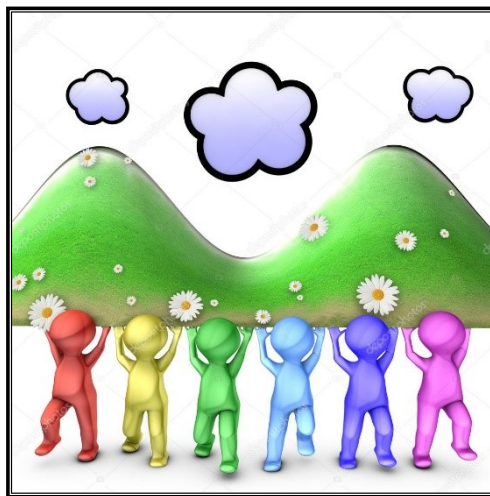


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

September 23, 2016

Column #102

Part 4 – Monterey Workshop Addresses Affordable Housing Solutions



BOONDOGGLERS AND BELLYACHERS VS. LOCAL MOUNTAIN MOVERS

By Wanda Sue Parrott

BOONDOGGLING and protocol-honoring seem indistinguishable to a homeless person like CeliaSue Hecht, 66, who spends cold nights in a car because she can't find an affordable room.

Boondogglers are those who could get things done to solve the problem but use stall and delay tactics to prolong a situation until it fades out, is forgotten, goes bust or dies. Homeowners with empty rooms to rent fall often into that category.

City halls are especially notorious for boondoggling, but Boondogglers can be any and all procrastinators.

Should any person complain too openly about lack of affordable housing, he or she falls into the category my Ozarks-born father called Bellyachers.

Bellyachers can be everyone who complains about anything except their own actions or ideas, especially during election years, but present at all times.

To affordable-housing seekers, the City of Monterey probably appears to have been boondoggling since its March 23 adoption of the 2015-2023 Housing Element. They're wrong. The city was following parliamentary procedural protocol.

A third category of person in Ozarkese is the Mountain Mover, one who gets things done. On Monterey's Affordable Housing stage, John Q. Public played that dramatic role in this week's city council meeting where Shakespeare might have summed up the conclusion by asking: To amend or not amend the Housing Element? That was the question!

Housing Element Was The Question

State law requires California cities and counties to address the needs of all income groups in their Housing Element as provided by the California Dept. of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

At the March 23, 2016, meeting, Monterey City Council voted to adopt the 2015-2023 Housing Element with the proviso the city had six months in which to evaluate five amendments that might be added to the Housing Element to ameliorate its affordable housing dilemma.

The Planning Department's Housing Issues Community Workshop was held Aug. 31 at the Monterey Youth Center, with 110 signed in and many more unregistered attendees. Stations were set up for five major issues: emergency shelter zoning; short-term rentals; second units; decoupling parking costs in new rental developments; adaptive reuse of hotels and motels.

Forty-one surveys were either completed at the workshop, mailed to City staff, or downloaded from the City's website and emailed to City staff. They included questions on four of the five issues (short-term rentals, second units, adaptive reuse of hotels, and decoupling parking costs) that corresponded to the questions on the voting posters.

The same four affordable-housing issues were presented by the Planning Dept. for consideration and direction to the Monterey City Council on Sept. 20. The packed council chamber was the setting of a dramatic reenactment of Shakespeare's old saw: All the world's a stage, and...

...all the men and women merely players...

The performance was a brilliant presentation featuring Boondogglers, Bellyachers and Mountain Movers, a few arguing for and majority arguing against the four issues.

Finally, as 11 p.m. approached, council members who went without dinner because its earlier session (related to highly charged Fisherman's Wharf issues) overshot its mark, ended discussion of public input and Mayor Clyde Roberson said:

"I move the Housing Element be left as it is, and that the City focus attention on a true affordable housing policy with regional, State, and Federal cooperation and funding, including CDBG money. Staff is directed to explore affordable housing opportunities in mixed use and R-3 zones, educate homeowners on how to rent rooms without adding second units, and to increase enforcement of illegal short term, vacation rentals." The motion passed 5-0.

What's Next?

The emergency shelter location overlay presentation will be on Monterey City Council's Oct. 4 agenda.

Mike Rhodes, author of "Dispatches from the War Zone" was guest speaker at the Sept. 6 ACLU meeting. His advice to those interested in cutting through bureaucratic red tape in order to get something done about affordable housing was: Just do it, then invite the authorities to see what you've done. If it's working, they'll probably approve it. If not, you tried.

My dad would have said, "Aw, quit your bellyaching and do something about it."

Or as Mayor Clyde Roberson points out: In Monterey homeowners are already allowed to rent out rooms. No permission is needed.

Does anyone reading this column want to rent a spare bedroom for \$250- \$500 and share your kitchen and bath? If yes, quit boondoggling. Let me know.

Meanwhile, CeliaSue Hecht relocated to Southern California where, when winter chill arrives, the temperature might hover around 70 degrees F.

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