

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL**  
**TRINIDAD PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**THURSDAY August 25, 2011**

**I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Becker, Johnson, Pinske, Vanderpool  
Commissioners Absent: Rotwein  
Staff: Planner Parker & Caldwell

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

***Motion (Becker/Pinske) to approve the Agenda.***  
***Passed unanimously.***

**III. ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

None.

**IV. AGENDA ITEMS**

1. **Rancheria 2011-02a:** Design Review and Conditional Use Permit to amend the previously approved permit to install a tsunami warning siren near the Seascape vacation rental. Due to the hazardous sound levels that occur at the existing location on the ground, the siren will be mounted on a pole approximately 35 ft. in height at the existing location. Located at 1 Bay St.; APN: 042-071-08. *continued from the 08/17/2011 meeting*

Planner Parker introduces the project including the issues from the last Planning Commission meeting.

John Roberts (Trinidad Building Inspector) stated that there was no need to hold up approval from his end as long as the health and safety issues were resolved:

- receipt of Dan Larkin's report on the tsunami siren sound readings to correct the results of the last test that provided to be too loud;
- notification of the siren and hearing protection is provided in the vacation rental;
- an exit plan is provided in the vacation rental; an
- three bumper guards are installed around the siren to preclude contact via vehicles.

He was informed that if it had not been done so already, the above items will be addressed promptly. If the conditions are met, he supports the location and sees no reason to proceed with the project as presented.

Dan Larkin (Emergency Services Coordinator from the Humboldt County Sherriff's Office) reviews the siren test that occurred earlier that day. It was publicized with a press release, in the newspaper, on TV, and reverse calls were made. They made several soundings and adjusted the motor time. Subjective data and decibel levels were recorded. He is satisfied that the siren can be heard in the beach areas where intended and the present sound level is acceptable.

Michael Hostler (Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Programs Director) thanks the community members and Planning Commission for bringing the issue back to the table. A siren is a necessary component for saving lives. It is the Trinidad Rancheria's position to dismiss the motion to put the siren on the pole. The target areas were reached with the sound output. He responds to J. Roberts' conditions:

- they have standard information about distance source tsunamis and actions for vacation renters during a siren test for the vacation homes;
- the tenants will be notified that a one-minute sounding of the siren is only a test;
- the rental agreements will include information about ear protection and other detailed educational needs

#### *Commissioner Comments*

Commissioner Pinske gets clarification that sirens at all other sites are set at 35' and at the same decibel level except for the siren in Trinidad. Commissioner Pinske also appreciates the time that D. Larkin, M. Hostler, and J. Roberts have invested into this project. The other Commissioners agree.

#### *Public Comment*

J. Cuthbertson (840 Van Wycke) thinks that last week was a disgrace. He states that the few people that are against projects are the ones that show up to meetings, and the rest of the people that are for projects don't show up, so compromises are made for the minority of people that complain. He continues, stating that the siren would be on a pole next to an existing pole. If it's designed to be placed higher, it should be higher. Why should we not want to reach as many people as possible? Additionally, tenants at the vacation rental wouldn't have to wear ear protection if the siren was 35' in the air. If putting it up on a pole saves one person, it was well worth it.

In response to the question if the siren will reach farther at 35' high, he states that he's not an expert but that common sense tells him so. It is located on a bank which impedes sound. M. Hostler adds that three sides of the siren have obstacles that affect sound reverberation. At 35' there are fewer obstacles for the sound to bounce off. D. Larkin states that the decibel level isn't the only recognizable feature of the warning—the length attributes to how the sound is recognized.

T. Odom () states that no one wants the siren to be in the backyard as there is a willing property owner to accept it, everyone should be grateful...and it should be placed at the height for which it was designed.

A Trinidad resident agrees that the pole may be nasty looking but at higher level so it can be louder is important for saving lives.

M. Russo (128 Himalaya) states her opinion its current position is important to life and contributes to the 1<sup>st</sup> response. She encourages Trinidad to upgrade to carefully crafted safeguards. She embraces the siren in its current state. She continues, stating that Troy Nicholini from NOAA suggested that there may be plugs that could be used for the cones pointed at humans so the siren could be turned up. She also agrees with M. Hostler that the City needs to be more proactive in coordinating 1<sup>st</sup> response emergency preparedness.

C. Lindgren (Trinidad Ancestral Society) thanks everyone for being able to explore alternatives. She points out that the siren is designed to be heard over a quarter-mile radius which is less than half of Old Home Beach. The siren was heard at the end of it. Also, she feels someone should look into emergency awareness for College Cove and Baker Beach.

S. Pinske (Trinidad resident) is surprised that Trinidad is the only site without a siren at 35'. It is common sense to place a siren at a higher level if the possibility of increasing its distance heard exists. His friend's father died in a tsunami and that makes it more unbelievable that the siren isn't at its optimal height. He suggests painting it green if people don't like what it looks like. A

siren makes residents and tourists feel safe. If they feel safe here, it could lead to a better economy. He finds it hard to believe that it's not at its designed height because of the impact to the view of a rock and vegetation—is that more important than human life?

M. Hostler responds to a question from the public stating that the deadline for a project amendment through the Coastal Commission has already passed. J. Cuthbertson states that the Planning Commission's decision to delay the issue was based on the fact that the Coastal Commission deadline could still be met if an amendment was needed. M. Hostler responds that this turned out to not be the case. However, he feels strongly that the City has a responsibility to keep the public safe. Putting the siren on a pole better benefits the City and visitors.

#### *Commissioner Comment*

Commissioner Pinske feels strongly that as a representative of the City, he has a responsibility to keep the public safe. Looking at the existing conditions--20' difference of pole height from the others) and location with another pole next to it, wires, etc.--he doesn't feel that not installing the siren to spec is appropriate only because it destroys people's views.

Commissioner Johnson realizes that you can't satisfy everyone. In this case that you don't always get what you want, but rather what you need. He states that he learned things from his background reading, such that the sirens are part of an integrated program of emergency services and that it is astute of D. Larkin to come up with a criteria for recognizing the siren, as it is not just decibel level that plays into the sound—it's frequency, humidity, the day, buildings. The siren is not a panacea but part of an integrated program. He recognizes D. Larking put a lot of outstanding work into this and also acknowledges the Rancheria for their effort and lead role. He also asks D. Larkin if the siren can be set at different sounds, but D. Larkin responds that the siren is not multipurpose and he would like there to be only one warning sound so the community acclimates to it. Commissioner Johnson would like to recommend the City be more involved in emergency preparedness.

J. Cuthbertson and Commissioner Johnson discuss the weak spots in the City's notification process.

Commissioner Becker appreciates the comments made here tonight but wishes a more diverse opinion be voiced in the beginning of the process. She encourages more public participation at the meetings.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Commissioner Pinske is appointed temporary Vice Chair of the Planning Commission and Commissioner Becker says she'll help.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

D. Larkin makes a few announcements including:

- sirens are in place and the testing program will most likely be straightened out by the end of the year;
- testing will occur once a month across three counties;
- there will be an expansive public education plan that will be put in place about tsunamis and the testing;
- OES is trying to put another siren in at Moonstone Beach;
- this community could put on the free class: *Living on Shaky Ground*;
- a series of evacuation maps will be on the web that was displayed at the county fair;
- the government is making cut-backs; emergency preparedness can be drastically improved with volunteer efforts & community members should take advantage.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 7:12pm.

**Submitted by:**

**Sarah Caldwell**

Secretary to the Planning Commission

**Approved by:**

---

**Richard Johnson**

Planning Commission Chair