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## Council provides direction to staff regarding Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative

By Vera Kochan

The sixth cycle Housing Element deadline is December 2022. Also on the table are an Environmental Impact Report, a re-zoning of the Bollinger Valley Study Area, a General Plan update, the Regional Housing Needs Allocation and compliance with new state laws.

A Housing Element provides an analysis of a community's housing needs for all income levels, and a strategic response to provide for those housing needs.

According to a staff report presented by Planning Director Afshan Hamid during the March 10 town council meeting, the town's RHNA increased from 229 new housing units for the fifth cycle to 1,118 new housing units for the sixth cycle.

New housing legislation, over the past four years, has made it increasingly easier for developers to secure housing projects without interference from local governments. This includes: Mandatory Accessory Dwelling Units laws and amendments; Senate Bill 743 (transportation demand based on Vehicle Miles Traveled); Housing Affordability Act (allows the state to limit the ability of local government to restrict new housing); Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (designates sites for affordable housing in high opportunity areas and decreases segregation); Senate Bill 330 (speeds up the approval process for housing developments); and Senate Bill 35 (ensures access to affordable housing and authorizes streamlined multi-family housing developments that involve very low to moderate income households).

Beginning in 1969, California has required its cities to comply with the RHNA by determining how many new homes must be built and how affordable they should be within an eight-year period. The period is called a cycle, hence the upcoming moniker - Sixth Cycle, which would cover the period of 2023-31.

The regional agency, Association of Bay Area Governments, determines through data and analysis what recommendations to make to the state regarding the Bay Area's housing needs.

In order to meet its Sixth Cycle requirements, the town staff has created a timeline of events in order to adopt the housing element by the state deadline of January 2023. The tentative schedule is: a Request for Proposals (March 2021); award a Consultant Agreement (May/June 2021); begin Housing Element and Bollinger Valley Re-zone Project (Summer 2021); Public Outreach (throughout 2022); Planning Commission and Town Council Study Sessions (throughout 2022); draft Environmental Impact Report (Summer 2022); Planning Commission recommendation (November 2022); Town Council Adoption of Housing Element (December 2022); final submittal of Housing Element to California Department of Housing and Community Development (January 2023); begin Re-zone and General Plan update (Winter 2023); complete Re-zone (Summer 2023); and complete General Plan update (Winter 2024).

Moraga's council members were overall pleased with the aspects of the staff timeline and encouraged the planning department to stay the course.

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