

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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May 11, 2017

City of Long Beach City Council
c/o Development Services/Planning Bureau
333 W. Ocean Boulevard, 5th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Appeal of Local Coastal Development Permit No. 1405-01, Belmont Beach and Aquatics Center Project, City of Long Beach

To the Honorable Long Beach City Council:

Our agency is aware that appeals to the City Council have been filed by members of the public in regard to the approval by the City's Planning Commission of a coastal development permit for construction of a 125,500 sq. ft. swimming pool complex, café, and 55,745 sq. ft. park on a 5.8-acre beachfront site in the Belmont Shore area of Long Beach. We have received numerous inquiries from the public in regard to the Coastal Act planning issues that must be addressed as part of the coastal development permit process, and our staff offers the following comments. These comments supplement the letter our staff submitted in response to the Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed development, dated June 16, 2016.

In regard to permitting jurisdiction, portions of the project would be located seaward of the former mean high tide line (Chapter 138 Line), on State Tidelands that the legislature has granted to the City, and would extend into the California Coastal Commission's retained coastal development permit jurisdiction as shown on the Local Coastal Program Certification Map approved by the Coastal Commission for the City of Long Beach. Thus, the proposed project will require both a local coastal development permit from the City and a coastal development permit from the Coastal Commission and any development proposed on the project site must conform to the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act as well as the policies set forth in the City of Long Beach certified LCP.

Commission staff believes that the primary issue raised by this project is that, based on the information contained in the City's DEIR, although the beach is currently wide enough that the structure would likely be safe from wave action in the immediate future, given sea level rise, the new pool facility is expected to be subject to wave action and shoreline erosion over the structure's expected life. The Commission's Sea Level Rise Guidance Document and the hazards and shoreline development policies in Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act provide that new development should not be located in hazardous areas subject to sea level rise and shoreline erosion if there are feasible alternatives.

The project appears to be designed to likely ensure the structure's stability (from an engineering perspective) if the area of the beach where the seaward portion of the structure is located becomes inundated due to sea level rise; this would be achieved by utilizing a substantial foundation that would extend not only below the expected scour level of the beach but would also be built up

relatively high in elevation. As a result, this deepened foundation itself could effectively act as a seawall, or result in similar impacts to coastal resources as a seawall, raising potential issues with the hazards and shoreline development policies of the Coastal Act (including Sections 30235 and 30251), which provide that new development should be designed and located in manner to ensure geologic and engineering stability independent of the need for shoreline protection.

Moreover, both the Coastal Act and the City's LCP set forth policies to protect shoreline areas for public access and recreation. Beaches are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of new development because beaches backed by fixed or permanent development, such as the new pool facility, will not be able to migrate inland as sea level rises, and will become permanently inundated over time, which in turn presents serious concerns for future public access, recreation and habitat protection.

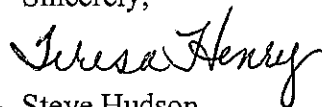
For these reasons, Commission staff believes that the best practice is to avoid locating new development in hazardous areas subject to sea level rise and shoreline erosion. In the case of this project, our staff has previously recommended to the City that it consider relocating the facility to a site that will not be affected by sea level rise/wave action for the expected life of the development, consistent with the Commission's Sea Level Rise Guidance Document and with Sections 30235 and 30253 of the Coastal Act in order to avoid potential impacts to public access and recreation along the beach.

In regard to visual resources, the project should be evaluated to determine the extent of its impact on visual resources and views from public viewing areas, including the beach, pier and public streets. The height of the proposed structure appears to exceed the allowed height for development on the site pursuant to the City's LCP, and we request that the City's address this issue in its deliberation on this matter and provide clarification on how the project would be consistent with the LCP without the need for an LCP amendment.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments to the City. Commission staff requests that the City thoroughly address these issues as part of its review of the City's local coastal development permit and adopt appropriate findings in relation to the LCP policies. In addition, we look forward to continuing to work with City staff to address these issues as part of the City's future application for a coastal development permit from the Coastal Commission for the development as well.

Please feel free to contact Charles Posner, Planning Supervisor, or me in our Long Beach office if you have any questions on this matter.

Sincerely,


for Steve Hudson
District Director

cc: Roberto Uranga, Coastal Commissioner
Tom Modica, Assistant City Manager
Amy Bodek, Director of Development Services
Linda Tatum, Planning Bureau Manager