

Attachment 1

Draft Minutes of August 6, 2025

**CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH
GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA
CIVIC CENTER COMMUNITY ROOM – 100 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE**

**August 6, 2025
REGULAR MEETING – 5 P.M.**

I. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Co-Chair Greer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

Co-Chair Greer conducted roll call:

Present: Virginia Anders-Ellmore, Dennis Baker, James Carlson, Annie Clougherty, Chuck Ebner, Arlene Greer, David Guder, Laird Hayes, Ruth Kobayashi, Katie Love, Thomas Meng, Jim Mosher, Amber Snider, Debbie Stevens, Christy Walker, and Paul Watkins

Staff: Planning Manager Ben Zdeba

Excused Absent: Nicholas Acedevo, Curtis Black, Jeremy Evans, Rita Goldberg, Lynn Hackman, and Scott Laidlaw

Absent: Susan DeSantis (joined meeting at 5:13 p.m.), and Anthony Maniscalchi

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

(This item includes written correspondence received that is not related to items on the agenda.)

None

IV. CURRENT BUSINESS

a. Meeting Minutes of July 2, 2025 (Attachment 1 – Draft Minutes)

Motion made by GPAC Member Dennis Baker and seconded by GPAC Member Jim Carlson to approve the meeting minutes of July 2, 2025.

The motion carried unanimously. Co-Chair Greer and GPAC Members Ebner, Kobayashi, and Love abstained due to their absences from the July 2 meeting.

b. Draft Safety Element (Attachments 2 – Draft Element)

The GPAC Safety Subcommittee met on June 25, 2025, to review the draft Element. GPAC Member Amber Snider was identified as the new Subcommittee Chair and will provide an overview of the Subcommittee's discussions. At the conclusion of the Subcommittee's meeting, those in attendance agreed to allow City staff to make some small revisions and to share the Element with the full GPAC for consideration. Attachment 2 is the draft Element, as reviewed and revised by the Subcommittee.

Recommended Actions:

- (1) Receive an overview from the GPAC Safety Subcommittee;
- (2) Provide any feedback on the Subcommittee's efforts; and
- (3) Conduct a vote to support moving the draft Element forward for the GPUSC's review, and for public review, thereafter, including any related City Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

Planning Manager Ben Zdeba reported that the Safety Subcommittee held a productive meeting on June 25 to review the Draft Safety Element.

Consultant Elizabeth Dickson (Dudek) stated that feedback from the Subcommittee has been incorporated into the latest draft. She outlined key focus areas, including compliance with State legislation, interagency coordination, and maintaining consistency across General Plan elements. She noted that the Safety Element is among the most heavily regulated elements and requires review by outside agencies. She confirmed that coordination with CAL FIRE is underway and that the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Resource Protection Committee will also review the draft.

Ms. Dickson reported that updates to the draft include clarifying the City's goal of conducting sand replenishment every five to seven years, while acknowledging that replenishment may be irregular. Additional revisions include new context and mapping related to CAL FIRE's 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Zone updates, recognition of the Newport Beach Emergency Council, and revisions to several policies. She noted that Draft Policy S-1.1 was updated to prioritize development of a Sea Level Rise Plan, with benefits for completing the plan before 2029.

GPAC Member Snider, Chair of the Safety Subcommittee, requested GPAC input on the Draft Element.

Planning Manager Zdeba recommended that the GPAC vote to advance the Draft Element to the General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC) for concurrence, followed by Commission-level review. He stated that the Element would go before the Planning Commission prior to public release.

GPAC Member Baker noted that a motion should be made before discussion.

Motion made by GPAC Member Baker and seconded by GPAC Member Katie Love to forward the Draft Safety Element to the General Plan Update Steering Committee for review, and for public review, thereafter, including any related City Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

GPAC Member Anders-Ellmore reported on recent flooding in Texas and expressed concerns about flood resilience in her Newport Shores neighborhood. She recommended installing flow meters along the Santa Ana River, creating a flood alert system similar to tsunami warnings, and reviewing underground electric line safety in light of sea level rise.

Planning Manager Zdeba pointed to Draft Policies S-11.4 and S-12.5 addressing monitoring conditions and emergency warning protocols, noting that more detailed measures are covered in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Consultant Dickson added that, in addition to policies on beach sand replenishment with the U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers, similar policies could be developed with Prado Dam and Southern California Edison regarding underground lines.

Kimberly Carter recommended referencing City evacuation plans and emergency materials. Nancy Gardner reported that Good Neighbor Newport had sent a letter to the City Council supporting the presentation of emergency information at community meetings rather than through mailers. Ms. Carter inquired about resident survey data from recent tsunami warnings. Planning Manager Zdeba confirmed that the LHMP is referenced in the General Plan, but emphasized that the General Plan is not designed for use during active emergencies.

In response to GPAC Member Annie Clougherty, Planning Manager Zdeba clarified that Draft Policies marked “Imp.” indicate implementation programs, which will be tied to the numbered Implementation Plan. Consultant Dickson confirmed that the Implementation Plan will be revised, as necessary. GPAC Member Walker compared the City’s tsunami warning and evacuation plans favorably to Hawaii’s.

GPAC Member Paul Watkins cautioned about the political implications of terminology, noting the Department of Energy’s shift away from climate change language, and expressed support for advancing the Draft Element. GPAC Member Baker added that replacing the term “climate change” is challenging, as alternatives like “global warming” are inadequate. GPAC Member Ruth Kobayashi stated that clear, neutral language would encourage broader acceptance. Consultant Dickson confirmed that only two non-policy references to climate appear in the Draft and can be removed if desired. She noted that “sea level rise” is mandated by State law, while terms like “warming of ocean waters” and “atmospheric river” will remain.

GPAC Member Chuck Ebner asked about geologic hazards, and Consultant Dickson clarified that these are addressed outside the Land Use Element. GPAC Member Love agreed with Kobayashi, recommending accessible language such as “climate conditions” or “extreme heat events.” GPAC Member Jim Mosher suggested consolidating hazard tables into one central table with 2050 projections and noted inconsistencies in geographic representation. He also called for minutes to be kept for Subcommittee meetings and for future draft elements to include redlined changes for clarity. GPAC Member Susan DeSantis recommended using “resilience” to frame issues, with Consultant Dickson confirming this could be incorporated.

Co-Chair Arlene Greer recommended adding the Newport Coast Community Center and Newport Coast Elementary School to the list of evacuation centers. Ms. Gardner urged the City to work with private enterprises on shelter planning, and Ms. Carter recommended presenting evacuation sites in map format. Planning Manager Zdeba noted that evacuation sites listed in the General Plan are only potential sites, that churches and other facilities can be discussed, and that the LHMP may be a better home for such lists due to the need for frequent updates.

Nancy Scarborough suggested that the final online General Plan include hyperlinks for easier navigation and noted that tourists and CERT should be better integrated into emergency planning. GPAC Member Love supported identifying specific evacuation facilities, such as conference spaces at Hoag Hospital. Planning Manager Zdeba confirmed that lifeguards are included in emergency plans.

Planning Manager Zdeba also clarified that recent draft revisions had been shared only with the Subcommittee Chair and committed to notifying the full GPAC of future updates. GPAC Member Mosher recommended that future versions show redlined changes. He also raised concerns about terminology such as capitalizing “City,” with Consultant Dickson confirming the City’s style guide distinguishes “City” for government references and “city” for geographic use.

Co-Chair Greer agreed with Ms. Carter’s proposal to map evacuation sites. GPAC Member David Guder expressed that residents already know evacuation areas within their neighborhoods, but Ms. Carter responded that the City should explicitly provide this information. Zdeba recommended removing the evacuation site list from the Draft and instead directing staff to consider both public and private facilities.

Substitute Motion made by GPAC Co-Chair Greer and seconded by GPAC Member Kobayashi to forward the Draft Safety Element to the General Plan Update Steering Committee for review, and for public review, thereafter, including any related City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, with the amendments suggested at the meeting.

The motion carried unanimously except for GPAC Member Anders-Ellmore, who voted no.

GPAC Member Virginia Anders-Ellmore stated that GPAC Member Watkins’ comments on avoiding divisive language should be included in the motion.

Planning Manager Zdeba confirmed that the motion incorporates climate language and reflects consensus to allow wordsmithing edits, including capitalization of “City.”

GPAC Member Anders-Ellmore subsequently changed her vote to “aye.”

c. Language Used in General Plan Update

With the GPAC’s review and shaping of each individual updated General Plan Element, “softer” language has been suggested throughout using words like “reasonable” and phrases like “to the extent necessary.” Given the frequency of such suggestions, the GPUSC determined at its July 23, 2025 meeting that it would be worthwhile to place the matter on the GPAC’s agenda for a broader discussion and consideration.

Recommended Actions:

- (1) Discuss and seek a consensus on how to proceed through a straw poll or similar.

GPUSC Chair Gardner emphasized the importance of language in the General Plan, noting the need to balance overly severe language that could limit the City Council with overly loose language that could diminish meaning. She referenced GPAC Member Watkins’ practice, from his legal background, of inserting terms such as “reasonable” to avoid overly firm language. She reported that there has been discussion of requesting the City Attorney to draft a preamble to the General Plan to establish balance and provide flexibility as conditions change over time.

Planning Manager Zdeba agreed, stating that a preamble could clarify the GPAC’s aspirational intent while acknowledging the unpredictability of future circumstances. He added that it would also reduce the need for repetitive, diluted policy language.

GPAC Member Snider expressed support for including a preamble.

Co-Chair Greer conducted a straw poll, which indicated strong interest in pursuing GPUSC Chair Gardner's recommendation for a City Attorney-approved preamble.

d. Subcommittee Reports

Since the GPAC last convened on July 2, 2025, the GPAC Land Use Subcommittee and the GPAC Noise Subcommittee have both met. Subcommittee Chairs DeSantis and Mosher will provide verbal updates.

Recommended Actions:

- (1) Receive an Overview from the Subcommittee Chairs Subcommittee members, and City staff; and
- (2) Provide any feedback on the efforts.

Chair DeSantis reported that the Subcommittee met in late July to review the Draft Land Use Element, which had been provided a week in advance. Attendees included Consultants Dickson and Rodriguez (Dudek), Planning Manager Zdeba, and Deputy Community Development Director Murillo. She stated that discussion focused on new or updated policies, leading to robust debate. The Subcommittee agreed to revisit 12 Draft Policies at its next meeting on August 11 at 4:00 p.m., and she noted that a recording of the prior meeting is available.

GPAC Member Mosher reported that a key issue raised in the Subcommittee relates to thinking boldly about the City's long-term evolution within the General Plan timeframe. He noted concerns that the Dudek contract does not include an Environmental Impact Review (EIR), which limits the scope of potential changes. In response to Subcommittee Chair DeSantis, he cited redefining industrial zones as an example of where the GPAC is constrained. Planning Manager Zdeba clarified that the GPAC cannot consider parcel-level land use changes but should focus on balanced communities in Housing Element growth areas through Specific Plans or Corridor Plans. He emphasized that past Land Use Elements have been effective and that this process can still explore how areas may evolve without altering zoning definitions.

In response to Subcommittee Chair DeSantis, GPAC Member Stevens noted that CEQA has been streamlined to provide additional exemptions, particularly for affordable housing. Consultant Dickson clarified that these legislative changes apply to development projects and do not affect the General Plan. Planning Manager Zdeba added that CEQA applies to project compliance with the General Plan, not to revising the General Plan itself.

Chair Mosher reported that the Noise Subcommittee met on July 28 with Dudek Acoustician Dana Lodico. He stated that Dudek is preparing State-mandated Noise Impact Contours for automobiles and aircraft, based on noise samples at approximately 20 roadside locations. He noted uncertainty about how contours for John Wayne International Airport will be developed, questioned how drones could be included, and identified a goal of achieving less aircraft noise by 2050.

Chair Mosher reported that discussion of Draft Policies highlighted the need for noise standards applicable to new construction. He recommended that the Noise Element be implemented in conjunction with a Community Noise Ordinance, although drafting the

ordinance is outside Dudek's scope. He also suggested incorporating vibration impacts, similar to practices in other jurisdictions, to address construction activity.

In response to GPAC Member Love, Chair Mosher explained that the noise surveys were conducted along busy roadways to capture traffic decibel levels, not in quiet neighborhoods to establish baseline background noise. He expressed disappointment that surveys were not conducted in areas where airplane noise is the dominant factor.

e. Updates and Overview of Upcoming Deliverables, Objectives, and Schedules

City staff and the consultant team will provide updates since the GPAC last convened on July 2, 2025, and what to expect from here in terms of deliverables and timing.

Recommended Actions:

- (1) Receive a presentation from City staff and the consultant team; and
- (2) Provide any feedback on the efforts.

Planning Manager Zdeba reported on the schedule of upcoming GPAC Subcommittee meetings and on when boards, committees, and commissions will review General Plan elements relevant to their work. He noted that the first such meeting occurred the previous evening, when the Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Commission was presented with draft elements. He reported that the Commission responded by forming an Ad Hoc Committee to review the drafts.

Consultant Dickson outlined the editorial review process, which includes a week-long pause following each presentation to identify typographical errors, inconsistencies, and other issues from prior review rounds before the drafts are released for public input.

Planning Manager Zdeba confirmed that draft documents will continue to display a large "DRAFT" watermark to make clear they are works in progress. He reported on discussions regarding a potential joint session between the Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Commission Ad Hoc Committee and the GPAC Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee, expressing support for the idea.

In response to Co-Chair Greer, Planning Manager Zdeba confirmed that the Cultural Arts Commission and the Board of Library Trustees will be presented with the Arts and Culture Element and the Historical Resources Element.

V. COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATTERS WHICH MEMBERS WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION OR REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM)

Planning Manager Zdeba stated that he will send a poll to the GPAC members to see if they would prefer Sept. 3rd or Sept. 10th for their next meeting out of respect for Labor Day.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Co-Chair Greer adjourned the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

Next Meeting: TBD