CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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April 30, 2014

TO: COMMISSIONERS AND INTERESTED PERSONS

FROM: CHARLES LESTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: CITY OF SAN DIEGO DE MINIMIS LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

AMENDMENT LCP-6-SAN-14-0309-1 (Appeals of Environmental

Determinations) FOR COMMISSION REVIEW AT ITS MEETING OF May 14-

16, 2014

The Coastal Act was amended January 1, 1995 to provide for a more streamlined method to review amendments to local coastal programs. Section 30514(d) allows the Executive Director to make a determination that a proposed LCP amendment is de minimis in nature. The Executive Director must determine that the proposed amendment: 1) has no impact, either individually or cumulatively, on coastal resources; 2) is consistent with the policies of Chapter 3; and 3) does not propose any change in land use or water use or any change in the allowable use of property. Section 30514(d) requires the local government to notice the proposed de minimis LCP amendment 21 days prior to submitting it to the Executive Director either through: 1) publication in a newspaper of general circulation; 2) posting onsite and offsite the area affected by the amendment; or 3) direct mailing to owners of contiguous property. If the Executive Director makes the determination that the proposed amendment qualifies as a "de minimis" amendment and finds the public notice measures have been satisfied, such determination is then reported to the Commission for its concurrence.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

On March 26, 2014, the City of San Diego's LCP amendment request was filed in the San Diego Coast District office. The amendment involves revisions to the City's Land Development Code (LDC), which is the certified Implementation Plan for the City of San Diego Local Coastal Program. The proposed changes will clarify when environmental determinations are appealable at the local level, how the public is given their Notice of Right to Appeal (NORA), and the timing to file an appeal. The amendment was properly noticed via posting to the City's website and direct email and there are no known interested parties.

Following is a summary of the proposed changes along with a brief explanation of the purpose for or intent of the change and a reason why it is de minimis pursuant to Section 30514 of the Coastal Act.

DISCUSSION

The revisions to the LDC addressed in this action are de minimis in nature. They include changes to existing code language to reflect the City's current noticing practices for

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environmental determinations, and some minor formatting and text changes to identify the Planning Director as the authority for implementing environmental quality procedures. The proposed revisions are attached in the "strikeout" version of the ordinance (Exhibit 1).

Although not required by CEQA, the City of San Diego requires a NORA to help inform the public that an environmental determination has been made by staff and is subject to appeal pursuant to CEQA and the City's LDC Section 112.0510. The existing code (Section 112.0310) only requires NORAs to be posted in the lobby of the City's Development Services Department (DSD). However, the City's current practices are to post NORAs in the DSD lobby and on the City website, as well as to distribute NORAs to any person who requests notification, to the affected community planning group, and to the Council office for the Council District in which the project is proposed to be located.

The City has therefore submitted Ordinance No. 20348 which amends relevant sections of Chapter 11, Articles 2 and 3, and Chapter 12, Article 8, of the San Diego Municipal Code to reflect the City's current expanded practices for issuance of a NORA determination, to clarify the City's environmental procedures, and to facilitate awareness of rights to appeal environmental determinations.

Specifically, proposed changes to Chapter 11, Article 2 include language stating that NORAs are not required to be posted for activities that are not subject to CEQA, projects with an environmental document subject to a Hearing Officer or Planning Commission action, and projects with an environmental document or an exemption determination subject to City Council approval. These exempt activities or actions do not warrant a NORA because they do not involve the exercise of discretionary powers by a public agency, will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, or are not a project as defined in CEQA Section 15378. In addition, NORAs are not required for projects with environmental documents heard by the Hearing Officer or Planning Commission, because the public is still informed and has appeal rights through other means. NORAs will be posted and distributed pursuant to the City's current practices as described above, and will be posted for 10, rather than 15, business days beginning on the date of the environmental determination. Minor changes are made to clarify that an appeal to an environmental determination can be made within 10 business days from the date the NORA is posted, or within 10 business days from the date of the decision by a Hearing Officer or Planning Commission. In multiple places in Chapter 11, Article 2 and Chapter 12, Article 8, the Development Services Director and Development Review Director has been omitted and replaced by the Planning Director as the authority for implementing environmental quality procedures. The only proposed changes to Chapter 11, Article 3 are minor modifications to the definition of "environmental determination," specifically that a project can be determined as exempt from, rather than not subject to, CEQA requirements.

The proposed de minimis changes do not change land uses or have any potential for impact to coastal resources. The proposed changes reflect procedural revisions that

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support due process and public participation in land use decision-making. All proposed de minimis modifications are consistent with Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

Section 21080.5 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exempts local government from the requirement of preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) in connection with its local coastal program. The Commission's LCP review and approval program has been found by the Resources Agency to be functionally equivalent to the EIR process. Thus, under CEQA Section 21080.5, the Commission is relieved of the responsibility to prepare an EIR for each LCP.

Nevertheless, the Commission is required in an LCP submittal or, as in this case, an LCP amendment submittal, to find that the LCP, or LCP, as amended, does conform with CEQA provisions. In the case of the subject LCP amendment request, the Commission finds that approval of the de minimis LCP amendment, as submitted, would not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts under the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act. Therefore, the Commission finds that there are no feasible alternatives under the meaning of CEQA which would reduce the potential for such impacts which have not been explored and the de minimis LCP amendment, as submitted, can be supported.

DETERMINATION

The Executive Director determines that the City of San Diego LCP Amendment #LCP-6-SAN-14-0309-1 is de minimis. Based on the information submitted by the City, the proposed LCP amendment will have no impact, either individually or cumulatively, on coastal resources. It is consistent with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. The amendment does not propose any change in land use or any change in the allowable use of property. The City has properly noticed the proposed amendment. As such, the amendment is de minimis pursuant to Section 30514(d).

MOTION: I move that the Commission concur with the Executive

Director's determination that the LCP amendment, as

submitted, is de minimis.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Director recommends that the Commission **concur** in this determination. Unless three or more members of the Commission object to this determination, the amendment shall become effective and part of the certified LCP ten (10) days after the date of the Commission meeting.

STRIKEOUT ORDINANCE

OLD LANGUAGE: Struck Out NEW LANGUAGE: Double Underline

ORDINANCE NUMBER O	(NEW SERIES)
DATE OF FINAL PASSAGE	

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 11, ARTICLE 2, DIVISION 3 OF THE SAN DIEGO MUNICIPAL CODE BY AMENDING SECTION 112.0310; AMENDING CHAPTER 11, ARTICLE 2, DIVISION 5 BY AMENDING SECTIONS 112.0511 AND 112.0520; AMENDING CHAPTER 11, ARTICLE 3, DIVISION 1 BY AMENDING SECTION 113.0103; AMENDING CHAPTER 12, ARTICLE 8, DIVISION 1 BY AMENDING SECTIONS 128.0103 AND 128.0104; AMENDING CHAPTER 12, ARTICLE 8, DIVISION 2 BY AMENDING SECTIONS 128.0202, 128.0203, 128.0207, 128.0208, 128.0209, AND 128.0210; AMENDING CHAPTER 12, ARTICLE 8, DIVISION 3 BY AMENDING SECTIONS 128.0303,128.0304, 128.0307, 128.0308, 128.0309, 128.0310, 128.0311, 128.0312, AND 128.0313; ALL RELATING TO PROCEDURES AND APPEALS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT.

§112.0310 Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination

In accordance with Chapter 12, Article 8, Division 2, the Planning Director implements the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines within the City of San Diego. While not required by CEQA, in some circumstances the City requires the posting of a Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination for activities that are subject to CEQA.

(a) A Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination shall be posted for an environmental determination for the following:

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EXHIBIT NO. 1

APPLICATION NO.

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Strikeout Ordinance



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California Coastal Commission

- (1) A determination that a project, as defined by State CEQA

 Guideline section 15378, is exempt from CEQA pursuant to a

 categorical exemption, that an activity is covered by the general

 rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential

 for causing a significant effect on the environment, or is exempt

 pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Article 12.5 in accordance

 with State CEQA Guidelines sSections 15061(b)(2), or

 15061(b)(3), or 15061(b)(5);
- (2) A determination that a project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to a statutory exemption, e.g. CEQA Guidelines 15061(b)(1); and
- (3) An environmental determination A decision to adopt or certify an environmental document associated with a project, as defined by State CEQA Guidelines section 15378, that the City Manager approves or decides to carry out without a public hearing in accordance with his powers under City of San Diego Charter sSection 28, including environmental documents for projects decided in accordance with Process Two.
- (b) The Director is not required to post a A Notice of Right to Appeal

 Environmental Determination is not required to be posted for those

 projects deemed statutorily exempt in accordance with State CEQA

 Guidelines, Article 18, commencing with Section 15260 the following:
 - (1) Activities that are not subject to CEQA pursuant to CEQA

 Guidelines Section 15060(c) and 15061(b)(4);

- (2) Projects with an environmental document subject to a Hearing

 Officer or Planning Commission action to adopt or certify; and
- (3) Projects with an environmental document or an exemption determination subject to City Council approval.
- (c) The A Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination shall include:
 - (1) and (2) [No change in text.]
 - A statement regarding the type of environmental determination and;
 - (4) A brief statement to support the reasons for the environmental determination, including citation to applicable State CEQA Guidelines or statutes; and
 - (5) The date the Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental

 Determination is posted and the time for filing an appeal in accordance with Section 112.0520(b).
- (d) The A Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination shall be posted on the date of the environmental determination as follows:
 - at <u>At</u> the City of San Diego, Development Services Department at in a location easily accessible to the public; and
 - (2) On the City of San Diego's website.
- (e) A Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination shall be distributed via electronic mail (or by U.S. mail if electronic mail is unavailable) on the date of the environmental determination as follows:

- (1) To the Council Office for the Council District in which the proposed project is located;
- (2) To the officially recognized community planning group, if any, that represents the area in which the proposed project is located; and
- (3) To any person who has submitted a written request for notification of the proposed development to the City staff person named in the Notice of Future Decision.
- (f) A Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination shall remain posted in accordance with Section 112.0310(d) shall remain posted for a period of 15 10 business days.

§112.0511 No Development During Appeal Period

Development authorized by a permit, map, or other matter may not occur before the date of final action, except that actions necessary to address an emergency can proceed to the minimum amount necessary to protect public health and safety.

112.0520 Environmental Determination Appeals

- (a) [No change in text.]
- (b) Time for Filing an Appeal

 An application to appeal a decision described in Section 112.0520(a) an

 environmental determination shall be filed in the Office of the City Clerk
 as follows:
 - (1) within Within 10 business days from the date of the posting of the

 Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination-; or

- (2) Within 10 business days from the date of a decision by a Hearing Officer or the Planning Commission to adopt or certify an environmental document.
- (c) [No change in text.]
- (d) Power to Act on Appeal. After the conclusion of the public hearing, Tthe City Council shall consider may take action the appeal and shall, by a majority vote as follows:
 - (1) By majority vote Ddeny the appeal, approve the environmental determination and adopt the CEQA findings and statement of overriding considerations of the previous decision-maker, where appropriate; or
 - (2) By majority vote Ggrant the appeal and set aside the *environmental*determination, in accordance with Section 112.0520(e).
- (e) If the City Council grants the appeal under Section 112.0520(d)(2):
 - (1) [No change in text.]
 - (2) The Development Services Planning Director shall reconsider the environmental determination in accordance with Section 128.0103 and prepare a revised environmental document as appropriate, in consideration of any direction from the City Council.
 - (3) At a subsequent hearing, the City Council shall again consider the environmental determination and associated projects, and <u>may</u> take action in accordance with Section 112.0520(e)(3)(A), (B), or (C) to as follows:

(A) through (C) [No change in text.]

§113.0103 Definitions

Abutting property through Encroachment [No change in text.]

Environmental determination means a decision by any non-elected City decision maker, to certify an environmental impact report, adopt a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration, or to determine that a project is not subject to exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), under State CEQA Guidelines sSection 15061(b)(2) or (3).

Environmentally sensitive lands through Yard [No change in text.]

§128.0103 Powers and Duties of the Development Services <u>Planning</u> Director in Implementing Environmental Quality Procedures

The Development Services Planning Director shall be responsible for implementing this article.

- (a) The Development Services Planning Director shall have the following powers as required for all projects or activities as defined by CEQA, whether proposed by private applicants, the City, or other public agencies: (1) through (8) [No change in text.]
- (b) The Development Services Planning Director shall establish and maintain that degree of independence in the performance of these functions and duties as will assure the City Council, the City Manager, the Planning Commission, and the people of the City of San Diego that the review and analysis of the environmental consequences of projects, are in accordance with CEQA, are independent and wholly objective, and are not prepared for the purpose of either supporting or detracting from any project, plan, or

position, whether advanced by the City, any other governmental agency, or private interest.

§128.0104 Authority to Require Mitigation and Monitoring Programs

When the conditions of a project approval require mitigation and monitoring, the City Manager and the Development Services Planning Director are responsible for promulgating mitigation and monitoring standards and guidelines for public and private projects consistent with the requirements of CEQA Section 21081.6. The Development Services Planning Director or City Manager may require appropriate surety instruments or bonds from private project applicants to ensure the long term performance or implementation of required mitigation measures or programs. The City is authorized to recover its costs to offset the salary, overhead, and expenses for City personnel and programs to monitor qualifying projects.

§128.0202 Incorporation of CEQA by Reference: Actions That Require Compliance with CEQA

- (a) Except as otherwise provided, CEQA and this article shall apply to the following discretionary activities located within the City of San Diego:
 - (a)(1) Activities directly undertaken by the City such as construction of streets, bridges, or other public structures or adoption of plans and zoning regulations;
 - (b)(2) Activities financed in whole or in part by the City of San Diego; and
 - (e)(3) Private activities that require approval from the City of San Diego such as adoption and amendment of *land use plans* and the *Local Coastal Program*, zoning and rezoning actions, *development*

agreements, subdivision activities, development and use permits, and variances.

(b) An activity is not subject to CEQA if the activity does not involve the exercise of discretionary powers by a public agency; if the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foresecable indirect physical change in the environment; or if the activity is not a project as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

§128.0203 Actions Exempt from CEQA

An action or activity may be exempt from CEQA if it meets any of the following conditions:

- (a) The activity is not a project as defined in the State CEQA Guidelines,
 Section 15378;
- (b) The project has been granted an exemption by statute (e.g., State CEQA Guidelines, Article 18, commencing with Section 15260) or by categorical exemption (State CEQA Guidelines, Article 12.5, commencing with Section 15191, and Article 19, commencing with Section 15300).
 - (1) CEQA exempts ministerial actions by statute. City approval decided in accordance with Process One is a ministerial action, including issuance of a construction permit. The following are construction permits: Building Permits, Plumbing Permits, Electrical Permits, Mechanical Permits, Grading Permits, Public Right-Of-Way Permits, Demolition Permits, Removal and Relocation Permits, and Sign Permits:

- (2) Activities within the City of San Diego that typically are exempt
 by statute or categorical exemption from CEQA are provided in the
 CEQA Administrative Guidelines of the Land Development
 Manual.
- (e)(b) The activity is covered by the general rule in the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15061(b)(3), that states that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

§128.0207 Review for Exemption from the Requirements of CEQA

- (a) As part of the preliminary review of an activity proposed within the City of San Diego, the Development Services Planning Director shall determine whether the proposed activity is exempt from CEQA as described in Section 128.0203 and in the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15061 and shall file a Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination in accordance with Section 112.0310.
- (b) A determination by the Development Services Planning Director that a project is exempt from CEQA, as described in State CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(2) or (3), for which a Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination must be posted pursuant to Section 112.0310(a), shall be subject to the appeal procedures in sSection 112.0510 112.0520.

§128.0208 Determination of Type of Environmental Document

- (a) After an application for a discretionary permit or action is deemed complete, the Planning and Development Review Director shall take one of the following actions:
 - (1) through (3) [No change in text.]
- (b) [No change in text.]
- of the scope of the required environmental document and the additional information required, if any, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15060.

§128.0209 When a Previous Environmental Document May Be Used

- (a) A previously certified EIR or Negative Declaration, including any supplement or addendum, may be used when changes in the project or circumstances have occurred, unless the Planning and Development

 Review-Director determines that one or more of the situations identified in the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15162, exist.
- (b) If a previously certified document is to be used, the Planning and

 Development Review Director shall provide the decision-making body
 with an explanatory cover letter stating that none of the conditions
 specified in the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15162, exists.
- (c) [No change in text.]

§128.0210 When a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Document or Joint Document May Be Used

- (a) NEPA applies to projects that are carried out, financed, or approved in whole or in part by federal agencies. If a project will require compliance with both CEQA and NEPA, the Planning and Development Review Director should use the NEPA document rather than preparing a separate CEQA document if the following two conditions exist:
 - (1) [No change in text.]
 - (2) The NEPA document complies with the provisions of the State

 CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. Because NEPA does not require
 separate discussion of mitigation measures or growth including
 impacts, these points of analysis would need to be added,
 supplemented, or identified before an Environmental Impact

 Statement (EIS) could be used as an EIR.
- (b) If the NEPA document would not be prepared by the federal agency by the time the City of San Diego would need to consider an environmental document consistent with this article, the Planning and Development Review Director should try to prepare a combined NEPA-11 CEQA joint NEPA/CEQA document. Preparation of this joint environmental document shall involve the federal agency to avoid the need for the federal agency to prepare a separate document for the same project.

§128.0303 Who May Prepare an Environmental Document for the City

(a) The Planning and Development Review Director shall be responsible for preparation of environmental documents required by this article. The

- Planning and Development Review Director is authorized to retain consultants to implement the provisions of this section and expend funds collected in accordance with Section 128.0206 for this purpose.
- (b) The Planning and Development Review Director may choose one or more of the following alternatives for preparing a draft environmental document:
 - (1) through (2) [No change in text.]
 - (3) Execute a three-party agreement or memorandum of understanding with the applicant and an independent environmental consultant to govern the preparation of a draft environmental document by the independent environmental consultant based on a scope of work prepared by the Planning and Development Review Director; or
 - (4) Allow a draft environmental document to be prepared by an environmental consultant retained by the applicant based on a scope of work prepared by the Planning and Development Review Director.
- (c) An environmental document prepared in accordance with this section shall be subject to the requirements for independent review and analysis set forth in Section 128.0103(b) and shall not be released for public review until the Planning and Development Review Director determines that the document is adequate.

(d) The Planning and Development Review Director shall review and consider for inclusion in an environmental document any information regarding the project submitted by any person.

§128.0304 Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

After the Planning and Development Review Director has determined that an EIR is required for a project, the Planning and Development Review Director shall send to each Responsible Agency, each Federal Agency involved in approving or funding the project, and each Trustee Agency responsible for natural resources affected by the project a Notice of Preparation stating that an EIR will be prepared. The contents, distribution, and procedures for the Notice of Preparation shall be consistent with the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082.

§128.0307 Requests for Additional Public Review Time on the Draft Environmental Document

The Planning and Development Review Director may approve a request from the affected officially recognized community planning group or *interested party* if there is no officially recognized community planning group for an additional review period not to exceed 14 calendar days. The additional time for review shall not extend the time for action beyond that required under law. The failure to allow additional time for review shall not invalidate any discretionary approval based upon the document for which the additional review time was requested.

§128.0308 Responses to Comments on the Draft Environmental Documents

The Planning and Development Review Director shall prepare, or supervise preparation of, written responses to letters of comment received during the public review period for all environmental documents. Both the letters of comment and the responses shall be attached to the final environmental document.

§128.0309 Recirculation of a Draft Environmental Document

When significant new information is added to an environmental document after notice is given of the availability of the document for public review but before it is certified, the Planning and Development Review Director shall recirculate the draft environmental document consistent with the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5.

- §128.0310 Final Environmental Document Preparation, Distribution and Public Review

 A final environmental document consisting of all information required by CEQA

 and the State CEQA Guidelines and any other information the Planning and

 Development Review Director may add shall be prepared and distributed for review.
 - (a) Final Environmental Document Distribution

 At least 14 calendar days before the first public hearing or discretionary action on the project, the Development Services Planning Director shall make all final environmental documents, including EIR Candidate

 Findings and Statements of Overriding Consideration if applicable, available to the public and decision makers and shall also mail copies of final environmental documents to the officially recognized community planning groups and members of the public who commented on the draft document. Failure to provide this 14-calendar day review period shall not be treated as a procedural defect and shall not preclude discretionary

action on the project when necessary to avoid conflict with time limits imposed by law. The Development Services Planning Director shall provide a final EIR to any public agency that commented on the draft consistent with CEQA.

(b) Comment on Final Environmental Document
[No change in text.]

§128.0311 Certification of an Environmental Document

- (a) [No change in text.]
- (b) If the environmental document has been previously certified because the decision is being heard on appeal, because the City is acting as a Responsible Agency, or because of reuse of a previously certified document, subsequent discretionary approvals on the same project shall not require recertification of any previously certified environmental document prepared in connection with the project. In this case, the decision maker need not certify as required by Section 128.0311(a)(1) but shall state the information contained in Section 128.0311(a)(2) for the record. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to preclude the Planning and Development Review Director from reviewing the previously certified document to determine whether any supplemental information or document may be necessary.
- (c) [No change in text.]

§128.0312 Adoption of Candidate Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations by the Decision Maker

Before approving a project for which the final EIR identifies one or more significant effects, the decision maker shall adopt the required *findings* in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15091. When the decision to approve the project allows the occurrence of significant effects that are identified in the final EIR but are not at least substantially mitigated, the decision maker shall make a statement of overriding considerations stating the specific reasons to support the decision based on the final EIR and other information in the record in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15093.

- (a) Review of Further Information

 If before making a decision, the decision maker determines that substantive additional information has been presented at the public hearing requiring further review, the decision maker may refer the information to the Planning and Development Review Director for analysis, provided the referral does not adversely affect any time limits imposed by law.
- (b) Preparation of Adopted *Findings*[No change in text.]

§128.0313 Notice of Determination

The Development Services Planning Director, or City Clerk as appropriate for Process Five decisions, shall file a Notice of Determination within 5 working days of the *date of final action* for each project approval for which an environmental document was considered. The contents of the Notice of Determination and

procedures for its filing shall be consistent with the State CEQA Guidelines,

Section 15075 and 15094.

SMT:als 11/25/13 Or.Dept: DSD Doc. No. 517389_3