



16 December 2010

**Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee (GVPAC)**

Valerie Olsen, Chair  
Bonnie Freeman  
Kenneth Mineau  
Kim True  
Kenan Ezal  
Ted Adams  
Tom Elliot

Subject: **Goleta Valley Community Plan Administrative Draft  
Agricultural and Rural Land Use - San Marcos Agricultural Area  
5050 and 5052 Hollister Avenue – APNs 065-080-008, 009 and 024**

Chair Olsen and GVPAC Members,

I am writing as Head of Montessori Center School (MCS). Specifically, I am writing to express our deep concern with draft Policy LUA-EGV-2.7 in the Goleta Valley Community Plan Administrative Draft and its potential impact upon our ability to develop a permanent site for our school. Upon review, we believe this draft Policy may preclude our ability to develop a school on property we own at 5050 and 5052 Hollister Avenue (APNs 065-080-008, 009 and 024).

MCS was founded in 1965 and was located at the Hope School Campus from 1977-1997. Since 1972 MCS has been a non-profit educational organization. MCS is affiliated with the American Montessori Society and licensed by the Department of Social Services. MCS currently serves approximately 290 children and their families and employs approximately 50 staff members. MCS moved to its present location (where we lease property from Goleta Union School District) at 401 North Fairview Avenue in June 1997. Our lease with Goleta Union School District expires in 2013. It has become apparent that if we want to strengthen our programs and enhance our long term viability we need a permanent site.

As has been discussed at previous GVPAC meetings and community workshops, MCS has purchased the above referenced property for the purpose of developing a permanent site. We have reviewed the Administrative Draft of the Goleta Valley Community Plan and we are quite concerned that there is no mention of our intention to develop a school at the property, even though our intention has been public for quite some time. We participated in the van tour in January 2009 (as documented in the minutes from the tour) and met with neighbors of the subject property in early 2009 to discuss the school proposal. It was evident from various public comments made at the February 27, 2010 workshop that the community is aware of our intention.

In addition to a lack of discussion about our intentions, we are also concerned about draft Policy LUA-EGV-2.7 which addresses agricultural conversions. It is unclear to us whether this draft Policy, if implemented, would preclude our ability to develop a school upon approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP)<sup>1</sup> as is currently the case under the existing Santa Barbara County

---

<sup>1</sup> We understand that a Development Plan would also be required if structures total over 20,000 square feet.

Land Use and Development Code, in contrast to an actual rezone. The Administrative Draft does not specify whether in the future a school could be developed on agriculturally zoned property upon approval of a CUP.

As it currently reads, we believe it would be impossible for MCS to meet the criteria required by draft Policy LUA-EGV-2.7. Not only do we believe that the ability to develop a school upon approval of a CUP should be retained, we also believe that the criteria included in draft Policy LUA-EGV-2.7 are overly burdensome and essentially serve as a de facto prohibition of agricultural conversions. For example, the entire San Marcos and South Patterson agricultural areas include prime soils and prime or unique farmlands (according to County maps) and would never be able to meet the criteria required to allow a conversion.

We purchased the subject property with the understanding that approval of a CUP would be required and that it was feasible. Under the existing Community Plan the project would be consistent with relevant policies. We intend to develop a school that is sensitively designed to be compatible with our neighbors and that allows decision makers to make the Findings<sup>2</sup> necessary to approve a CUP. Due to our serious concerns about the criteria included draft Policy LUA-EGV-2.7, MCS is taking a strong stand on this matter and we urge the GVPAC to clarify the Administrative Draft of the Community Plan to specify that a school may be developed on agricultural land upon approval of a CUP.

We understand that we are reviewing a draft document and that details are yet to be worked out. We remain concerned, and we look forward to working with you on this issue that is so critical to our future. If you have questions or would like to discuss these matters further please contact me at (805)683-9383 or [mcshead@mcssb.org](mailto:mcshead@mcssb.org). You may also contact our agent Steve Fort with Suzanne Elledge Planning & Permitting Services, Inc. at (805) 966-2758 x21 or [stevef@sepps.com](mailto:stevef@sepps.com).

Sincerely,



Eric Swain  
Head of School  
Montessori Center School

CC: Vicki Parker, Office of Long Range Planning  
June Pujo, Office of Long Range Planning  
Erika Leachman, Office of Long Range Planning

---

<sup>2</sup> The following Findings must be made: a site is adequate to accommodate the proposed density and intensity of use; adverse impacts are mitigated; streets, highways, and public services are adequate; public health, safety and welfare are not adversely impacted; and compliance with the Land Use and Development Code and the Community Plan.