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Bluffs*

Midcoast Community Council
A Municipal Advisory Council to the
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Post Office Box 64
Moss Beach, CA 94038

January 13, 1998

Ralph Nobles, Chairman
San Mateo County Planning Commission
County Government Center
590 Hamilton Street, Second Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

Re: CDP 97-0016, RMD 97-0013 (Charnock/Neel)

Dear Chairman Nobles and Planning Commissioners,

The Midcoast Community Council Planning and Zoning Committee on January 9, 1998, considered some of the issues related to the proposed domestic water well and subsequent homes proposed for the seven lots associated with this request. The Council will further discuss this item at our meeting on Wednesday, January 14, 1998. This will occur after your Commission takes action on the current application.

We want to insure that our initial concerns are noted in the project's record. Our follow up will take place either during the appeal on this project or the subsequent Coastal Development Permit Process (for the house which a water supply is being sought.) The Council will then provide a detailed analysis of the community-wide issues that touch on this project. There are five major areas of concern: (1) "Creeping Buildout"; (2) Integrity of RM/CZ Zoning; (3) Potential for Well Failure; (4) Coastal Trail Access; and (5) Blufftop Erosion.

4 By "creeping buildout", we are referring to the incremental increase in overall Local Coastal Plan (LCP) buildout numbers through individual project applications. There are other proposals in the pipeline that would definitely increase these numbers. In addition, the substandard lot problem has the potential of operationally inflating these numbers. It is irresponsible both economically and environmentally to continue to develop the MidCoast beyond its carrying capacity. We request immediate support and assistance from the County to respect and consistently enforce our LCP buildout numbers.

The integrity of our RM/CZ zoning is being violated on a routine basis. The LCP anticipates this zoning as being used for open space, with very low-density residential development (one residence per 5 to 40 acres, for example). Once again, we need the County's support to consistently uphold the spirit of this designation. Our greatest fear is that our RM/CZ zoning is suffering such repeated erosion that it is being rendered meaningless.

The County is approving numerous wells throughout the MidCoast area, particularly within the service area of Citizens Utilities. Are property owners being put on notice that Citizens is under a Public Utilities Commission order that prohibits any new connections until a significant additional water supply is developed? Our community is concerned about the impact of additional private domestic water wells on the community wells and on existing private domestic wells. When private wells fail (as they have done in El Granada), there will be (over)

pressure to provide emergency connections to Citizens Utilities system. Should this occur, it would be in direct violation of the existing moratorium.

The Coastal Trail: the eventual development of seven structures on this small (approximately 2.5 acre) RM/CZ parcel will impinge upon this trail. Of grave concern, to coastal visitors and the community alike, is the County's decision to abandon the Coastside Trail and reroute it from this spectacular blufftop to along Highway 1. Both the community and visitors have used this trail, as part of the Fitzgerald Maritime Reserve, for years.

According to the LCP, Shoreline Access Component, the County holds the responsibility for seeking out opportunities to enhance public coastal access. In an April 24, 1997 letter, Mr. Charnock acknowledged public access rights along the Bluff Tops. The Council believes that a positive opportunity exists for the County to develop a public/private partnership with a community based land trust. This would allow for the development and maintenance of the Coastal Trail.

Our Council has not reached a recommendation on how the current project area should proceed, and appreciates the needs of the property owner, Dick Charnock, as well as the desires of his proposed purchasers and the abutting property owners. At this time we hope that, in a spirit of compromise and protection of vital community assets (not merely those of the Midcoast, but the California coast), some means can be found to reconfigure the parcels. We want to ensure that the health and safety of the proposed new property owners is not placed at risk through cliff top retreat or landslide. It is imperative that a safe and secure Coastal Trail area is preserved for public access along the blufftops.

Sincerely,

David Spiselman, Chair

Laura Stein, Councilmember