

# MONO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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## MINUTES

DECEMBER 11, 2014  
(Adopted March 12, 2015)

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**COMMISSIONERS:** Scott Bush, Chris Lizza (videoconference), Mary Pipersky, Rodger B. Thompson. **ABSENT:** Dan Roberts  
**STAFF:** Scott Burns, CDD director; Courtney Weiche, associate planner; Gerry Le Francois, principal planner; Garrett Higerd (videoconference) & Walt Lehmann, public works; C.D. Ritter, commission secretary

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**1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Mary Pipersky called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. in the board chambers at the county courthouse in Bridgeport, and attendees recited the pledge of allegiance.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**3. MEETING MINUTES:**

***MOTION:*** Adopt minutes of October 9, 2014 (*no November meeting*) as submitted.  
(*Bush/Thompson. Ayes: 4. Absent: Roberts.*)

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. VARIANCE 14-001/Meade.** The proposal is to reduce the required front-yard setback for construction of a single-family home in the June Lake Highlands Specific Plan from 20 feet to 10 feet. The subject property is located at 216 Highland Dr. at June Lake (APN 015-290-021) and has a land use designation of Specific Plan/Single-Family Residential. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, a class 5 exemption is proposed under section 15182(a).  
*Staff: Gerry Le Francois, principal planner*

Gerry Le Francois acknowledged applicant Carl Meade and contractor Dennis Clark in attendance, and stated recommendations. Project is in June Lake Highlands Specific Plan area. Prominent issue is slope. Could raise foundations, bring in fill to alleviate steep down-slope. Locating garage with workshop below closer to street with 10' setback lessens fill requirement with decreased slope. Driveway faces north, which is problematic in snow country. Mono road standards = 15% slope, Cal Fire = 16%. Small portion of structures fall within 20' setback.

Comments from fire agencies? *No. Two standards, Cal Fire and June Lake FPD. Rear and side setbacks are 10'. Maximum height is 35'; how much height was gained? Looks like 5' on contour lines.*

**OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT:** Applicant Carl Meade described house as potential full-time residence. Lot is pie-shaped with narrow part facing cul-de-sac. He wanted to avoid gully in front, saying he'd rather drive, not slide, cars into the garage.

Contractor Dennis Clark noted plans show correct height of 35'. Top of cul-de-sac dropped down into garage; pushing building back gets into 16%, very steep driveway. Get closer to street. **CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENT.**

***MOTION:*** Find that the project is exempt from CEQA under CEQA guidelines 15182 (a), Residential Projects Pursuant to a Specific Plan, and direct staff to file a Categorical Exemption; adopt the Variance Findings contained in the staff report; and approve Variance 14-001 to allow a front-yard

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DISTRICT #1  
COMMISSIONER  
Mary Pipersky

DISTRICT #2  
COMMISSIONER  
Rodger B. Thompson

DISTRICT #3  
COMMISSIONER  
Daniel Roberts

DISTRICT #4  
COMMISSIONER  
Scott Bush

DISTRICT #5  
COMMISSIONER  
Chris Lizza

setback of not less than 10 feet for the construction of a single-family home. (*Lizza/Bush. Ayes: 4. Absent: Roberts.*)

## 5. WORKSHOPS:

**A. NEW GROUNDWATER REGULATION & REQUIREMENTS:** Stacey Simon, assistant county counsel, presented a PowerPoint on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014, which will have minimal impact on Mono County but is a big deal statewide. CASGEM maps highlighted priority basins. No plan on regulation at the time. Only medium or high rankings are affected by legislation. Owens Valley Basin has medium ranking, but some rankings might change. Criteria are identical with one exception: Anything else relevant includes impacts of groundwater on surface waters. Tri-Valley basin boundary adjustment is being considered. Local regulation is encouraged. Key concept 1: Any other relevant info may include adverse impacts on local habitat and local stream flows. Deadline to request boundary change: Jan. 1, 2016.

Which agency in Mono? *Tri-Valley Groundwater District*. Lots of agriculture is water dependent. Basins low or very low are encouraged to be managed by a groundwater sustainability plan. State wants data, objectives, monitoring program, coordination with local land use programs, overdraft, recharge, and conservation. If designated as probationary basin, State could step in, but would cede to local agents. De Minimus Extractor. Agricultural wells in Tri-Valley would not qualify; report annually directly. Fees: SWRCB can adopt fee schedule for regulation. Unauthorized extraction has civil penalty of up to \$1,000 plus \$100/day for each additional day violation continues if no compliance occurs within 30 days of notice. Ranchers advised things are looking good right now, don't do a bunch of drilling that would put Mono in medium category.

BMPs for agricultural uses? *Not mandated, a "may."* No adjudication of water in Mono. All General Plan Amendments will go by *Tri-Valley Groundwater District*.

California is the only western state without a comprehensive system of groundwater management. Envisioned as local regulatory program, not State.

Does sustainability plan apply to Tri-Valley? If probationary, State could develop plan for district, with enhanced reporting requirements for users.

**B. SCENIC BYWAY UPDATE:** Courtney Weiche, associate planner, referenced the large-format draft Design Idea Book in the packet. In 2012 Mono got a Federal Highway Administration grant for designation of US 395 as federal scenic byway. Did mapping, signage, trails, marketing plan, and prior documents such as corridor enhancement program. Opticos Consultants team has been hired. Byway involves all communities from county line to county line, including SR 158 and SR 203. Ski resorts are listed as a benefit to byways.

Consultants spent week in summer meeting with communities, especially Walker/Coleville and June Lake. Weiche and Le Francois went door-to-door. Returned to June Lake last month when businesses were not as busy; good turnout, good feedback. Recognizing uniqueness of building character, frontage facades, and signage. Looked at corridor as whole, listing iconic features of each community. Intrinsic qualities included scenic, natural, cultural, and historical. Identify quality for marketing ads. Frontage improvement renderings for businesses interested. Gateway signage/wayfinding: Placement along 395, 158 and 203. Improve existing signage, move to more-appropriate location. Unifying signs along 395 show sense of being on a byway yet reveal uniqueness.

Still in draft form, updating next couple weeks, with final idea book by February. Worked closely with Town, as byway is huge marketing tool for Town as well.

What about communities not along 395? Weiche: Part of byway story. SRs 203 and 158 definitely part of 395, especially ski resorts. Byway is described as fish skeleton as opposed to string of pearls. Twin Lakes Bridgeport? Included in points of interest, recreational opportunities. Signage would indicate 395 is gateway to recreational opportunities. Tahoe plan calls out trails not necessarily right on highway.

Resulting product? Interactive tool with map for visitors. Still want product even if designation does not occur. If approved, door opens for funding opportunities. How many national scenic byways exist? 120. Fairly new program, since 1995. Variety of levels. State byway is required to precede national. Three other byway designations, federal is most prestigious.

Commissioner Lizza noted Lee Vining is not specifically addressed. Scott Burns cited it as complementary to transportation planning world GHG, walkability, cycling – get people out of cars, get tourists to patronize businesses. Good master plan with tourist slant. More-comprehensive main street plan in Lee Vining. Eastern Sierra Trail System parallels scenic byway. MoYo also ties in. CURES kiosks might be revitalized. Weiche: Good grasp on Mono Basin Community Plan. Lizza: Inyo County and Caltrans involved? Weiche: Caltrans yes, but Inyo has no interest in combining with Mono (fearful of regulation). Burns: No additional regulation would result. Invigorate people to upgrade properties. Lizza: Overlap exists. Weiche: On Montana trip, went roundabout way on byway. A national byway has enough presence and attention to attract people.

**C. MONO/YOSEMITE TRAIL:** Courtney Weiche discussed the Mono-Yosemite Trail Plan. She went to Mono Basin RPAC several times. In 2013 got Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance grant and established working group of agencies, stakeholders. Formalize existing trails, identify known gaps. Lots of phone conferences, walking tours. Study areas identified: reduce unauthorized trails, limit new; longer stay in Lee Vining. Trail has three sections: 1) Lee Vining trails from Tufa Reserve to National Forest Visitor Center, town, and Mobil Mart. Constraints are agency permission, so focus on minimal improvements of existing trails; 2) Lee Vining Creek corridor: Poole power plant road, sensitive lands along creek concerned the tribe (uncomfortable to have them shown on map); trail is conceptual; and 3) Connection to Yosemite: Need more time, outreach, and study to define trail. Three recommended approaches if interest in moving forward. Next steps: Community stewardship. Additional outreach to tribes, property owners, agencies. Trail signage – improve what’s already there. Funding for continued efforts. Mono Basin RPAC to formally accept MoYo Trail at next meeting. Lizza: Just for hiking? Weiche: No talk of motorized involvement, barely even biking. Lizza: Potential use conflict on road to Edison plant.

## 6. REPORTS:

**A. DIRECTOR:** 1) Housing Mitigation Ordinance: BOS suspended till July 2016; 2) TRODs: BOS approved Planning Commission recommendation; 3) LTC: Going through Regional Transportation Plan, not a lot of changes; 4) General Plan update: Under way by consultant Sandra Bauer; 5) Conway Ranch easement: consummated; 6) Strategic Planning: Process going through county, BOS will conduct workshop in late January, likely ask to take to RPACs and commissions; 7) Convict Lake Road rehab: Negative Declaration this week; Development Impact Fees: No impact this calendar year, maybe \$5,000 impact next fiscal year. CAC noted intent to capture major projects, including Rodeo Grounds. What happens if ordinance is suspended? Mitigate impacts on housing stock. Hopefully, fair share would be taken care of. Adopted when economy was strong, joint with Inyo, but circumstances are different today. Ordinance could return, but in different form. Trigger point is application for building permit for 2,400 sf or greater. Major projects = combination of units, new units, deed restriction or alternative mitigation strategy. No significant projects that have triggered ordinance. Tioga Inn may be on radar, employee housing, how is it different from affordable housing.

**STACEY SIMON:** Litigation filed against Air Quality Control District had named Mono even though it was not lead agency; removal request was granted. Court could decide Mono should be included, but chances seem fairly slim.

**B. COMMISSIONERS:** **Pipersky:** Letter from MWTC on communication towers scoping. RPACs scheduled to weigh in. Not on private property, but Antelope Valley is interested.

**7. INFORMATIONAL:** No items.

**8. ADJOURN** at 11:45 a.m. to January 8, 2015.

*Prepared by C.D. Ritter, commission secretary*