

**SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025
JOINT SALINAS CITY COUNCIL AND SALINAS PLANNING COMMISSION
UNOFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Dennis Donohue and Commission Chair Lorisa McKelvey Daye

ROLL CALL – CITY COUNCIL

Present:

Councilmember Jose Luis Barajas
Councilmember Tony Barrera
Councilmember Margaret D’Arrigo
Councilmember Gloria De La Rosa
Councilmember Aurelio Salazar, Jr.
Councilmember Andrew Sandoval
Mayor Dennis Donohue

ROLL CALL – PLANNING COMMISSION

Present:

Commissioner Jessica Almanza-Larios, District 1
Commissioner Juan Gutierrez, Mayor's Appointee
Commissioner John Meeks, District 2
Commissioner Carissa Purnell, District 5
Commissioner Marcelino Rocamora, Jr., District 6
Commissioner Maureen Wruck, District 4
Commission Chair Lorisa McKelvey Daye, District 3

STUDY SESSION

25-199 Joint Study Session: Draft General Plan Update - Visión Salinas 2040

Received report from Jonathan Moor regarding the Draft General Plan Update – Vision Salinas 2040, quarterly progress reports to City Council. Throughout the process, staff held Study Sessions with City Council and Planning Commission to review draft policy on rising topics, including land use and circulation, health and safety and economic development. This Study Session focuses on the General Plan in its entirety and summarizes the update process, changes to state planning law, major themes and significant new additions to the document. The City is preparing a Public Review Draft of the General Plan for release this summer and is also working on the related Climate Action Plan and an Environmental Impact Report for both documents.

Commissioner Purnell inquired about the origin of data source used in the AMBAG population projections in the plan specifically related to age demographics and potential impacts on housing. Additionally, she inquired about the distribution of land use designation and zoning ratios.

Mr. Moore explained that the city uses a ratio of three acres per thousand residents for open space. Through the planning process staff can look at opportunities to increase the open space. He also added that Census data is use to make projections on population growth.

Commissioner Rocamora asked what progress has been made since the initial Economic Development (ED) Plan was implemented. He also asked about the slow growth of housing development.

Mr Moore clarified that since the EDE was adopted, the City has been able address the environmental impacts on specific neighborhoods and launched community planning efforts throughout the city including the Chinatown and Alisal areas that will become part of the overall general plan.

Community Development Director Lisa Brinton added that housing construction is dictated by the fluctuations in the market and delays in the adoption of the specific plans. The City is passed that phase and the city has received application for over 5,400 homes and over 1,600 units planned for development. She added that the city is understaffed and are diligently working on increasing staffing to increase permit processing. Additionally, there is a need to update the zoning code to more efficiently streamline the permitting process.

Chair McKelvey-Day asked for clarification regarding AB 821, General Plan and the connection with the zoning code and asked why the EDE was optional. She noted the importance of linking community involvement with economic and planning processes to ensure everyone can understand the plan and emphasizing greater engagement with commissions and long-term financial and economic planning with other portions of the general plan.

In response, Mr. Moore clarified that it is important to update the zoning code in tandem with the General Plan to ensure that implementation can be accomplished seamlessly and without confusion. It also creates an opportunity to elevate key elements of the plan all in one document. He added that the EDE is not required by state law to be included in the General Plan.

Mr. Brinton added that the development process helps ensure consistency among all elements of the plan. The plan was prepared in-house in collaboration with staff and the community to develop goals, policies, and actions as part of a work plan or strategic plan that will prepare the roadmap to the implementation of the general plan. Mrs. Brinton added that the General Plan will require state reporting and reports to Council.

Commissioner Wruck expressed concern regarding the limited connection between the Climate Action Plan, parks, the lack of open space, and the use of walkability spaces. She recommended open space and walkability spaces should be required as part of the plan. She noted that the rising cost of housing production may be the leading factor to lack of housing production.

Commissioner Meeks asked whether birth rates are factored into school enrollment projections.

Mr. Moore indicated that birth rate, death rate, migration rates and a number of other demographics are taking into account to plan the future growth area.

Councilmember D'Arrigo asked for clarification if Arts and Culture Element are added into the General Plan and expressed support of ensuring that the "optional" elements are being added to the General Plan including the Public Safety Element. She asked for clarification regarding the zoning code update process.

Mrs. Brinton clarified that the City Council will need to authorize contracting a consultant to support the work and then will work on establishing an advisory committee with stakeholder groups and public engagement.

Councilmember De La Rosa stated it is important to work with key stakeholders in the community as part of the General Plan process.

Councilmember Salazar asked when 600 housing units will be available. He also asked about coordination with other cities regarding traffic circulation and housing.

Mrs. Brinton explained that the City is finalizing the Final Map and working with the developer as model home applications are submitted. Mr. Moore clarified that coordination with other neighboring cities was a key part of the Housing Element and remains an ongoing effort.

Councilmember Barajas referenced annexation and target areas added to the General Plan and the sphere of influence and asked for clarification regarding the economic reserve areas. He also requested an explanation regarding the maintenance assessment districts and further asked why bike paths were removed from the circulation plan and suggested reinstating the eastern bicycle path for continuity.

In response, Mr. Moore and Mrs. Brinton explained that the full map will include the added target areas and annexed areas identified for growth for both the City and County which the city will work with LAFCO to increase the sphere of influence. They also explained that establishment of an assessment district function like lighting and landscape districts or a road maintenance district will fall under the Proposition 218 process.

City Manager Rene Mendez responded that such projects can be factored in to associated infrastructure and housing costs.

Councilmember Barajas recommended removing housing eviction references from the environmental justice element due to recent Council actions.

Councilmember Barrera asked about consistency between past and current Councils. He also asked how Council could support Community Development and whether staff retention or funding is an issue. Additionally, he inquired about the relationship between the city and stakeholder as it related to the Alisal Marketplace.

In response, Mr. Moore confirmed that the General Plan and other planning documents maintain policy consistency. He added that recent land use changes and renewed engagement with local businesses has increased flexibility and relationships with key community stakeholders. Mrs. Brinton added that ensuring budget allocations to Community Development for this effort is critical. City Manager Mendez emphasized that the General Plan defines the City's future and must be reviewed carefully, given the complexity of required environmental analyses. The City of Salinas has done incredible work on various planning efforts, and it is important for them to be reflected in the general plan.

In closing Councilmember Barrera also asked about bicycle lane maintenance and recommended adding maintenance to the safety component of the plan.

Councilmember Sandoval asked about seawater intrusion and further inquired about identifying pesticide impacts to the community. He additionally asked if staffing needs could be included in the General Plan.

In response, Mr. Moore stated seawater intrusion will be addressed regionally through the SVBGSA as a major infrastructure project. Mrs. Brinton added that pesticide impacts will be determined by the environmental impact studies as project mitigation measures.

Ms. Monica Gurmilan explained that pesticides are covered under the Environmental Justice Element and primarily fall under the County Agricultural Commissioner's jurisdiction, with the City focusing on education and interagency collaboration.

Received public comment from the following members of the public:

Peter Kasavan, Kasavan Architects/SPARC

Christie Cromeenes, Central Coast Builders Association

Karen Cameron

Yolanda Hayes

David Maisonneuve

Mary Ann Worden

Jose Guerra, Monte Bella

Peter Szalai

Commissioner Gutierrez expressed appreciation for the presentation and stated he looks forward to the future of Salinas.

Commissioner Almaza-Larios also thanked staff for their extensive work and emphasized the importance of maintaining consistency.

Commissioner Meeks expressed appreciation for the presentation and the work completed thus far.

Commissioner Wruck also thanked staff and expressed concerns with concern with transportation management and hopes it is properly vetted and as part of the General Plan implementation process.

Commissioner Purnell extended heartfelt thanks, especially to Ms. Gurmilan, the steering committee, the Alisa Vibrancy Plan team, and Alfred Diaz-Infante for their work through this process. She Praised inclusion of the Environmental Justice (EJ) plan and looks forward to future dialogue.

Commissioner Rocamora highlighted the need for developers, architects, and contractors to be involved in revising the permitting process. He suggested updating the permitting process with input from key stakeholders.

Commission Chair McKelvey-Day thanked the community for its engagement. Pointed out bottlenecks in current processes and suggested greater involvement of the Planning Commission. She emphasized the need for planning, economic development, and use of community talent.

Councilmember Sandoval thanked staff and community and noted the importance of focusing on low- and moderate-income housing, improving permitting processes, accountability, standardized community engagement, and intentional growth and maintenance.

Councilmember Barrera noted the importance of consistency and community engagement. He encouraged hiring professionals who are approachable and simplifying processes at the permit center.

Councilmember Barajas thanked staff and the steering committee. He stressed the importance of housing and continuing the conversations. He requested a presentation from SVBGSA.

Councilmember Salazar recommended reviewing the county's circulation plan and its impacts on Salinas. He stressed protection of the General Plan from legal challenges and urged proactive planning.

Councilmember De La Rosa thanked staff and encouraged innovative housing solutions, such as manufactured homes, and highlighted the importance of community engagement and support for the Alisal Vibrancy Plan and future growth.

Councilmember D'Arrigo thanked all stakeholders for their engagement. In closing, she requested prioritizing major projects, improving customer service, increase Planning Commission involvement, staffing, training, and improve infrastructure maintenance.

Mayor Donohue reflected on previous General Plan experience and noted that effective community outreach and timing of the current process is a critical component of this effort. In closing, he emphasized the importance of the role of the Planning Commission and all other City Commissions and Boards as part of this process. He noted that this is an opportunity to improve consistency and an opportunity for a zoning overhaul which will compliment the overall General Plan effort.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.