term 'special' as a descriptor of habitat type. A range of interpretations of the definition could allow for more or less protection of ESHA, depending upon whether the goal is more or less protection of resources.

Wildlife corridor issues refer to the movement of wildlife between watersheds and along riparian areas, in relation to barriers across those corridors. Currently there is no existing local policy direction for wildlife corridors. However, recent development proposals have included mitigation for such issues, when it is clear that development is going to impair corridors. Lloyd views wildlife corridors as not limited to specific areas, but rather throughout the project area. McGinnis mentioned there is a cadre of experts working on the wildlife corridor issue, including how to define where corridor locations may exist and what needs to be done to ensure safe passage of wildlife. McGinnis suggested that the GavPAC could recommend a pilot project to study wildlife corridors as part of this planning effort. Lloyd is in favor of recommendations that would support wildlife migration, including fencing design that would facilitate wildlife movement. Van Leer said that wildlife routinely migrates through a tunnel under the Highway, across Las Varas Ranch.

Boise-Cossart mentioned that Rick Ridgeway is nationally active on the corridor issue and that he works out of Ventura County. Staff will further investigate Ventura County's policies on wildlife corridors.

Public Comment:

Mike Lunsford: The GavPAC should look at the linkage between watershed planning and the health of aquatic wildlife as well as land use planning and its relation to the watershed. The GavPAC should distinguish between the optimum practices to protect the watershed and appropriate watershed protection policies. There needs to be a mechanism to balance development activities within a watershed. Studies done at UCSB have shown that if 10 percent or more of a watershed is paved (impervious surface), then the watershed can be negatively impacted. A policy framework should be developed for landowners to collectively manage their watershed.



Mike Lunsford: Agrees there could be a better definition of ESHA, but that ESHA discussion should not side-track GavPAC deliberations. Asked the GavPAC to consider land use policy on bigger and broader terms, and begin thinking about creative sources for financing improvement projects, similar to what was done by the Gaviota Coast Study Group. Watershed planning as part of the Gaviota Coast Planning process needs to fit existing policy framework.

Chris Shaeffer: Staff asked Chris Shaeffer how Caltrans goes about planning for wildlife corridors. Chris Shaeffer attempted to get a Caltrans biologist to attend tonight's meeting, but was unsuccessful. However, one or two biologists will likely attend the next meeting to speak to some of the issues raised during this meeting and to explain what Caltrans is doing in response to wildlife corridor challenges along the Highways. Biologists will also explain Caltrans' approach to watershed protection.

7. Consideration of RSOS Planning Tools

Deliberation: Included under Item 6 and continued to Meeting 23.

8. Discussion of LUDC Certification Process

Deliberation: Discussed during the Administrative Briefing item.

9. Discussion of Long Term Meeting Schedule

Deliberation: McKenna requested Staff schedule some of next year's GavPAC meetings in the Goleta Area. Staff will look into the availability of additional meeting locations in Goleta prior to the next meeting, at which time the GavPAC can deliberate on where it would like future meetings to be held.

Public Comment: None

Meeting Adjournment – 8:54 p.m.

