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October 26, 2010

Camille Leung
County of San Mateo
455 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

RE: Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for Big Wave Wellness Center and Office Park (SCH No. 2008102109; PLN 2005-00481 and PLN 2005-00482)

Dear Ms. Leung:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Big Wave FEIR. The FEIR includes additional information and several project modifications that address some of our comments on the Draft EIR. However, we still have significant concerns about the proposed project and have identified several potential inconsistencies with the certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) and the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act. In addition, the FEIR does not include all of the information necessary to evaluate the project for consistency with the aforementioned policies. The following is a brief summary of our primary concerns. We urge the County to address these issues before acting on the coastal development permit (CDP) application.

Zoning Regulations

The project site is located in the Waterfront zoning district. The purpose of this district is to provide for a working waterfront area that serves marine related industries, and to accommodate compatible recreational and resource management uses. The proposed Wellness Center would be a residential facility for developmentally disabled adults, which would provide its residents with on-site caregivers and social and employment opportunities, in addition to connecting its residents to support and medical services. Although the Wellness Center is not specifically allowed in the Waterfront district, it could be allowed pursuant to Section 6500(d) of the zoning regulations, if it is considered to be a "sanitarium." However, Section 6326.2 of the County's zoning regulations, which is part of the certified LCP, prohibits the development of facilities that are used primarily by "physically or mentally infirm persons" within tsunami inundation areas. The Wellness Center would house and provide services, including residential aides, for 57 developmentally disabled adults, and, as shown in the DEIR, is located within a tsunami inundation area. Therefore, although we understand the importance of such a facility to the community, the proposed location is inconsistent with Section 6326.2 of the zoning regulations.

Water Supply

The proposed project is located within the County's urban/rural boundary and therefore, must be served by public water utilities. LUP policies 1.3, 1.4, 1.16, and 1.18 direct new development to existing urban areas to maximize the efficiency of public utilities. LUP policy 1.18 specifically

requires new development to be concentrated in urban areas by requiring infill development, and LUP policy 1.19 goes on to define infill as development of vacant land in urban areas that is served by sewer and water utilities. Moreover, LUP policy 2.14 clearly intends for urban services to be provided in urban areas and not within rural areas. To be consistent with these policies, development within the urban/rural boundary, including the project site, should be served by public utilities. The County staff's recommendation for approval of the project addresses this issue through recommended special condition 9, which requires the applicant to pursue a water connection from Coastside Community Water District (CCWD). However, this condition would allow for the permanent use of the private on-site well for potable water needs if a connection to CCWD is not obtained. Therefore, the recommended project appears to be inconsistent with the LCP policies cited above. We recommend that the County require that the proposed project be served by public utilities, including a public water supply, prior to issuance of the CDP.

In addition, the County staff's recommended approval would allow the project to be served by CCWD for fire protection purposes. This fire protection service would constitute an extension of water services outside of the CCWD service boundary as defined on January 1, 2003 and would require amendments to Coastal Development Permits A-1-HMB-99-20 and A-2-SMC-99-63.

Sewer Service

The FEIR indicates that the on-site sewage disposal system has been eliminated. In the currently proposed project, a portion of the wastewater generated by the project would be recycled and reused on site, and the remainder would be disposed of through the public sewer system. The project is served by an 8-inch sewer line and would obtain eight equivalent dwelling units of sewer capacity from the Granada Sanitary District (GSD), which amounts to approximately 1,800 gallons of wastewater per day. In addition, GSD would provide emergency sewer service to the project, in the event that the project's water recycling and/or reuse capacity is interrupted.

The DEIR states that it is unclear if the 8-inch line could physically accommodate the 26,000 gpd of wastewater that would need to be disposed of if the recycling and/or reuse capacity were disrupted.¹ In addition, the DEIR states that the El Granada pump station, which would need to be used to transport the wastewater to the sewage treatment plant, may not be adequate to accommodate the 26,000 gpd flow.

The policies of the LCP, including policies 2.8 and 2.21, require public works and sewage capacity to be reserved for Coastal Act priority uses, such as marine related industrial uses and commercial recreation. The proposed office park would accommodate general industrial development and therefore, is not considered a priority use. Because wastewater generated by the project may exceed the capacity of the sewer infrastructure, including the sewer lines and the El Granada pump station, it would not be consistent with these LCP policies.

¹ As discussed in the DEIR, Title 22 requires recycled water facilities to have the capacity to store or dispose of 20 days worth of wastewater discharge. It is unclear if the GSD emergency hookup would provide sufficient treatment capacity to accommodate this requirement.

Traffic Capacity and Public Access

The project site is located between the first public road and the sea, and therefore, must be consistent with the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act. Coastal Act sections 30210 through 30213 protect the public's right to access the coast and require maximum public access to the coast to be provided and maintained.

The proposed office park would include a subdivision to create ten parcels in order to accommodate the construction of 225,000 square feet of office space in eight new office buildings. The project would nearly double the existing office space in the Midcoast and would add approximately 2,123 peak-hour vehicle trips to the road. All of these vehicle trips would utilize Highway 1, and many would also utilize Highway 92. Both of these highways are at capacity during peak commute and recreational times, which interferes with the public's right to access the coast. Traffic congestion on Highways 1 and 92 significantly interferes with the public's ability to access the area's substantial public beaches and other visitor serving coastal resources in conflict with these policies. Therefore, any additional traffic on these roadways would cause significant adverse impacts on the public's ability to access the coast, which is protected under the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act. To determine the consistency of the proposed project with these policies, as well as the policies of the LCP, we recommend that the County fully analyze the impacts of the project on existing and future traffic conditions on Highways 1 and 92. Such analysis should include an evaluation of impacts on the level of service (LOS) for road segments on Highways 1 and 92, as required by LUP policy 2.49, in addition to impacts on intersection LOS. Any impacts that degrade the traffic LOS below the requirements of the LCP should be avoided through project modifications or conditions of approval.

Aesthetics

The Visual Resources component of the LCP regulates development to protect the visual resources of the County's coastal zone. LCP policy 8.5 requires new development to be located to be least visible from State and County scenic roads, to reduce impacts on views from public viewpoints, and to preserve the visual and open space qualities of the parcel. In addition, LCP policy 8.6 protects the visual resources of streams, wetlands and estuaries.

The project site is located adjacent to Pillar Point Marsh and would be visible from the harbor, Airport Road, Highway 1, several hiking trails, and other viewpoints. The project has the potential to obstruct views of ridgelines and significant open space areas, including Pillar Point Marsh. The proposed two and three story project appears to be oversized for the area and its mass and scale could cause significant visual impacts, inconsistent with the visual resources policies of the LCP, including those policies sited above. We recommend that the County consider reducing the footprint and height of the development to avoid impacts to these important coastal resources.

Wetlands

Portions of the project site appear to contain tidelands and public trust lands, which are subject to the Commissions retained permit jurisdiction authority. There are also wetland areas that are located in the County's permit jurisdiction. The applicant must obtain a coastal development permit approval from the Commission prior to any development in the Commission's original permit jurisdiction. Development in the wetlands and wetland buffers in the County's jurisdiction is restricted by the Sensitive Habitat component of the LCP. LCP policy 7.14 defines wetlands; LCP policy 7.16 limits the uses allowed in wetlands; LCP policies 7.18 and 7.19 establish wetlands buffer zones and limit the uses allowed in them; and LCP policy 7.20 provides specific protections for the Pillar Point Marsh. Our comments on the DEIR, dated December 23, 2009, identified several concerns about the wetland delineations and biological studies. Unfortunately, given the short period allotted to review the FEIR, we have not had an opportunity to carefully review the response to our comments. However, after a brief review, it appears that not all of our concerns have been addressed. We urge the County and the applicants to continue to work with us to ensure the wetlands delineations and biological reports are adequate for the purposes of the Commission's review of the project. Further, we note that the native plant nursery proposed to be located within the wetlands buffer appears to be prohibited by LCP policy 7.19 if it would have any impacts on the adjacent wetlands.

Conclusion

In summary, we urge the County to delay action on the proposed project until all of the information necessary to evaluate the project for consistency with the LCP and the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act is available. After this evaluation is completed, any inconsistencies with the standards of the LCP or the Coastal Act should be addressed through project modifications or conditions of approval so that the project avoids significant adverse environmental impacts and conforms to LCP and Coastal Act requirements.

If we are provided with additional time to review the changes to the project, we may be able to provide more detailed comments regarding the proposed project's impacts on coastal resources, including biological resources and flooding and geological hazards. If you have any questions, or wish to discuss this project further, please feel free to contact me at (831) 427-4863 or mcavalieri@coastal.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Cavalieri', followed by the text '(for)' in parentheses.

Madeline Cavalieri
Coastal Planner
North Central Coast District

cc: Scott Holmes
Nicole DeMartini