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STEVE BENNETT
SUPERVISOR, FIRST DISTRICT
(805) 654-2703
FAX: (805) 654-2226
E-mail: steve.bennett@ventura.org

October 10, 2006

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

SUBJECT: Direction to RMA staff to evaluate adoption of mandatory higher energy efficiency standards for new large homes and voluntary incentives for smaller homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Direct the Resource Management Agency, as part of the "Energy Leadership in Land Use Planning" grant-funded program, to study and report back to the Board on the issues involved in the adoption of a program to require very large homes to implement greater energy-efficiency measures than required by State Title 24 and the creation of a voluntary incentive program for smaller homes.

FISCAL IMPACT: None (fully grant funded).

DISCUSSION:

As approved by the Board, the Resource Management Agency is currently studying various potential strategies to reduce energy consumption under a grant from SCAG. Energy use reduction would assist in averting power outages, avoiding the need for costly new power plants, reduce consumption of finite resources, reduce air pollution, and aid in reducing global warming.

County records indicate that approximately 50 permits per year are issued for construction of homes of sizes greater than 4,000 square feet. Because these very large homes use more energy for heating, cooling, and lighting than

average-sized homes, they consume a disproportionate amount of energy per occupant. Additionally, large homes offer the opportunity to achieve greater total energy savings than small homes, and energy conservation or alternative energy measures would constitute a smaller increment of total project costs.

As an example of such a program, the County of Marin has adopted a Single Family Home Energy Efficiency Ordinance (attached). This Ordinance requires that large homes use no more energy than a 3,500 square foot home- the larger the home, the greater the energy conservation or alternative energy measures that must be implemented. I would like to see this approach considered along with other potential strategies.

Another potential strategy to consider would be to build upon the State's upcoming revisions to the Title 24 residential energy efficiency standards. This update that will be adopted in 2007 and become applicable in 2008 will both tighten the base standards for energy efficiency, and, establish a voluntary second tier of higher efficiency. It may be appropriate to consider applying the second tier standards to larger homes.

RMA will of course need to consider the impact to plan check and inspection of adopting programs that differ from state codes, and approaches that can minimize implementation challenges for both applicants and staff.

Some agencies, including Marin County and the City of Ventura, have adopted a program to offer voluntary incentives for construction of smaller homes that achieve substantially greater energy efficiency than required by law. These incentives included expedited plan checking and reduced fees. This Board action asks that RMA also evaluate and report back on a voluntary incentives program.

I have discussed this proposal with RMA management, and they believe the work can be accomplished with existing staff resources and with existing grant funds.

Cordially,



Steve Bennett
Supervisor, First District

Attachment