



CITY OF SIERRA MADRE

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 5:30 P.M.

City Council Chambers, 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons with a disability who require a disability related modification or accommodation in order to participate in a meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, may request such modification or accommodation from the City Clerk at (626) 574-5455. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT & ACCESS

The Brown Act provides the public with an opportunity to make public comments at any public meeting. As an alternative, public comment may be submitted by e-mail to publiccomment@sierramadrecal.gov by 3:00PM on the day of the meeting. Emails will be acknowledged at the City Council meeting, filed into public record, and scanned onto the City website for public review.

A copy of the posted agenda and a live video stream of the meeting can be found on the City's website at sierramadrecal.gov , on Foothills Media website at foothillsmedia.org/sierramadre, and broadcast on Government Access Channel 3 (Spectrum).

If you require special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (626) 355-7135 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of a City Council meeting is to conduct City business. Members of the public that behave in a manner that interrupts or obstructs the City Council's ability to conduct City business may be asked to leave the meeting. Any and all demonstrations which disrupt, interrupt, or obstruct the City Council's ability to conduct City business are prohibited. No signs, posters, or other large objects shall be brought into the Council Chambers or other meeting place if doing so would disrupt, disturb, or otherwise impede the orderly course of the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Denison called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Director Lin called the roll.

2. ROLL CALL OF PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Thomas Denison, Chair
Patrick Simcock, Vice Chair
Kevin Brennan, Commissioner
Yong Yoo, Commissioner

Absent: Christine Moran, Commissioner

Also Present: Clare Lin, Director of Planning and Community Preservation
Julia Homaechearria, Deputy City Attorney
Joshua Wolf, Senior Planner
Katelyn Huang, Assistant Planner

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Denison asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Vice-Chair Simcock made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Commissioner Yoo seconded the motion.

Ayes: Chair Denison, Vice-Chair Simcock, Commissioner Brennan, and Commissioner Yoo

Noes:

Absent: Commissioner Moran

Abstain:

The motion to approve the agenda as presented was approved by a unanimous voice vote by all commissioners present.

4. REPORTS FROM CITY COUNCIL LIAISON

Mayor Lowe provided a brief report. She informed commissioners about upcoming measures on air and soil toxins, expected around 2027, with some potentially appearing on ballots. The city recently met with the EPA concerning similar issues, especially in the Meadows area, to examine federal resources and understand toxin standards used by California and nationwide.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Any person wishing to speak before the Planning Commission is asked to complete a Speaker Card and provide it to staff prior to the start of the meeting. Speakers are generally limited to three (3) minutes per person and time may not be delegated; any changes to the allotted time

will be announced prior to the Public Comment period. Under the Brown Act, the Planning Commission is prohibited from discussing or taking action on any item not listed on the posted agenda.

Addressing the Planning Commission from the audience is not permitted; all comments addressing the Commission must be made from the podium. Only public comment made from the podium will be recognized by the Planning Commission and entered into public record.

Chair Denison opened the podium for public comment on items not on the agenda.

Seeing no one come forward, Chair Denison closed public comment.

Chair Denison disclosed that the Planning Commission did receive a calendar of school events in the first quarter for Alvero Heights Academy.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

All matters listed under the Consent Calendar are considered to be routine and can be acted on by one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the Planning Commission requests that a specific item be removed from the Consent Calendar for separate discussion and action.

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2026

CEQA: Not a Project

Recommended Action: Approve

Chair Denison asked the Commission for a motion to approve the February 19, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Commissioner Brennan made a motion to approve the February 19, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Vice-Chair Simcock seconded the motion.

Ayes: Chair Denison, Vice-Chair Simcock, Commissioner Brennan, and Commissioner Yoo

Noes:

Absent: Commissioner Moran

Abstain:

The motion to approve the February 19, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes was passed by a majority voice vote by all commissioners present.

b) 2025 General Plan and Housing Element Annual Progress Report

CEQA: Not a Project

Recommended Action: Approve

Chair Denison asked the Commission for a motion to approve the 2025 General Plan and Housing Element Annual Progress Report.

Vice-Chair Simcock made a motion to approve the 2025 General Plan and Housing Element Annual Progress Report.

Commissioner Brennan seconded the motion.

Ayes: Chair Denison, Vice-Chair Simcock, Commissioner Brennan, and Commissioner Yoo

Noes:

Absent: Commissioner Moran

Abstain:

The motion to approve the 2025 General Plan and Housing Element Annual Progress Report was passed by a majority voice vote by all commissioners present.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a) Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-01) Amending Chapter 17.22 (Accessory Dwelling Units) of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code

CEQA: Not a Project

Recommended Action: Provide Direction

Senior Planner Wolf presented the discussion item on updating the city's Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance. The update seeks to align with state ADU laws and HCD guidelines for ministerial standards, resolve conflicts, fix errors, clarify ambiguities for consistency, and support strategies to reduce constraints while encouraging more housing options.

Deputy City Attorney Homaechvarria outlined the specific state laws being implemented in the ordinance update:

- **AB 1154:** Removes owner-occupancy requirement for JADUs with independent bathrooms
- **AB 130:** Prohibits ADU-related fees in covenants/deed restrictions (not included in code changes)
- **AB 462:** Allows detached ADUs to get occupancy before the main home if it was destroyed in a declared emergency

Urban Lot Splits and ADU Conversions

Wolf raised concerns about urban lot splits on properties with existing homes and ADUs, noting they may require converting ADUs into single-family homes and potentially avoid fees. He added that in 2020, the city waived ADU impact fees to encourage development.

State Law Alignment and Ordinance Updates

The ordinance also incorporates recent state laws, including SB 9 and SB 543, which set timelines for submitting, reviewing, and deciding ADU applications. The update also changes ADU and JADU size limits to be regulated based on interior livable space rather than building area.

Wolf addressed cleanup actions, updating obsolete government code references, reorganizing eligibility to distinguish by-right allowances from limitations, and adding new terminology from the discretionary demolition permit ordinance regarding historic preservation standards.

Wolf proposed either distinguishing conditions for single-family versus multifamily dwellings or generalizing with "ADUs as plural" to adapt to future state law changes. Staff recommended a resubmittal timeline for incomplete applications: 90 days (currently drafted) or one year, highlighting frequent ADU law updates.

Proposed Space Definitions and Development Limits

Chair Denison noted the presentation's complexity and suggested addressing the exemption issue first, as commissioners were confused about "proposed space" and whether it could bypass size and development limits.

Wolf clarified that under a stricter interpretation, conversions must be from already-approved proposed space, either approved by right or through applicable discretionary entitlements. Deputy City Attorney Homaechevarria noted that "proposed space" is undefined in state handbooks and the interpretation remains ambiguous.

Commissioner Brennan asked for more examples to clarify how proposals could overlap with JADUs in permit applications. Chair Denison noted that the ambiguity could allow applicants to avoid square footage limits and reduce triggers for discretionary review.

Homaechearria noted that HCD has provided guidance to cities and that clarification could be requested on this issue.

Chair Denison noted his instinct that converted JADUs shouldn't be counted toward total square footage since conversion doesn't change the square footage by definition but acknowledged the need for HCD guidance on the matter.

Chair Denison recommended directly citing state code for definitions like "habitable area" to maintain alignment during interim changes. Wolf concurred.

Chair Denison asked whether section 17.22.020 simply repeated the ADU definition from elsewhere in the code, noting that definitions appeared in multiple locations. Wolf and Homaechearria clarified that the section specified where ADUs are allowed, noting they are not permitted in commercial zones.

Fire Sprinkler Requirements and Size Standards

Regarding fire sprinkler requirements, Chair Denison asked about thresholds for large converted garages. Homaechearria explained that, since fire codes change frequently, compliance is generally handled through standard fire code rather than being specifically codified.

Vice Chair Simcock suggested reorganizing the fire sprinkler section to make the "unless otherwise required by the fire department" provision more prominent as a numbered condition rather than embedded in paragraph text. Wolf agreed to revise this as a catch-all third condition.

Planning Director Lin asked for clarification about fire sprinkler requirements for large converted ADUs when the primary house doesn't have sprinklers, confirming that state law prevents requiring sprinklers for ADUs when the primary dwelling doesn't have them. She also noted that under SB 9 lot splits, a converted ADU could become a primary house without conforming to current codes as a nonconforming use.

Chair Denison questioned the 850 sq. ft. limit for attached ADUs versus 800 sq. ft. for others. Wolf noted detached conversions have no state limit, sparking debate on applying the 1,200 sq. ft. cap for new detached ADUs to conversions.

Commissioner Brennan asked which subsections apply to conversions versus new construction, and Wolf suggested revising Section 17.22.030.C.2 to specify "new construction" and remove "or attached" to avoid overlap with 17.22.030.C.1.

Chair Denison recommended a new subsection for detached accessory unit conversions, proposing "no maximum limit as long as it stays within the converted space." Commissioners agreed partial conversions should be permitted, like converting only the basement of a two-story garage while retaining the garage above.

Wolf warned that a "no limit" rule for conversions could block needed expansions for habitability. Chair Denison proposed using "the greater of 1,200 sq. ft. or the existing converted space," matching the detached ADU cap.

Chair Denison asked whether angle plane requirements would still apply with 4-foot setbacks, and Homaechearria indicated they would research this interaction between development standards.

Parking Requirements and Exemption Rules

Chair Denison questioned "designated" parking for ADUs, preferring "required" to prevent reusing existing spaces. Wolf clarified that parking spaces must be separate from the primary unit's parking.

For parking exemptions in the R-1 and Hillside Management zones, Chair Denison argued against exempting the Hillside Management zone from parking requirements due to fire safety concerns and narrow roads. The Commission agreed to remove the hillside exemption while keeping the R-1 exemption.

Chair Denison asked how exemptions relate to ADU parking. Wolf explained that exempt ADUs bypass zoning limits, while larger non-exempt ADUs follow standards and parking rules.

Homaechearria proposed renaming the ambiguous "exemptions" section to "statutory approvals" or "ministerial."

JADU Compliance Updates

Chair Denison highlighted that Section 17.22.040.A.8(i) contradicts new JADU laws that permit shared bathrooms, recommending adding language for shared bathroom JADUs. Staff agreed to this amendment.

Code Corrections and Formatting Updates

On section 17.22.100.E.1, Homaechearria noted state law sets no rebuilding deadline for damaged primary dwellings. Staff suggested linking it to the emergency period or a six-year limit. Chair Denison raised concerns about potential nonconforming situations if dwellings aren't rebuilt.

Vice Chair Simcock noted a formatting issue where section E had only a numbered subsection 1 without a subsection 2, suggesting it should either be incorporated into section E or made into section F.

Wolf confirmed that staff had received the feedback needed regarding ambiguity portions and text amendments.

Community Input

Chair Denison opened the floor for community input for the Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-01) discussion.

Senior Planner Wolf announced that no speaker cards had been submitted for Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-01). Staff did receive a public comment online that was forwarded to the Planning Commission.

8. REPORTS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

Commissioner Brennan reported that he and Vice Chair Simcock attended the Planning Commissioner's Academy last week. Brennan prepared a summary, shared by Planning Director Lin, and recommended using Cal Cities online resources and the ILG Planning Handbook for its organized subsections.

Chair Denison reminded commissioners about the annual Form 700 filing requirement due before the end of the month, noting that the maximum penalty was \$100 for late filing.

9. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

Planning Director Lin attended the Planning Commissioner Academy and shared a suggestion for standing meetings. Lin announced that the planning department would have a booth at the Wisteria Festival on March 28th, encouraging commissioners to stop by.

Lin also noted the next Commission meeting on April 2nd, featuring legislative updates from the city attorney and a public hearing on a public nuisance case.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 pm to the next meeting on April 2, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clare Lin", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Secretary to the Planning Commission

Clare Lin, Director of Planning and Community Preservation