

Coastal commission sends affordable-housing law back to city

By MARY BROWNFIELD

FOR MORE than a year, the staff of the California Coastal Commission sat on the City of Carmel's plan to make it easier to build affordable housing in town. And when they finally looked at the plan, the coastal commission's staff decided changes had to be made.

June 11, planning and building services manager Sean Conroy presented the Carmel Planning Commission with the changes coastal planners said were necessary for the state agency to approve the amendment to the city's Local Coastal Program.

"They indicated they would not be sup-

portive unless some amendments are made," Conroy said.

As approved by city council in March 2007, the ordinance would allow exceptions to certain development standards — such as setbacks, height, floor area, density and parking — to make it easier for 100 percent affordable projects to be built and to allow "flexibility in design."

But with its mandate to promote visitor access to coast, the coastal commission's staff wanted the allowances permitted only in the multifamily residential and limited residential/commercial districts, not in the central and service commercial areas at the center of town.

"The commission staff was concerned that a potential project could be built in areas more appropriately used for retail and other commercial uses," Conroy explained.

Planners also said the flexibility should only be applied on lots 8,000 square feet or smaller, and the parking allowance should be eliminated, since the zoning code only requires one-third of a parking space per affordable unit and "further exceptions may not be appropriate."

Finally, the coastal planners sought more requirements to ensure "that the granting of zoning exceptions does not have a negative impact on the character of the city," according to Conroy, including determinations the new construction would be an improvement over existing buildings and "the project will not diminish the village character by excessively blocking important public or private

views and disturbing natural topography, mature trees or native growth."

Conroy recommended the commission OK the changes and forward the revised ordinance to the city council for adoption, at which point it would return to the coastal commission for final action.

If and when the law goes into effect, the Carmel Foundation will be able to move ahead with its plans to replace nine-units of low-cost senior housing at Trevvett Court with new buildings containing 14.

More than two years ago, the plan for Trevvett Court received a thumbs-up from the city but was delayed pending adoption of the new rules.

Nobody from the public commented on the changes, and the planning commission unanimously voted to recommend the city council adopt the amended ordinance.



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Now that the Coastal Commission has taken a position on the city's new affordable housing law, the Carmel Foundation may be able to go ahead with plans for new units at Trevvett Court.