

Valley Center Community Planning Group

Approved Minutes for a regular meeting held on **July 14, 2025** at 7:00 p.m. in the Valley Center Community Hall, 28246 Lilac Road, Valley Center, California 92082.

Dori Rattray, **Chair**; Lisa Adams, **Vice-Chair**; James Garritson, **Secretary**

A=Absent; Ab=Abstention; DRB=Valley Center Design Review Board; N=Nay; P=Present; R=Recused; VCCPG=Valley Center Community Planning Group; VCPRD=Valley Center Parks & Recreation District; Y=Yea

Zoom Link: Meeting ID: **736 9689 6959** Passcode: **Uvx1GC**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/73696896959?pwd=wFV3m1r8JjDicmaIaDlimHtlxVLC24.1>

A. Roll Call

- The Meeting was called to order at **7:00 p.m.** and a Quorum was established with **12 members present**. Michele Bothof and Vlad Ciupitu attended the meeting via Zoom. Dr. Matthews arrived at 9:15 p.m.
- ~~Lisa Adams~~ - A • Susan Fajardo - P • Bob Littlejohn - P
- Chris Barber - P • James Garritson - P • Matt Matthews - A*
- Michelle Bothof - P* • Mary Hodson - P • LaVonne Norwood - P
- Delores ChavezHarmes-P • Steve Hutchison - P • Dori Rattray - P
- Vlad Ciupitu - P* • Karen Lieber - P • Tom Stinson - P

B. Pledge of Allegiance - Mr. Barber

C. Approval of June 9, 2025 Minutes

- **Motion: To approve the June 9, 2025 Minutes.**
- **Maker/Second:** Hodson/Norwood
- **Motion CARRIES 13-0-1 (Y-N-Ab). Mrs. Harmes abstained. This vote took place at 9:55 p.m.**

D. Public Comments: Members of the public may address the Planning Group on any topic not on the agenda.

- A comment was shared about having a Valley Center sign that will let drivers know that they have entered Valley Center. There was discussion about the possibility of having a larger sign paid for through fundraising efforts in Valley Center. The Chair mentioned that there was a sign, halfway up the grade, that states "Welcome to Valley Center." However, if there's a fundraising activity to raise money organically, for a newly branded sign in the heart of Valley Center, we are not opposed to it."

1. SANDAG, Draft 2025 Regional Plan, Antoninette Meier, Sr. Director of Regional Planning

- Antoninette Meier explained information about the regional plan. The plan must be updated every four years. Most of the funding for transportation comes from State and federal funding. Equity, Air quality, Climate, Housing, Land Use, and Vehicle Miles Traveled are requirements that SANDAG must meet when updating a regional plan. SANDAG's goal is

to reduce Greenhouse Gas emission by 19% by 2030 or 2050 and to get individuals out of their vehicles (a.k.a. bike lanes, public transportation, ride share, etc.)

- A lot of rural communities do not have transit service available every day of the week.
- Mr. Hutchison shared a comment requesting that SANDAG make a lot more effort to address the needs of rural communities—especially the community of Valley Center. He asked a question about the I-15/SR-78 Managed Lanes Direct Connectors and Woodland Parkway Interchange Project.
- Mr. Garritson asked a question about the Park and Ride parking lot located at Gopher Canyon Rd and the I-15 offramp. Antoninette will get back to Chair Rattray about this location.
- Chair Rattray made a comment asking about the feasibility of connecting Mirar De Valle Rd to the I-15.
- Eddie (audience) asked about how SANDAG works to implement Dark Sky policies into its plans.

2. Woods Valley/VC Road Intersection Update, Michael Kenny, Traffic Engineer, Dept. Public Works

- A comment was shared by Chair Rattray about a traffic light not changing for minutes. Mr. Garritson and Ms. Hodson shared that the traffic light at Park Circle and Mirar de Valley at Valley Center Road is not changing sometimes for many minutes.

3. SDGE Overhead Utility Relocation on Cole Grade, Ryan Lau, Project Manager, Dept. Public Works

- Ryan Lau introduced himself and shared an update about the overhead utility relocation on Cole Grade Rd. He shared project renderings of this project, which should begin sometime in July 2026.
- Mr. Ciupitu shared his concerns about the type of work that he is experiencing from SDG&E contractors. He shared an image of a fire that occurred on his property due to poor safety expectations by SDG&E. Mr. Ciupitu asked why Ryan Lau seems to represent SDG&E for this project. Ryan shared that the County and SDG&E have a partnership working on this project.
- Mrs. Harmes would like the County to provide the community with more accountability over SDG&E in these types of projects.
- Ryan shared information about dewatering designs for the construction of the bridge that is past Cool Grade Rd. along Cole Grade Rd. This new design does have additional costs, but it will lessen the dewatering for each phase.
- The water removed will not be placed back into the groundwater basins during the summer, as this could cause potential root rot for native oak trees.
- Mr. Ciupitu shared his concerns about the removal of 1.5 million gallons of water from this area, as private water wells could become dry wells on private property. This happened to a property owner when SDG&E took 6 million gallons of water in this area in previous years.

- Ryan provided an overview about the Oak Tree Impacts Mitigation Strategies. The contractor that completes this project must use a treatment system before it discharges the water back into Keys Creek.
- Ms. Norwood asked for further clarification about where the water that is removed will be stored. Ryan mentioned any water removed will be trucked to offsite locations and then returned back to the community.

4. Cannabis EIR Review & Proposed County Options, Rattray, Adams, Matthews & Kathleen Lippit

- Chair Rattray introduced Kathleen Lippit and shared information about the EIR Review. The County is still pursuing proposed options to place cannabis in the Valley Center community. Santa Barbara is having huge problems because of cannabis growing. The odor has become unacceptable and a class action lawsuit has required changes for growers.
- Kathleen has worked for the last 15 years to bring awareness to the Board of Supervisors about cannabis policies that are impacting unincorporated communities in the County. Kathleen shared that Rady Children's Hospital is seeing a huge increase of THC poisoning cases that are impacting adolescent populations.
- There was a lot of discussion about how the community of Valley Center can work to voice their concerns about the implementation of these County proposals.

5. Corridor Concept Funding Update, Rattray

- Chair Rattray shared information about how the County might raise funds for the corridor concept plan by placing additional fees on developments.

E. Action items (VCCPG advisory vote may be taken on the following items)

6. South Village Storage: A discussion to determine if an exception is available to waive under-grounding the AT&T wires. (Rattray) (VOTE)

- **Motion: To recommend a waiver for undergrounding the AT&T wires for this project.**
- **Maker/Second:** Hutchison/Rattray
- **Motion CARRIES 13-0-0 (Y-N-Ab)**
- Dave Bohorquez shared that he has worked on this project for over two years and the County just recently introduced new requirements. The Park Circle developers were not required to bury AT&T wires and also did not remove a hill next to this project.

7. Vertical Bridge/Bear Ridge Wireless Communication Facility: A cell tower project to close the gap of cellular coverage in Valley Center. (Bothof/Harmes) (VOTE)

- **Motion: To recommend the approval of the Vertical Bridge/Bear Ridge Wireless Communication Facility.**
- **Maker/Second:** Norwood/Harmes

- **Motion CARRIES 12-1-0 (Y-N-Ab).** Mr. Ciupitu voted nay.
- A presentation was shared about this 55' Mono-Eucalyptus cell tower project. The project will have a lightning rod at the top of the eucalyptus pole. This project will help improve cellular coverage in this area. The fire district has approved plans for this project. T-Mobile is the main carrier for this tower. If another cellular company would like to connect its equipment to this tower, they would need to come back to the Planning Group.
- There were questions about the possibility of a generator being placed at this tower.

8. Cole Grade Road LLC: A proposed self storage facility with no on-site employees or customer amenities on 4.8 acres at the corner of Cole Grade & Fruitvale (Hutchinson) (REVIEW ONLY) [APPENDIX]

- Mr. Hutchison shared information about this project. Access to this self storage facility would be limited at certain times of the day. The project is located in a seasonal flood area. The property is currently zoned rural residential. Most projects of this type are placed in industrial zones. This project would require rezoning for the property. There is a two-story element of the project proposal.
- The project applicant shared that the project does not need rezoning, as it is only 4.8 acres. Two of the project owners live in the community.
- Ms. Norwood inquired about the Fire Availability Form that Div. Chief Justin filled out stating that there will be conditions for the project in the future. She would like to see those conditions. Ms. Norwood also asked if the applicant would be rezoning the property. The applicant shared that the property does not require rezoning. Ms. Norwood asked if the proposed project was presented to the DRB.
- Ms. Hodson noted that on the Fire Availability Form it stated that services would not be available to serve this project for another 4 years.
- Dr. Matthews shared that this project will interfere with the beautiful view that community members have from within the windows of the Valley Center Library. How will this project shield car lights during evening hours?
- Rick Paicius (**Opposed**, audience) lives next to this property and is opposed to this project because of potential noise pollution. He does not believe that this project provides economic benefits for our community.
- Deb Hofler (**Opposed**, audience) is against changing the zoning of this property, as she is a business owner who was required to purchase residential commercial property in Valley Center.
- Conni Reiner (**Opposed**, audience) shared that she lives two blocks away from this property and is very concerned about the loss of oak trees with this project proposal.
- Anita Scliebel (**Opposed**, audience) shared that this type of facility is in violation of the character of Valley Center.
- Jon Walters (**Opposed**, audience), representing Valley Center Community Church, asked questions about where the entrance to the project would be located. He shared that the

property owners have not currently acted as a good neighbor to the adjacent church property.

- Lori Jacobs (**Opposed**, audience) shared that the VC History Museum is likely opposed to this type of project adjacent to its building.
- Tracy White (**Opposed**, audience) shared that the Friends of the Library is against this project. This organization shared that the library is currently the cultural center of the Valley Center community.
- Gloria Owler (**Opposed**, audience) shared her opposition to the project. She shared that this project will increase traffic along Cole Grade Rd.
- Sue Alderete (**Opposed**, audience) shared reasons why she is opposed to this project.
- Jess Phoenix (**Opposed**, audience) shared that she moved to the community recently and her property is very close to the Valley Center Library. She does not believe that this project will provide any benefits for this community.
- Carlos Phoenix (**Opposed**, audience) shared that this project will not bring jobs into the community. He is opposed to the project.
- Chair Rattray (**Opposed**), read a letter from Katie Burlington that explained reasons she is opposed to the Major Use Permit Application.
- **Motion: To extend the meeting until 10:15 p.m.**
- **Maker/Second:** Harmes/Rattray
- **Motion CARRIES 13-1-0 (Y-N-Ab).** Ms. Fajardo voted nay.

9. Project Summary Reports, a current list of all projects proposed for Valley Center.

- Chair Rattray shared the Project Pipeline Report with all members. Mrs. Harmes shared a lot of information about the proposed project at Indian Creek.

F. Subcommittee Reports

Association of Planning – Mr. Hutchison

- A brief update was shared.

Government – Mr. Stinson [APPENDIX]

- There are a number of changes coming to CEQA that have now gone into effect.

Cannabis – Dr. Matthews

- This topic was addressed in the beginning of the meeting.

Mobility – Mr. Barber

- Mr. Barber invited Michael Kenny, the County Traffic Engineer to our meeting. He also provided a brief update.

Community Plan Update – Mr. Ciupitu

- No update.

Nominations – Mrs. ChavezHarmes

- No update.

Enhancement – Ms. Norwood

- A brief update was shared about the possibility of having the Valley Center High School and the Valley Center Art Gallery Association come together to paint SDG&E boxes. Ms. Norwood asked members to look for available SDG&E boxes and email her these locations.

Parks, Rec & Trails – Mrs. Hodson

- Harvest County Park was turned over to the County.

Design Review Board – Mrs. Bothoff

- No update.

Revitalization – Mr. Barber

- Mr. Barber shared updates.

Energy – Mr. Littlejohn

- He will have a phone conversation with SDG&E tomorrow and will discuss some of the

Tribal – Mrs. Rattray

- No update.

Emergency Evacuation – Mrs. ChavezHarmes

- There is a meeting this month on July 31, 2025.

Quarterly Chair CPG Update - Chair Rattray

- Chair Rattray will share this update at the August 11, 2025 meeting.

G. Adjournment

- Next regular meeting of VCCPG: **August 11, 2025 at 7 p.m.**
- **The meeting adjourned at 10:13 p.m.**
- **Minutes were approved on August 11, 2025.**

James Garritson, Secretary

Appendix VCCPG July 14, 2025 Minutes

Major Use Permit for the Cole Grade Storage Facility



Letter Proposed Industrial Storage Facility

July 14, 2025

RE: Proposed Industrial Storage Facility
MUP Permit: SDC PDS RCVD 06-12-25 MUP25-006
Parcel: 188-180-58-00

Dear Valley Center Planning Board,

As a nearby resident to this proposed project, I am writing to express strong opposition to the proposed industrial project (known as SDC PDS RCVD 06-12-25 MUP25-006), which seeks a major use permit to allow the construction of a 583 unit, two-story self-storage facility at the intersection of Fruitvale and Cole Grade Roads on parcel 188-180-58-00 currently zoned Village Residential (VR-2).

As a preliminary matter, this permit request is not allowed by right, and is a direct violation of the current Valley Center Community Plan zoning, which explicitly prohibits industrial use in residentially zoned areas. This Plan, and its associated zoning is not arbitrary - it was developed over the course of decades to protect the character, safety, and long-term integrity of our unique rural town. Approving this major use permit would not only ignore the plan — it would reward an out of town owner who recently purchased the property with the intent to circumvent the current zoning in place.

Zoning aside, the proposed project also presents significant safety concerns as it is directly adjacent to a primary school, a county library, a church, and numerous homes. The construction of a two story, unsupervised, sprawling, high density industrial facility (on what is now pristine sagebrush) raises serious concerns about crime, traffic, visual blight, environmental impact and overall incompatibility with the surrounding environment. There is no justification for placing an industrial facility in the heart of a family-oriented neighborhood where children are perpetually present. Particularly when there are so many other areas already designated for industrial use and better suited to the proposed use.

Finally, and on a personal note, as a 35-year resident of a nearby property several parcels over, our family has resided over 60 years in Valley Center, during which time we have participated over and over again in County planning activities which sought to preserve the character of our beautiful town through smart growth. This proposed project is a gross injustice to these carefully created plans created by generations of Valley Center residents. If approved, this project will steal one of the most meaningful places in the heart of town to be replaced by a throwaway concrete box. The thought that all the decades of previous careful efforts would end in such a careless and sad way is horrific and unacceptable.

Again, I urge you vote no on this project, and to respect what zoning and growth has long been planned for this town, - and even more so in this particularly important location.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter,

Katharine J. Burlington, Esq.

Attachments: 7.14.2025 Email with attachments

CEQA Bills

CEQA Reform

AB 130 and SB 131 (Budget Committees)

Both have been chaptered – as budget bills they are now in effect:

- AB 130 creates CEQA exemption for qualifying infill housing and expands housing streamlining provisions. Projects that qualify are not subject to CEQA environmental review
- SB 131 creates 9 CEQA exemptions for infrastructure, community-serving facilities and climate resilience projects
- AB 130 establishes a statewide vehicle-miles-traveled mitigation program, allowing developers to fulfill transportation obligations by paying into the Housing and Community Development Department's Transit Oriented Development Program (TOD)
- AB 130 caps the number of public hearings for qualifying housing projects
- AB 130 removes some Coastal Commission appeal rights for specific residential developments
- AB 130 places a moratorium on new or more restrictive residential building standards
- AB 130 allows developments with over \$100 million investments to qualify for streamlined CEQA processing until 2031
- Exempts from CEQA developments where 2/3 of square footage is residential, development is under 20 acres, located in a census area with 2,000 housing units or a minimum population of 5,000

SB 131 creates CEQA exemptions for:

- Health centers and rural clinics
- Childcare centers
- Food banks
- Farmworker housing (new and existing repairs)
- Advanced manufacturing facilities
- Clean water and sewer projects in disadvantaged communities
- Broadband development in public rights of way
- Public parks and nonnotarized recreational areas
- Wildfire risk mitigation projects (subject to conditions)

Housing projects must meet specific labor standards to qualify. Private projects must certify prevailing wage payments and workforce standards

Stakeholders should review all policies, permitting policies and development plans and make necessary adjustments

Local governments may need to revise ordinances, update permitting procedures and train staff. Zoning, building standards, shelter enforcement policies will need to be adjusted