

**ALAMEDA COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 18, 2007, 6:00 P.M.
EDEN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, OLIVER HALL
21455 BIRCH STREET, HAYWARD**

**MEETING TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO COMMON BOUNDARY BETWEEN
THE CASTRO VALLEY AND EDEN AREA GENERAL PLANS
(El Portal Ridge Boundary)**

Chris Bazar, Alameda County Planning Director, called the meeting to order at 6:25 p.m. Eden United Church Sr. Pastor Dr. Arlene K. Nehring welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated that 2/3 of the parishioners live in the Castro Valley area. This denomination is always in forefront of community issues and she was glad to see such a large crowd attend this meeting.

Mr. Bazar introduced County officials present at the meeting, including members of the Board of Supervisors, the MAC, the Board of Zoning Adjustments and the Planning Commission. He noted that this is not a formal hearing of any of those bodies, but is rather a meeting to provide information and take testimony. The next meeting, a hearing of the Castro Valley MAC, will take place on June 25, 2007 at the Castro Valley High School Center for the Arts. The Planning Commission will hear this issue on July 16, 2007 and the Board of Supervisors will do so on July 24, 2007.

Mr. Bazar then provided a power point presentation (*now available for review on the County website*). He noted that there are a variety of potential solutions to the issues related by residents pertaining to the El Portal boundary line. For example, one could return the entire area to the Castro Valley Plan area, or the boundary line could otherwise be redrawn, or a ballot of residents could be taken, or there could be one plan and several sub-area specific plans. Mr. Bazar emphasized that the CVGP and EAGP are still in draft form and there is ample time to change either or both as needed. He also noted that the Planning Department strong opinion is that general plans should reflect the community preferences to the greatest extent possible; to the extent that previous public process may have been unsuccessful in accurately gauging public opinion in respect to this issue, staff believes the plans can and should be corrected.

Following Mr. Bazar's presentation a number of audience members requested to speak. Below is a list of speakers from the community, all of whom expressed their strong preference for keeping El Portal Ridge area within the Castro Valley Planning Area:

Mark Lowry (provided a powerpoint presentation as well as comments)

Warrant Vinzant

Charlie Cameron

Pete Marino

Leah Meagher

Charles Morrisson

Judith Radousky

Richard A. Rhodes
Masa Shochira
Martin Capron
Eva Harris
Ron Madaras
Katherine Ray Beringer
Debra Butler
Lester Friedman
Luba Suhova
Jim Panico
Charles Amaral
Sheila Cunha
Arman Sawhey
Carolyn Vasconcellos

The clear consensus among these speakers was to leave the boundary line as it had been in the 1985 Castro Valley Plan. The following are the primary reasons why speakers said the boundaries should remain the same (*please refer to the audio recording of this meeting on the County website for specific comments related to each of the speakers identified above*).

1. The speakers stated that they identify with Castro Valley. They shop and socialize there, and many of their children attend Castro Valley schools.
2. They believe the Castro Valley General Plan is a better plan. The tenor of the Castro Valley plan is specific to what areas will be improved; it lists how to achieve the desired improvement. The Castro Valley plan describes the community, has a section on design, biological resources, there is no such thing in the Eden plan.
3. They believe property values will decrease dramatically if boundary is changed.
4. They want to remain in Castro Valley because it has a better school district, and they are concerned that the boundary change could lead to a change in school district boundaries.
5. Being part of the Castro Valley plan will make the neighborhood better and improve chances to improve streets, services, etc..

In addition, testimony was provided by Wulf Bieschke, in his capacity as President of the San Lorenzo Village Homes Association, and Dean Nielsen as Chair of the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council.

Several speakers questioned if the legal requirement for noticing the residents in El Portal neighborhood had been met. Both the Planning Director and Brian Washington of the Office of the County Counsel indicated that it had been; Mr. Washington indicated that he would prepare a formal statement confirming that compliance had occurred.

Mr. Jerry Macy from the Castro Valley School District informed the audience that the Planning Department does not have power to change the school district boundaries. He explained that the process is driven by State law and the County school board. The process does not involve the Board of Supervisors or the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council.

Mr. Dean Nielsen, Chair for the CVMAC, assured the crowd that they will listen to the residents of El Portal. He asked them to attend the coming meeting on June 25th and make their wishes known so that the Board can make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Lester Friedman, asked that this issue not be heard by the Planning Commission as the reason for this boundary change had been the direct result of Commissioner Richard Hancocks' involvement in the initial Eden Area Plan process. He stated that there are two members on the Planning Commission members, Richard Hancocks and Kathy Ready, who have conflicts of interest. Since most of other members are from other parts of the County, he said it would be improper to have this issue heard by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Brian Washington, County legal counsel, responded to Mr. Friedman by noting that there is a government code on how these matters have to proceed, and quoted from that code. Mr. Friedman said he will submit a legal opinion to the County.

On two different occasions during the evening, straw polls were conducted to gauge the preferences of El Portal residents at the meeting. Based on these polls, it appeared clear that: 1) The overwhelming majority of the people present (seemingly in excess of 90%) were El Portal Ridge residents; and 2) all or virtually all of the El Portal residents believed that the area should remain within the bounds of the Castro Valley plan.

Mr. Bazar thanked everyone for coming and encouraged them to attend the upcoming hearings on this issue.