

**MINUTES OF THE CALABASAS PEAK SCOPING MEETING OF
AUGUST 31, 2011**

Location: Topanga Community House, 1440 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., Topanga, CA 90290

Time: 7 PM to 9 PM

Project Nos. R2008-00115, R2008-00116, R2008-00257, R2008-00258

(MINUTES ARE PREPARED BY PLANNING STAFF FROM NOTES)

PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE

Registered Sign-Ins

Mary Ellen Strote
Gerlinde Gautrey
Beth Burnam
Ryan Ulyate
Lynne Haigh
Dorothy Reik
Howard Soroka
Ken Wheeland
Russ Sutherland
John Sipple
Arthur Nissman
Nancy Helsley
Nancy Rothenberg
Kim Lamorie
Roger Pugliese
Clark Stevens
Robert Buswell
Cynthia Maxwell
A. Ohwha
Janet Shrelaam

THIRD DISTRICT SUPERVISORIAL OFFICE

Ben Saltsman, Chief Planning Deputy

REGIONAL PLANNING STAFF

Mi Kim (Zoning Permits West Supervisor)
Rudy Silvas (Zoning Permits West Principal Asst.)

SCOPING PRESENTATION CONSULTANT

Lloyd Zola (ESA, Community Development)

EIR CONSULTANTS

Julie Berger Cole (Impact Sciences, Inc.)
Dr. Daryl Koutnik (Impact Sciences, Inc.)

APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVE

Bill Cohen (Construction Advisory Services)

**MINUTES
August 31, 2011**

AGENDA ITEMS

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Purpose of the Scoping Meeting
- III. CEQA Process
- IV. Project Description
- V. Public Comment on Content of Environmental Impact Report

MINUTES

1. Meeting commenced at 7:15 PM. Regional Planning Staff welcomed the audience to the Scoping meeting, informed them what the meeting was for and the need to gather comments from the public on the proposed Calabasas Peak Residential Development project. Staff clearly stated that the Scoping meeting was a County meeting. Staff then turned over the presentation to Lloyd Zola (moderator) who presented the Notice of Preparation (NOP), the four separate applications received for the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and Variance on each of the four parcels in the project area, the environmental impacts and the purpose of the Scoping meeting, what the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is and why an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required. The moderator discussed the 30 day time frame for the comments to be received on the NOP for the forthcoming EIR, the 45 day public review period for the EIR, public hearings before the Regional Planning Commission, and Final Planning Commission Action.
2. The public raised questions of the presentation and the slides presented by the moderator, inconsistencies with the NOP handouts. Staff clarified the material being presented on the NOP was related to the slides and assisted with coordination. Public informed by staff that slide presentation would be posted to Department website.
3. The public immediately expressed concerns for impervious surfaces and runoff into the creek beds of surrounding areas, sewer services and sewer lines, why there is a need for an additional water tank if one is existing on the opposite side of Old Topanga Canyon Road, concerns for constructing in a ridgeline protection zone, impacts to the ridgeline as a result of new construction, addressing impacts in the geotechnical and visual impact sections of the EIR, the need to address the watershed impacts to the north of the ridgeline, concern for the haul route necessary to remove excess graded material, responsibility and liability for the water tank should it rupture, the water supply to fill the water tank, concerns for rainy season impacts and fire hazards, and a question of accessibility to the water tank for neighboring residents.
4. The moderator began presentation of the environmental issues discussed in the NOP prepared for the project. The **Geotechnical Hazards** category is the first issue discussed in which the moderator talked about grading impacts near the ridgeline and on the slopes, landslide hazards, and grading quantities to be handled, balanced or removed from the site.

Public Comments: The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- Where will the graded material removed be taken to? It should be addressed in the EIR where the graded material removed will be exported to and how it will be hauled away, also the haul route to be used.
- About how many dump truck loads would be necessary for hauling away graded material?
- The development area being in an earthquake induced landslide area, what hazard to the development and surrounding community does this present? What hazardous impact would placing a large water tank atop the ridgeline have upon the surrounding area? What are the impacts to slope stability?
- A three-dimensional (3D) model of development and grading should be provided.
- The actual slope intensity for the project area should be provided.
- What impacts will there be to the ridgelines?
- The project should be analyzed in relation to the location of landslides that have occurred in the area.
- How will dust due to grading and construction be controlled?
- What impacts will the grading have on runoff and mudflow during and after construction?

- Grading that will remove a large quantity of vegetation in the area, how will this impact runoff and create other erosion related problems?
 - There should be an alternative for cut and fill to be balanced on site.
 - Regarding the landslide potential, who will pay to mitigate the impacts?
5. The **Flood Hazards** category is the second issue discussed in which the moderator talked about drainage patterns associated with grading and the runoff produced due to impervious surfaces.
- Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:
- Surface runoff created by impervious or impermeable surfaces, quantities should be determined based on impervious surfaces and what their impacts will be to creeks in the surrounding area.
 - The EIR should also address the runoff impacts to the area north of the ridgeline, down the slopes to the north.
 - What is the potential flood hazard if the proposed water tank should rupture, the threat/impact to residences downstream, and who would be liable for all damages? (Moderator responded that typically the entity that operates and maintains the water tank is who you go to).
 - What would be the flood hazard during the rainy season? Hydrology studies should be conducted which recognize the effects of global climate change and heavier rainy seasons.
6. The **Fire Hazards** category is the third issue discussed in which the moderator talked about fire hazards associated with the project's location in Fire Zone 4 (Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone).
- Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:
- The EIR should give a good detailed plan for fire fighting in the area. A five year plan should be presented.
 - Who will pay for fire-fighting services and the water tank? Will taxes go up? (Moderator responded that costs would become part of the conditions of approval if project is approved).
 - The project would create new fire hazards to the existing area; question of the access road, who can go in and out? Comment made that the site gets closed off if there is a fire and also on red-flag days.
 - There is very little time to evacuate if a fire gets started and spreads up through the canyon. The County Fire Marshall for the area had comments two years ago about a devastating fire scenario in which up to 2,000 people could lose their lives.
 - What would happen to the existing trail as a result of road widening for Fire Department requirements?
 - A fire in 1993 started where the two existing water tanks are currently located across (north) Old Topanga Canyon Road, which worked its way over and across to the proposed project site.
 - Would there be an increased Fire hazard due to traffic during the construction phase?
 - What type of impacts to the natural habitat would be created as a result of fuel modification requirements for the new structures?
7. The **Traffic Hazards** category is the fourth issue discussed in which the moderator talked about the potential for traffic impacts due to the proposed project. **Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:
- The parking situation needs to be reviewed for people using the riding and hiking trail.
 - There is a concern for the access road not being aligned exactly where the access easement is, would also like to see clarification of easement grants in document.
 - There is a concern for the amount of dirt to be hauled away as a result of grading and site preparation. What will be the traffic impacts for approximately 4,500 potential dump truck trips?
 - Would there be an impact of the weight of the trucks hauling away graded material on Old Topanga Canyon Road? Is there a weight limit?

- What would be the direction of travel for trucks hauling away material?
- What would be the impact of slow moving trucks and the danger of other vehicles attempting to pass them?
- Who will monitor the project site's use?
- What will be the impacts of parking to the riding and hiking trail?
- What runoff changes will result from necessary road widening improvements for traffic?
- Can it be assumed that the homes proposed are specially designed to minimize traffic impacts?
- Traffic impacts cannot just be looked at within the four parcels. Impacts need to be looked at for Old Topanga Road as well. All cumulative impacts need to be analyzed.
- Where would trails go and where would they be staged?
- There is a concern for projects getting started and not being completed, which then become mud pits. Kids will get into the unfinished project area.
- There should be restrictions on turning left out onto Old Topanga Canyon Road from Calabasas Peak Motorway, a hazardous situation with a blind curve. Would there be a need for a traffic light at the intersection?
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) Rangers should be consulted for their opinion on opening up Calabasas Peak Motorway to the public for vehicle access. This could create a major traffic hazard.

8. The **Water Quality** category is the fifth issue discussed in which the moderator talked about the impact of grading on storm water runoff quality, potential for erosion and runoff during grading, changes in the quality of storm water running off impervious surfaces (i.e. streets, sidewalks, driveways and buildings).

Public Comments: The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- The use of pesticides and fertilizers has the potential to impact the runoff from the developed area.
- How much water will be used for grading and dust control during construction?
- The potential effects of erosion on area water quality should be addressed.
- There is a high concern for water runoff impacts to Topanga Canyon Creek, Calabasas Creek and its tributaries.
- Impacts from runoff should also be analyzed for areas north of the project site as well.

9. The **Biota** category is the sixth issue discussed in which the moderator talks about the impacts on existing undisturbed vegetation, potential impacts to sensitive, threatened or endangered plant and animal species.

Public Comments: The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- There is a high concern for the introduction of invasive/non-native plant species and grape vines into the area with the proposed development. What will the impacts to wildlife be?
- Is clustering of the proposed residences possible to reduce the potential environmental/biota impacts?
- Has the County's Oak Woodland Ordinance been approved and how would it apply to this development?
- The impact to the natural environment from water runoff goes beyond what is created by 200 feet of brush clearance. What would be the edge effects?
- There is a high concern for sensitive habitat area impacts of the Santa Monica Mountains.
- What will be the impacts created with the removal of earth in the project area to a depth of 250 feet? The biological impacts must be determined from the removal of this volume/quantity of earth.

- What will be the impacts to birds in the area (e.g. migratory birds, nesting birds)? Would alternate power sources be used, such as windmills, which could have an impact on birds?
- What will be the impacts to the wildlife corridor in the area and through the project site? Will the animal migration route be affected?
- Will habitat fragmentation be created?
- Would there be an introduction of non-native animal or other types of species into the area as a result of the project?
- What will be the environmental/biota impacts from implementation of septic systems into the project area?

10. The **Cultural Resources** category is the seventh issue discussed in which the moderator talked about the potential impacts to archaeological and paleontological resources. **Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- Will there be any impacts to Native American resources in the area? A study was just done by a local group from Calabasas.
- What will be the impact on the existing community and surrounding neighborhood (i.e. the rural culture)?
- What will be the impact to paleontological resources in the project area (e.g. whalebones location)?

11. The **Visual Qualities** category is the eighth issue discussed in which the moderator talked about the potential visual impacts along the significant ridgelines, visual impacts to adjacent residences, and visual impacts associated with grading and construction onsite. **Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- The EIR should include a large number of vantage points and a viewshed analysis of the project area. A vantage point of the site from Mulholland Highway should be presented. Visual impacts of the homes proposed, grading, the paved road, street lights, and the water tank need to be thoroughly analyzed.
- The type of development proposed impacts the beauty of the trails in the area.
- There should be a complete analysis of the ridgelines as they are now and after the proposed development.
- How could the project get this far in its application with the Ridgeline Ordinance in effect? (Moderator responded that the County is obligated by law to take case through the review process).
- The project area is visible from the entire West Valley region, including the 101 (Ventura) Freeway corridor.
- Visual impacts should be analyzed from the Cold Creek Canyon preserve.
- With the proposed road paving, will there be new street lighting impacts?
- What would be the impacts of headlights from vehicles traversing the Calabasas Peak Motorway in the project area?
- How does this project fit in with the Dark Skies Ordinance?
- Show all impacts above limits of ridgelines and show delineation of significant ridgeline setback.
- Would service utilities/infrastructure all be placed underground?
- All impacts upon both ridgelines must be shown, and should require the presentation of additional section drawings.
- The water tank and its visual impacts must be properly analyzed.
- The precise location of the ridgelines should be verified for the County's Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

- Could there be a consideration for joint overlay zones for the residences proposed? The moderator responded that this will be discussed in the EIR under alternatives.

12. The **Fire and Sheriff Services** category is the ninth issue discussed in which the moderator talked about the potential impacts due to the effect of the new residences on staffing and response times for the fire and sheriff services. **Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- What will be the response times for emergency services during rush hour and school times?
- How were distances measured between project area and Fire/Sheriff Stations?
- How does emergency service providers get to the point where they say they no longer have the resources to provide adequate services?
- Will a private road be as adequate to serve the project area as a public road?
- Feedback is needed from the Fire Chiefs at Fire Stations No. 68 and No. 69 on the response times to get to the site, and how many engines will have to respond.

13. The **Population/Housing/Recreation** category is the tenth issue discussed in which the moderator talked about how CEQA looks at the potential for newly constructed facilities to accommodate new growth. Direct impacts and cumulative impacts are evaluated. **Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- The project would create a domino effect by setting the precedent for future development of the area.
- How many more houses could be built and be supplied with water service from the proposed 277,000 gallon water tank?
- What easements are there that could serve other properties beyond the project area?

14. Discussion of other sections in the **EIR**, alternatives and general questions. **Public Comments:** The audience made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- What other alternatives would not require a variance or a CUP per the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District (CSD)?
- The “No Project” alternative should be further examined.
- The moderator explained to the audience that two alternatives have already been shown in the positioning of the proposed homes in the project area, and the potential for environmental impacts each alternative presents. The EIR requires that alternatives have to be determined for feasibility, thoroughly analyzed, and in some cases rejected. The moderator explained that alternatives will be explored that present a project with no water tank (e.g. use of additional pumping stations), a project with clustering of the residences and with smaller units, or a project that only requires administrative action. What physical implications the project may have if it is approved will also be analyzed.
- How many alternatives have been requested? (The moderator responded that a reasonable range of alternatives will be prepared, typically three alternatives or more).
- The moderator explained to the audience that there are no limitations on their comments (e.g. development outside ridgeline protection area, grading less than 5,000 cubic yards and water tank alternatives).
- How many discretionary permits for this type of project have been granted?
- What is the definition of feasible?

- The moderator explained that there is financial feasibility which looks at profitability, and there is also physical feasibility.
- Does a smaller less profitable project make the project unfeasible? (The moderator explained that it does not necessarily make a project unfeasible, and that the County cannot tell a property owner that the property could not be put to an economic use).
- Does the County have the means to purchase a property?
- Will there be a requirement for the project overall to have a completion bond? (The moderator explained that there are completion bonds required for road paving so that fire trucks may gain access, but for the four residential projects it must be researched).
- Riding and hiking resources, the Sierra Club should be consulted for major impacts anticipated as a result of the project.

15. **Meeting concluded at 9:00 PM.** All comments recorded and meeting minutes will be posted to Regional Planning Department's website at <http://planning.lacounty.gov> under the Project Numbers listed at the top of the minutes.