

Public Comments

Oral Communications

Written Comments Received After 12pm on 1/10/2022



January 10, 2022
City Council Meeting

From: Christine Boles <boles@beausoleil-architects.com>
Sent: Monday, January 10, 2022 3:29 PM
To: Public Comment; Woodhouse, Kevin; Wehrmeister, Tina; Murdock, Christian; Michelle Kenyon [BWS Law]; _City Council Group
Subject: Public Comment letter for tonight's council meeting regarding General Plan
Attachments: Boles Letter to City Council Public Comments Safety Element 1.10.21.pdf

[CAUTION: External Email]

Please see attached, thank you.

Christine Boles, Architect

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"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." - Desmond Tutu

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DATE: January 10, 2022

TO: Mary Bier, Mayor
Tygarjas Bigstyc, Mayor Pro-Tempore
Sue Beckmeyer,, City Council Member
Michael O'Neill, City Councilmember
Sue Vaterlaus, City Council Member
Kevin Woodhouse, City Manager
Christian Murdock, Deputy Director of Planning
Tina Wehrmeister, Planning Director
Michelle Kenyon, City Attorney



RE: 2021 Draft General Plan Safety Element Comments for 1.10.21 City Council Meeting

Dear Mayor Bier, Mayor Pro-Tem Bigstyc, City Council Members and city staff,

I appreciate the release of the draft General Plan documents last Friday (at 10:30 pm, such dedication Mr. Murdock!) and I wanted to reaffirm my commitment to a cooperative process of giving informed comments based on my training and over 30 years of professional experience with entitlement processes, environmental analysis, development, and construction.

I acknowledge that I have been hard on planning staff in the last year and a half, and I want to assure each of you, that it is not my intention to personally malign staff. My interests are in improving our practices and policies to better serve the entire City of Pacifica. As I have said in the past, clear regulations also work in the favor of developers and design professionals. I can tell you that as an architect, San Francisco is the worst local city to work in as the rules change depending on who you talk to!

I have spent a LOT of time over the past year researching the subject of safety in Pacifica, both in the hills with landslides and fires, and on the coast with coastal erosion and sea level rise. I spent days reviewing and commenting on Pacifica's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan this year, only to be told after the fact that that this work was not needed, and that Pacifica's hazards will be properly addressed very soon with the release of the updated General Plan Safety Element.

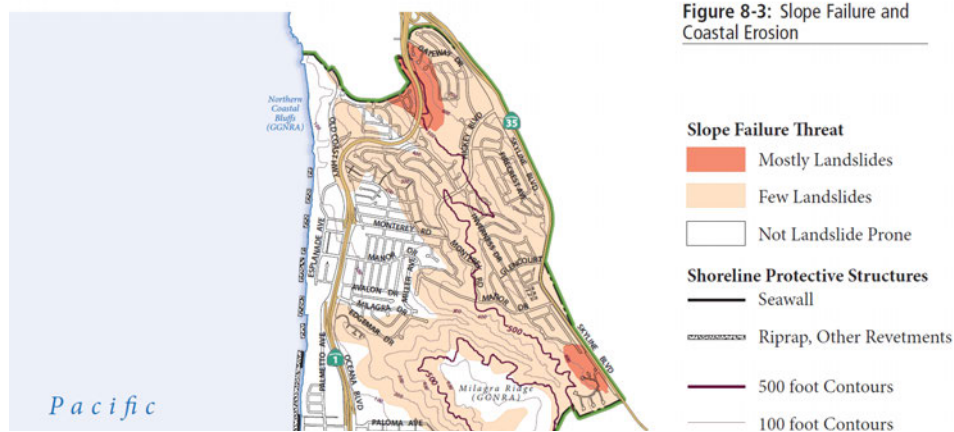
I spent the majority of this weekend reviewing the Safety Element, and honestly, I am appalled. Besides the landslide and coastal erosion errors I have already brought to your attention, the fire map only considers risks to property in the county (State Responsibility Area); there is no data at all for the entire area in City of Pacifica in the city limits.

The Introduction section of the General Plan talks about the importance of Horizontal Consistency within General Plan documents on page 1-5. I've copied the text below.

- **The General Plan Must Be Internally Consistent.**
This requirement means that the general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. "Horizontal" consistency applies both to figures and diagrams as well as general plan text. It also applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of the general plan, whether required by State law or not, have equal legal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element.

Horizontal Consistency between General Plan documents is a legal term and a basic requirement, along Vertical Consistency with other city documents like our zoning ordinances. I'm copying the City Attorney here because I am afraid that this poorly written document could actually put the City in legal jeopardy if adopted as written.

To be specific, here is one glaring example of horizontal inconsistency. Page 8-9 of the Safety Element talks about coastal bluff erosion and discusses the apartment buildings on the 300 block of Palmetto that were lost and had to be demolished in 2016. The Map of Slope Failure and Coastal in Figure 8-3, which was definitely updated since the 2014 version as it now includes riprap locations, still shows these bluffs as “Not Landslide Prone”.



There are no other maps in the Safety Element for coastal erosion or sea level rise, which obviously are an immediate and long-term issue of our city.

[SB 379](#) also requires cities to update their Safety Elements by January 2022 for climate change adaptation.

“This bill would, upon the next revision of a local hazard mitigation plan on or after January 1, 2017, or, if the local jurisdiction has not adopted a local hazard mitigation plan, beginning on or before January 1, 2022, require the safety element to be reviewed and updated as necessary to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies applicable to that city or county. The bill would require the update to include a set of goals, policies, and objectives based on a vulnerability assessment, identifying the risks that climate change poses to the local jurisdiction and the geographic areas at risk from climate change impacts, and specified information from federal, state, regional, and local agencies.”

There is very vague information about coastal vulnerabilities in section 8-3 which I will comment on in detail later, but I want to point out that the requirements of SB379 are for the entire city, not just the coastal zone. So much is missing from this draft document.

I am disappointed, because I have reached out to planning staff and the City Manager on numerous occasions over the past 16 months offering my assistance with the General Plan update and other planning issues. Were any public meetings ever held related to the Safety Element? Even if they were held in 2009, with climate change, these factors are now completely different. We have the resources here with coastal and geotechnical engineers, scientists and other professionals like me who would gladly donate time to improve this document. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience on the Planning Commission. Were they asked to review this document before its release?

By the City Manager choosing to save staff time and not involve the public in this update, I fear we are now on a much more expensive, confrontational, and lengthy path. I hope that is not the case and that you will be willing to reconsider the process to allow real dialogue. I and many others are ready and willing to volunteer our time to work with you all for a proper General Plan update that will be able to safely guide Pacifica through the next 20 years.

Sincerely,

Christine Boles

Christine Boles, Architect

From: [Christine Boles](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Below are my public comments from tonight's meeting
Date: Monday, January 10, 2022 7:57:30 PM

[CAUTION: External Email]

Good evening Council Members and staff, and Mayor Bier – that rolls of my tongue so nicely, congratulations again on your new role in leading our city this year!

In January 2020, starting with the Vista Mar project on Monterey Road and the landslides I found in old public records that were not identified in the planning application, I became concerned about whether the city was properly reviewing projects to protect public safety. I started digging into the General Plan, and the Safety Element section in particular. While the General Plan dates from 1980, the Safety Element was completely rewritten in 1983. Why was that? Because the winter of 1982 was so horrendous – the city experienced major flooding, 475 landslides, and the horrific deaths of three children in Park Pacifica. The studies done for this safety element update called for new landslide maps and yet, 40 years later, these had still not been done. I gave all this information to you and staff as part of our appeal hearing in late 2020.

I'm sure you know the famous quote about history, **"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."**

The Safety Element released on Friday still does not have proper landslide maps. The area where the kids died on Oddstad is still shown in white – not landslide prone. The cliffs on Esplanade, where just 6 years ago we lost several homes and two large apartment buildings to coastal erosion are also white, not erosion or landslide prone.

How is this even possible? Is staff overworked? Is SAMCAR, and other outside development interests so powerful that we can't even think about our risks because property values might decrease in certain areas?

I realize you are in a very difficult position right now as the process staff has established leaves no room for collaboration with the public. We are ready to work with you to revise these elements and ensure a proper update that considers our safety and that complies with state law. I encourage you to do the right thing. Perhaps you were elected for such a time as this, just like Esther in the Old Testament, to stand up and do right by her people.

Christine Boles, Architect

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