

[Date: June 8, 2025]

City of San Diego

Development Services Department

1222 First Avenue, MS 301

San Diego, CA 92101

Subject: Request for Documentation and Clarification on $34 Document Review Fee and Note-Taking Policy

Dear Elyse Lowe, Director,

In our recent appointment at DSD, John Terrel, Development Chair, PBPG and myself were surprised to learn about the $34 administrative fee for reviewing project documents and the policy prohibiting constituents from taking notes during these reviews. While our Councilmember clarified that the note-taking restriction was a misunderstanding, the staff member clearly believed this was an official policy.

As residents and Community Planning Group members committed to transparency and community engagement in the development process, we respectfully request clarification, documentation, and reconsideration of these measures.

The $34 fee creates a financial barrier for residents seeking to stay informed about projects that may impact their neighborhoods. Access to public records is essential for fostering trust and participation in local governance, and this fee may disproportionately affect individuals or community groups with limited resources. Additionally, prohibiting note-taking during document reviews restricts constituents’ ability to engage meaningfully with the information provided, limiting their capacity to provide informed feedback or participate in public discussions.

To better understand these policies, I kindly request the following:

* Documentation outlining the new $34 administrative fee, including the ordinance, resolution, or policy establishing it, its purpose, and how it aligns with the City’s commitment to transparency and public access.
* Identification of the department, office, or individual(s) responsible for implementing and approving the $34 fee and the note-taking restriction policy.
* An explanation of the note-taking restriction, including its intended purpose and any supporting documentation or guidelines.
* Consideration of alternative approaches, such as waiving the fee for non-commercial, public interest reviews.

I appreciate the Department’s efforts to manage resources efficiently while serving the public. However, I believe these policies may inadvertently hinder community involvement. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further or participate in any public forums addressing these concerns. Please provide the requested documentation and responses to our address and or email below.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Marcella Bothwell, MD, MBA

Chair, Pacific Beach Planning Group