

Spring Valley Community Planning Group

*** MEETING MINUTES ***

Tuesday, April 22, 2025 at 6:00 P.M

A. ROLL CALL – QUORUM

Present 12 (Gonzalez, Lowes, Robles, Pierce, Wallace, Eugenio, Lawson, Gibbons, Pearson, Custeau, Gettmann, Woodruff),
Absent 1 (Christie) Vacant 2. There was a quorum.

B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION – Opportunity for the public to speak to the Planning Group on any subject matter within our jurisdiction that is not on the posted agenda.

Stefanie Becker says she has applied 2X, last year and this year, but had not heard anything. She reviewed the application policy and followed it. She said she was interviewed by Gettmann, in March of this year, and she said that was against procedure. She said the group can go to Code Enforcement and have ordinances written based on community complaints and have those ordinances enforced. Stefanie continued about the low public attendance at the group meetings, and she is sure that group members do not speak to other public reps. She believes that there is shady stuff going on and she is going to uncover it. She has removed herself as a candidate for group membership. She continued to say group leadership needs to be changed, executive positions need to be changed, go back to basics and follow the mission statement, stop being concerned with issues outside the community area.

Next speaker is Jennifer. She referred to the group mission statement, page 24, regarding conditions in Spring Valley. From page 32, she read about poor county planning and the need for standards to be applied. She went to page 37 and transportation issues, lack of parking for tiny home projects, and various community projects that are suggested to improve the community but have not happened. She said that Spring Valley looks like a hellhole, and she doesn't know what the planning group is doing. She felt that there needed to be more county and Caltrans reps at the group meetings. What benefit is Spring Valley getting from the tiny homes? Robles said the document the community speaker is referring to is the Spring Valley Community Plan. Angelica Comargo said she loves her community but does not like her representatives. She felt group members are hiding something or making money on these deals. We have no sidewalks or parks but put homeless shelters in the middle of the community and the parks are full of homeless. Our reps are failing us. She wants money to go to the community, not to non-profit organizations. Woodruff, a group member, spoke on an upcoming butterfly event at the Water Conservation Gardens at Cuyamaca College on May 3rd. Custeau said that Parking and the homeless issues should be placed on future agendas. He further spoke on his membership on the County Traffic Advisory Committee and serves the SANDAG Transportation Committee. He also described the Brown Act restrictions on group discussions. Wallace said that County reps can be available during agenda items. Pierce said he is just a community member and yet he spends a lot of time on a community event, Spring Valley Day, this coming Saturday. Public reps will be there for discussion. He has fought for years for Calavo Park, Sweetwater Reservoir recreation and the SR125/94 interchange. He explained that the planning group is an advisory group. Gonzalez has concerns about the group having violations of the Brown Act and that it needs to be addressed tonight. Robles said he shares that concern.

C. ACTION ITEMS with designation as to whether there will be a vote or not on the item:

1. Approval of Minutes: 3/25/2025. Vote on this item.

Motion to approve by Pearson, second by Gettmann. **Vote is 10 Yes (Gonzalez, Robles, Pierce, Wallace, Eugenio, Gibbons, Pearson, Custeau, Gettmann, Woodruff), 0 No, 2 Abstain (Lowes, Lawson), 1 Absent (Christie), 2 Vacant.**
Motion passed.

2. Road Vacation: Vacation of a Portion of Jamacha Blvd., Former SR-54 Right-of-Way, and Golf Point Dr. Vote on this item.

Brice Lossler and Terry Plowden presented - they are the owners of this former right-of-way and former owners of the adjoining 190 acres that has already been sold to the County. They are here to answer any questions the group may have

related to the vacation of approximately for an approximate 7 acres area that needs to be vacated as a step in the donation of land process. The planned reservoir loop trail passes through this piece of property and completes the linkage across Jamacha Blvd. The county needs to have the land vacated before they accept the donation. Gettmann emphasized that vacating the land is a move toward the loop trail plan because the land is no longer considered as a highway project. Pearson made a motion to accept the vacation, seconded by Gibbons. Custeau asked about the property specifics from the presented map. The planning group had encouraged the county to buy the already purchased land and Custeau is in favor of the land donation since it can be used for trail parking and possibly a park. Lowes asked about the original purpose of the parcels in question. That purpose was commercial development. The owners worked with Parks and Rec to plan the donation of the property

Custeau explained our procedure regarding public comment.

Robles asked about the chairperson's email regarding the Sweetwater Authority meeting on 4/24/25 on how their meeting ties in with this vacation request? Chair, Pierce responded that their meeting is to discuss loop trail sections 7, 8, 9 and 10 and the email asks for group and public comment on the loop trail. Eugenio said this would be a good time to bring up the animal crossing land bridge. Wallace asked if we could stipulate the land bridge request in our motion/vote on the vacation. Public member Comargo asked the presenters what the benefit to them is to donate the land. The largest portion was sold to the county already; this small portion cannot be developed, so it was donated to complete the transfer of holding there. Comargo asked if the county is committed to this property for public use? This land allows the county to implement some of their open space master plan. Public member Gill asked if this land is in a flood zone area? There is a creek that runs from Dictionary Hill toward the reservoir. The land is zoned as part open space and part commercial office space. The county intends for it all to be open space. Community member Becker says she trusts the county even less than she trusts the planning group. She asks what assurances do we have that this land won't become a homeless encampment? Gill asked to have the full county owned area defined on the map. The money used for the original purchase came from land conservation funds and will be open space. The current landowners were not the original developers/owners of the land.

Vote is 11 Yes (Gonzalez, Lowes, Robles, Pierce, Wallace, Eugenio, Gibbons, Pearson, Custeau, Gettmann, Woodruff), 1 No (Lawson), 0 Abstain, 1 Absent (Christie), 2 Vacant. Motion is passed.

3. Undergrounding of Utilities Waiver Request: 1054, 1056, 1058, and 1060 Leland Street, Spring Valley, CA 91977. APN: 584-061-16-00. Presenter: Wallace. Vote on this item.

This item will be tabled, but Custeau wanted a brief conversation about the item. Project first came to the group in 2017, and three group members just recently visited the properties. In 2017, lot size was reviewed, landscaping suggested, parking spaces and after discussion, the property owner decided to table the project to address site needs. In 2018, after considerable discussion, the project was approved. In 2019, it came back to the group with changes, and we asked for further changes as well. Now the project is back to us; the building is complete but some approved site plan details were not included. Custeau spent 5 hours in research and has just submitted a letter to the county planner about the discrepancies. Lowes felt that, if the item is tabled, the county will go ahead and approve this waiver. Custeau displayed current pictures of the property. He has been to the building and will work with them on the issues. Woodruff said the setback doesn't look right and Custeau said the county needs to do their due diligence. Gettmann drove by the building and noticed that each building has separate utilities which means they will have to come back to us for property division. The discussion continued about utilities and getting back to this undergrounding waiver. Community member Gill said the zoning on the property is not correct for the plan and there are no down spouts for the roof and is a stormwater violation. As a planning group, go to a planning supervisor and file a grievance. He is a former building inspector. Custeau is glad they came to us with this waiver or this project may have received a permit to occupy without meeting community guidelines that we required when approving the initial plan. This item is tabled for now by group consensus.

4. Variance Request: PDS2025-VAR-25-015. 8915 Troy Street - Request to reduce front yard setback along Troy from 50' to 35'. APN: 503-290-09-00. Presenter: Pearson. Vote on this item.

Pearson went through the group's history with this property and that the PDS planner, Andrew Holtz, is treating this as a new building with required site plan and permits and would have to come back to the group if we grant the variance.

Christian, the architect, said by submitting a new site plan, the owner lost his 'grandfather' rights. The current zoning requires a 50-foot setback. Lowes asked why do you need the variance? The proponent answered, to keep the current building location. Parking will be at the back of the building. Lowes is against a setback variation, particularly on Troy Street. The architect said the owner is ignorant of the process. At least there is a tenant in the house, so there is some security, but trash is still dumped, and cars are parked on the street side. There is no sidewalk. Robles asked about a new sidewalk; the architect said it's Public Works responsibility. The group has an emphasis on sidewalk requests and understands sidewalks will be done piecemeal. Wallace asked if this is the project that had asked for past waivers and had went on to go against the group's direction including construction. But the variance waiver request is because a full site plan is now required. Gettmann said there appears to be an asphalt sidewalk on a portion of the frontage and that the county counts that asphalt area as a sidewalk. The group's goal is that any new construction adheres to the current standard. It was a tire shop for 20-30 years, but the last allowed use was a mini mart. Currently the use is not defined. Wallace asked how there could be a residence on the property. It is mixed use zoning, and the house had already been approved and permitted. Pierce noted that it's good there will not be a mini mart as there are already two nearby. The architect said they may go with office use instead. He also explained that a lot is 'grandfathered' and prevents the group from enforcing standards unless major property change happens. This perpetuates the problems we have in this community. Gettmann confirmed that, if the waiver is granted, the new building would fit the old footprint. No waiver and the lot is difficult to build on due to the drainage easement. The lot ends up for parking or storage and not an improvement to the community. Wallace asked why the new building has to be located in the old spot. Because the space has to accommodate parking and parking access and the setback would cause the building to be smaller. Community member Jennifer asked about the existing buildings and that a shorter setback would still encourage the parking and dilapidate building look. Becker is concerned that since past judgements on the properties have not been respected, there is no guarantee that the future will be different. A shorter setback is a terrible idea and the pressure of the lot ending up only for parking or trash should be discounted. Pierce emphasized that the group is only deciding on the setback variance at this meeting. Gill asked about square footage on the building, it's 1200. It appears that there is a master plan to make the area viable for sidewalks as businesses had changed, nearby parks and the new setbacks appear to be accepted. Pearson was asked about his opinion and he said that, with the full setback, the property becomes unusable except for the residence. The best situation would be to approve the variance, get a new site plan that cleans up the property. Gibbons came on the group because of the lack of sidewalks. **Motion made by Pearson to approve the variance, second by Gibbons. Vote is 5 Yes (Robles, Eugenio, Lawson, Gibbons, Pearson), 7 No (Gonzalez, Lowes, Pierce, Wallace, Custeau, Gettmann, Woodruff), 1 Absent (Christie), 2 Vacant. Motion failed.** Custeau described how the group only advises the county and the proponent can still ask the county to approve. Robles asked and the group agreed to move item #5 to the end of the meeting.

5. Letter: Request for Support: Proposal to Extend Public Review Time for Board Agendas. Vote on this item. No member of the public or the group wished to discuss the motion prior to the vote.

Motion by Gonzalez and second by Robles to support a proposal extending the public review time. Vote is 10 Yes (Gonzalez, Robles, Pierce, Wallace, Eugenio, Lawson, Gibbons, Custeau, Gettmann, Woodruff) 2 No (Lowes, Pearson) 1 Absent (Christie), 2 Vacant. Motion passed.

6. Candidate Introductions for SVCPG Vacant Seats 8 & 15. No vote on this item.

Candidate Ashish Bakshi introduced himself and indicated he has lived on Dictionary Hill since 2019 and has been interested in joining the group for a few years. He had spent a lot of time at the Gaslamp Quarter meetings to help drive tourism there. Now he wants to put an effort into his community. Pierce said there has been speculation that we have been holding up the process regarding vacancies. He explained how, in public elections, a candidate files with the Registrar of Voters (ROV) and, if unopposed, gets the seat. Lawson said that people complain about how the community is doing, but no one is running for the open seats. In November there was an additional seat available, but no one else applied. Becker said she had applied to be a candidate and had told Pierce that the county informed her, because she lived in District 1, she could not be a candidate. Pierce asked that she re-apply, but she has not completed that material and forwarded to him. Becker then sent a letter that she was withdrawing her application and Pierce asked that she reconsider. He admits he inadvertently did not follow the standing rules of the group and apologized. He then

summarized the standing rules regarding elections of group members. Custeau said the standing rules are a bit ambiguous and more clarity is needed. On the county website, he found a description of the application process. He also spoke about the I-1 county policy on the planning group election process. The primary way to join the group is during the biannual election period. However, most of the public's concern is when a seat opens outside of an election period. He went on to explain the seat requirements for candidates which culminate in a public election by the group. Robles said we have a variety of discussions going on. How we carry out our procedures shapes public trust. He detailed recent application processing and missteps that occurred such as not communicating with candidates in a public forum. The group needs to remain and align with our responsibilities. He asked that the group consider, in a future meeting as an agenda item and after the county responds to concerns about the handling of the election process, removing the chair and vice-chair from their positions. Pierce moved to approve this process. Robles spoke of Pierce's involvement in staging public events and the dedication of the current chair and vice-chair. Discussion ensued by various group members as how to agendize and schedule removing people from their positions. Public accusations have been made and Gettmann asked to hear the specifics of the accusations, and he felt he only communicated with a candidate to verify specifics of their application. He never asked about personal financial information. Gonzalez spoke about being disheartened by her perception of the treatment of community members and not hearing them respectfully. She is not sure of what is happening that is causing the crisis. The group's job is to listen and take the criticism. Lowes spoke about a group chat and how it could violate the Brown Act. She spoke of past member elections that produced multiple candidates and the process was followed. She felt a specific group member was attempting a coup on the group. Robles made a point of order as he felt the accusation was directed at him. Custeau says this discussion came as news to him. There is housecleaning needed on the way we go about filling vacancies. He suggested the group put on hold any candidate processing until the process is more clearly defined. There appears to be personal conflicts in the group. Gettmann said he performed properly and with proper authority in certifying the data on candidate applications. He felt there was no candidate prescreening involved, just validating the applications. Wallace said there are two questions we can ask a candidate; are you a registered voter and do you live in the planning area. Pierce said the county told him also if the candidate is willing to sign the 700 form. Wallace disagreed on having to sign the 700 and she reiterated what only can be asked. Pierce emphasized that the group texts are for determining who might be absent and would there be an upcoming meeting. Any business comments are shutdown because the text is not a meeting. Robles said this is not about doing something wrong but that the public is concerned. Custeau said, when he was chair, applying was a paper process. Now the process is electronic, but still with portions to be completed and signed by the applicant and the chair. Then the ROV certifies residency and sends back to the group. The standing rules need to be easier to follow, and the group needs to err on the side of transparency. Wallace says the open application date range should be extended in the standing rules to encourage more applicants. Becker said her comments were nothing personal but that group members were unaware of what was happening during the application process. The email to her said interview. She said Gettmann did not have her application, but he did and it is not signed by her. Becker continued with the confusion regarding her application with the county and that the county had caused some of the confusion. She felt the zoom meeting was shady and the questions not relevant. Community member Jennifer is concerned and that changes are needed. During the zoom interview Gettmann asked unnecessary questions to an applicant. Ashish said there was no confusion for him in the application and it only took him 10 minutes. The instructions and the process were not complicated. Robles said it's inappropriate to say the standing rules are out-of-date when those rules are based on the I-1 policy. Gibbons defined the applicant process from years ago. Robles said the I-1 supersedes the standing rules. Lowes said Pierce, as a relatively new member, got thrown into the position because nobody wants to be the chair, as it is a lot of work. Eugenio said the group had hammered this issue to death and there needs to a concise application policy written.

7. Updates to Standing Rules. Vote on this Item.

Eugenio, Robles, Custeau, Wallace and Lowes will comprise a new ad hoc committee to review the standing rules to insure they are following county policies and documentation processes.

D. GROUP BUSINESS

1. Announcements: none

2. Reports: none

☐ Chair: Spring Valley Day is this coming Saturday, April 26. If anyone wants to see the completion of the Sweetwater Loop Trail, write a public comment to the Sweetwater Authority.

- ☐ CSA 128: meeting time expired
- ☐ TAC: meeting time expired
- ☐ Highway cleanup: meeting time expired
- ☐ APG: meeting time expired
- ☐ Other: meeting time expired

3. Next scheduled SVCPG meeting: May 13, 2025

E. ADJOURNMENT at 8:59pm

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

We strive to protect personally identifiable information, by collecting only information necessary to deliver our services. All information collected becomes public record, subject to inspection and copying by the public, unless an exemption in law exists. In the event of conflict, governing the County's disclosure of records, the County ordinance or other law will control. You can review any personal information collected about you. You may recommend changes to your personal information, which you believe is in error, by submitting a written request that shows, credibly, the error. If you believe your personal information is being used for purposes other than those intended, you may contact us. In all cases, we will take reasonable steps to verify your identity, before granting access or making corrections.

Purpose of Planning and Sponsor Groups

Advise the County on Discretionary projects as well as on planning and land use matters that are proposed within their respective community planning or sponsor group area.