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COASTAL COMMISSION SUPPORTS AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICES FOR CARMEL

Santa Cruz, Calif. _ The California Coastal Commission unanimously approved an amendment to Carmel-by-the-Sea's Local Coastal Program (LCP) that provides incentives for builders to create more affordable housing in the city's core commercial and residential areas.

Such incentives will allow builders to construct more units than the zoning otherwise allows, provided that a certain percentage of those units is set aside for lower-income households. So-called "density bonuses" are one way to encourage developers to consider adding affordable units as part of market-rate projects.

"Affordable housing is critical for the future of California," said Acting Executive Director John Ainsworth. "We were very pleased to come up with this creative and innovative solution with the city of Carmel."

Commission staff worked closely with Carmel City staff to clarify and craft policies that offer a range of options, from a 10% density increase for very low income households, to 20% for lower income households, to as much as a 50% increase in density for housing that is reserved for seniors. Compliance will be monitored by a city-approved affordable housing agency. While the LCP amendment doesn't mandate affordable housing, these incentives encourage developers to consider ways to incorporate affordable units into their plans.

Later in the same meeting on Tuesday, the commission heard an appeal of a Monterey County decision to remove re-sale controls on 161 affordable homes built in 2000. The commission determined that the appeal was legitimate in part because the county did not provide replacement units for the affordable homes that would be converted to market-rate units as required by the Monterey County LCP.

The commission has taken the appeal under its jurisdiction, and will hold a full hearing on the matter at a later date.

"The commission does not currently have the authority to provide for affordable housing but it's something we are well aware is of critical importance," said Commissioner Effie Turnbull-Sanders. "We will consider all the information seriously when this appeal comes before us."

The Coastal Act originally contained policies that protected and provided for affordable housing in the coastal zone. But in 1981 the legislature approved a bill by former Senator Henry Mello (D-

Santa Cruz) that removed the commission's authority. A bill introduced by Assemblymember Autumn Burke (D-Marina del Rey) earlier this year sought to restore those policies, but was weakened by an Assembly Committee.

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