

40. Approve the nomination of Supervisor Cummings to the California Coastal Commission, and take related actions ()



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Board of Supervisors

Subject: Approve the Nomination of Supervisor Cummings to the California Coastal Commission

Meeting Date: March 25, 2025

Formal Title: Approve the nomination of Supervisor Cummings to the California Coastal Commission, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Approve the nomination of Supervisor Cummings to the California Coastal Commission; and
2. Direct the Chair to submit the nomination to the Speaker of the Assembly within the 45-day application period.

Executive Summary

Approve nomination to re-appoint Supervisor Cummings as the representative of the Central Coast counties of San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Monterey County on the California Coastal Commission.

Discussion

The California Coastal Commission is responsible for implementing the California Coastal Act within the state's coastal zone. The Commission consists of 15 members, 12 of whom are appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the President of the Senate. One seat is designated to represent elected officials from the Central Coast counties of San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Monterey. This appointment, made by the Speaker of the Assembly, may be filled with a City Council member or a County Supervisor. Currently, Supervisor Cummings serves as the Central Coast representative and is the Commission's Chair.

Many land use decisions made by the Board of Supervisors and local cities involve policies and projects within the coastal zone that require Coastal Commission approval. Santa Cruz County has greatly benefited—and will continue to benefit—from having a Commission member with deep knowledge of a broad range of local issues.

On December 11, 2024, Supervisor Cummings was unanimously elected Chair of the Coastal Commission by his fellow commissioners at a public hearing in Newport Beach. He was appointed to the Commission in 2023 as the locally elected representative for the Central Coast.

Supervisor Cummings began his political career as a tenants' rights organizer in Santa Cruz, motivated by the city's housing affordability crisis. In 2018, he was elected to the City Council, becoming one of the first two African American men to serve in that role. In 2020, he made history again as the first African American man to serve as Mayor of Santa Cruz. In 2022, he became the first African American elected to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. Throughout his career, he has prioritized affordable housing, environmental protection, and community service.

With a strong background in environmental sciences, Cummings holds a bachelor's degree in Biology, a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology with a designated emphasis in Environmental Studies, and a bachelor's degree in Spanish. Fluent in Spanish, he is committed to engaging with Spanish-speaking constituents. He brings over 20 years of experience in environmental scientific research and education, as well as a deep understanding of coastal issues and the Coastal Act. Given that much of the district he represents falls within the coastal zone, his expertise and leadership will continue to be invaluable in advancing public access, environmental protection, affordable housing, and local governance on the Commission.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact to the County budget for this item.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Attainable Housing, Sustainable Environment

Submitted By:

Felipe Hernandez, Chair and Fourth District Supervisor

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Agenda Management Support](#)
Subject: item 40 comment_West, T
Date: Monday, March 24, 2025 12:55:19 PM

From: Tina West <tinawestbookkeeping@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 12:33 PM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Please renominate Justin Cummings to coastal commission chair

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

Please renominate Justin Cummings to our coastal commission chair. The commission that protects public lands and ecosystems is under threat with the Trump administration. Justin will keep the public's interest a priority amongst a time of uncertainty.

Thank you,
Tina West
949-228-3125

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Agenda Management Support](#)
Subject: Items 30 and 40 comment_Vella, F and Stechbart, M
Date: Monday, March 24, 2025 2:49:19 PM
Importance: High

From: mark stechbart <mstechbart@msn.com>
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 2:00 PM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>;
district1@co.monterey.ca.us; cob@countyofmonterey.gov; district3@co.monterey.ca.us;
district4@co.monterey.ca.us; distric2@co.monterey.ca.us; district5@co.monterey.ca.us
Subject: March 25 2025 testimony Ca. coastal commissioner applicant nominations
Importance: High

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Monterey: item 8

Santa Cruz consent item-- 30 & 40.

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March 25 2025 testimony to Monterey and Santa Cruz supervisors: Ca. coastal commissioner applicant nominations

Frank Vella, President San Mateo County Assoc. of Realtors; Pacifica resident
frank@starboardcre.com. 650-464-8062

Mark Stechbart, Pacifica resident.
mstechbart@msn.com. 650-274-5193

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The current nomination process for CCC commission vacancies and recommendations to the Speaker are faulty.

Homeowners are not at the table. Neither homeowner issues, coastal

economic issues nor the future of 61 coastal towns are being discussed.

Commissioner candidates seek city selection or supervisor endorsements to the Speaker with no resume, no discussion of points of view, no statement regarding the 2025 policy issues facing the coastal zone. Most candidates don't even attend the nomination meeting.

Appointment to the CCC should not be a beauty contest ultimately decided behind closed doors.

Let us remind everyone-- the coastal zone is arguably the economic engine of the state. If the coastal zone goes dormant, Calif loses. All elected officials in the nomination process, including those outside the coastal zone, have an interest in a solid California economy. If Pacifica suffers CCC excess, 30% of the town goes grey (and with it our town sustainability). Thousands of homeowners are negatively impacted. Hwy 1 is threatened. This set of facts and expected consequences are terrible public policy.

The CCC narrative must change.

A public, transparent nomination discussion is needed to address current wider issues, not some looking backward reminiscing about events of 50 years ago. An ongoing example is Gov Newsom reducing CCC authority over Malibu and Pacifica Palisades rebuilding.. an obvious acknowledgement that onerous CCC regulations hurt neighborhoods, and securing CCC regulatory relief is indicated.

Pacifica needs regulatory relief. That starts with a legitimate interview of CCC applicants.

We hope the nominating groups are listening. We hope the Speaker and the Governor are listening. We ask that the nominating groups ask the candidates their views on these issues and the points described below in the listed two websites and the op/eds.

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1. see savepacifica.org for pacifica details

<https://www.smartcoastca.org/>

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2. background articles: first from 2 san mateo county supervisors..

Let's have conversation about sea level rise and our future

Pacifica Tribune sept 27, 2023.
Op/ed Ray Mueller, Don Horsley

Let's talk sea level rise and a call to action to bring best practices to bear on the issue.

Recent large storms have focused, yet again, public attention on climate change and general preparedness. From Burning Man to floods in Death Valley, events are forcing us to pay attention.

At issue in California are 840 miles of coast. Fifteen counties out of California's 58 are in the coastal zone. That includes 61 towns and cities. Recent figures on the economic activity in these 15 counties are dramatic. They represent 21 percent of California's land area but 69 percent of the population, over 26 million people. The 15 coastal counties generate 70 percent of the value of all statewide goods and services. They comprise 66 percent of all California jobs generating over \$662 billion in wages.

But as we know, the coast is subject to sea level rise and a precise focal point is here in Pacifica.

Coastal planning is controlled by the California Coastal Commission. The Pacifica City Council is working to get a local coastal plan approved by the Coastal Commission. The LCP, when adopted, controls a lot of the economic activity and all the development and much of the remodeling west of Highway 1. The LCP is a very important document. All 15 counties and all 61 coastal towns need an LCP approved by the Coastal Commission. That means 76 different plans across the coast.

The LCP in all counties and towns will control the types and locations of shoreline protection and managed retreat.

We are not writing here to debate any policy choice.

We are bringing forward the notion that the state needs a major community conversation about what is planned for our coastal towns.

What are the best technological and scientific practices available? Who pays for lost homes or local economic activity? Are beaches under stress? Are solutions site-specific due to geology and erosion or one-size-fits-all?

Here's the problem: We suspect the elected leaders from the 76 jurisdictions have never been in a room together to talk this issue out.

We also doubt the California Legislature has seen a list of potential erosion problems to beaches, homes, infrastructure and the local economy and the bill to protect, fix or move those items. Maybe the California Legislature should be in the meeting room as well.

More involvement and a substantive debate among the parties are essential.

We note \$1.7 trillion in yearly goods and services are generated by the 15 coastal counties. The continued health of these counties and their citizens across economic, environmental and social lines is critical to our future.

Climate change is not going to wait.

This piece came from Don Horsley and Ray Mueller. Mueller is the current San Mateo County supervisor from District 3; Horsley held the office previously.

The Coastal Commission 'tax' all Pacificans pay --- RV Resort

Pacifica Tribune

Jan 17, 2024. Page 5

The California Coastal Commission has it out for Pacifica. The Coastal Commission supports a bureaucratic solution to sea level rise known as "managed retreat" whereby the ocean is allowed unrestricted erosion east. Give up. This is bad news for long and narrow towns like Pacifica where even 10 feet of erosion can hit extremely expensive infrastructure

or a house, hotel or affordable apartments.

Pacifica has about 35 percent of its current shoreline protected by structures like the golf course berm built in 1944 and the seawall at the pier built in 1984. They need maintenance and upgrades just like your roof needs attention every 20 years or so. The pier seawall has reached the end of its service life after 40 years and is scheduled for modernization.

The Coastal Commission doesn't support shoreline protections that keep our homes, businesses and infrastructure intact. That mindset is going to cost every homeowner in Pacifica a fortune.

Enter the RV Resort at 700 Palmetto Ave., opposite the southbound Palmetto onramp to south Highway 1. The resort has a 2016 rock revetment on the west-side shore to keep the property intact. The revetment needs work and minor improvement.

The Coastal Commission ruled the resort can't improve the rock revetment, and it must pull up all the rock by the end of 2024, demolish the entrance station, pull up all the paving and utilities. The city sewer line crossing the property must be moved east.

Managed retreat is coming and it will destroy the twelve-acre resort and bring erosion up to Palmetto Avenue and Highway 1 by the end of 2025. That is 23 months; the clock is ticking.

Here is the Coastal Commission reasoning: Staff has reviewed the proposal for this site and has concluded that there are no "existing structures" located there as that term is understood in a Coastal Act armoring sense, including because the site was originally developed in the 1980s (and the city sewer line replaced) after passage of the Coastal Act in 1976. Therefore, the RV Park and the sewer line do not qualify for shoreline armoring under Coastal Act Section 30235 tests, and for other coastal resource impact reasons the Coastal Act directs denial of the proposed project.

In other words, since all structures on the property were built after the Coastal Act was enacted in 1976, they don't deserve protection.

Here's where all Pacifica homeowners get gouged by this order — moving the sewer line from current location inside the park to points east along Palmetto Avenue will cost Pacifica taxpayers more than \$4 million, subject to delay, inflation, etc. City Council approved this budget item in 2021.

What will this town will look like when the Coastal Commission starts

punching holes in our neighborhoods?

The policy considerations are clear. We are deeply involved in setting a new coastal plan to guide neighborhoods west of Highway 1 and what type of protection they will enjoy. Of parallel concern is east side Pacifica needs all its sewer and Highway 1 infrastructure protected so we have a community that functions.

Do you live in Fairmont or Park Pacifica and think sea level rise won't affect you? Think again! One line is just the start. Pacifica has hundreds of millions of dollars of pump stations, main sewer plant and water lines we all will pay to move. This one small part of a citywide system costs \$4 million or more to move and that equals about \$350 per household citywide.

Moreover, if the commission decides we cannot have rock protection at the west edge of the resort, when will the the CCC allow (or City Council demand) we have protection when erosion hits Palmetto Avenue and Highway 1? Who pays?

A solution is in front of us: We need a city-wide homeowner and infrastructure protection plan to keep the Coastal Commission honest. The RV resort needs to be saved and we then all save sewer line moving costs. We also save Highway 1.

We need a focused City Council to push the back. We need the involvement of the state Legislature. The Coastal Commission may be fine with "managed retreat" rolling up on Highway 1. Pacifica homeowners cannot afford it.

Mark Stechbart is a Pacifica homeowner.

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Aug 31 trib 2016

Shoreline Protection Needed Now.

By Jim Wagner, Mark Stechbart

A City Council decision on a shoreline protection policy is needed in the next 5 weeks. Coastal erosion will get worse in coming years. Pacifica homes, businesses and critical infrastructure are in danger of being flooded if nothing is done. Millions of dollars of our property value could be lost.

Two committees are studying the coast side erosion situation and will make technical and funding recommendations soon. One group comprises the US Army Corp of Engineers with various state agencies involved. The second consists of San Mateo County.

The problem is Pacifica does not have a Council policy on ocean erosion protection.

To make matters worse, some elements in town actually support the idea of “managed retreat” which sounds warm and fuzzy. In reality it’s a very dangerous idea. “Managed retreat” really means no government intervention and we all step back and let Mother Nature take her course. Another phrase for “managed retreat” is catastrophic ocean erosion. That’s means homes are lost, roads cut, sewer and water lines destroyed or moved at a huge taxpayer cost.

To make matters worse, in the absence of a Council policy, Pacifica Council member John Keener has been attending meetings where he toys with the idea of managed retreat. People attending these planning meetings really cannot tell which side of the issue Councilman Keener is on: protect Pacifica homes and businesses or let erosion chew through town.

Here’s the danger-- the shoreline is susceptible to erosion from Pacifica’s northern boundary to south of the golf course. Rockaway has problems. Linda Mar is exposed. Of special concern is everything west of and including Hwy 1. Thousands of residents, 75% of Pacifica businesses (most of the hotels), our golf course and most of the city infrastructure—sewer lines, water, telecommunications—are involved. Remember the Esplanade apartments eroding into surf and being torn down? A large portion of our affordable, workforce housing is in this area.

Some of the areas mentioned are protected by rock revetments or a seawall. But these features need maintenance. Unprotected areas in town will need installed rock. Any gaps in shoreline protection give ocean erosion a path to threaten town.

If the north end of town erodes, the middle school, trailer park, French bakery and Palmetto are affected. If for some reason the Beach Blvd seawall is not rebuilt or maintained, the central part of town is gone. If the golf course berm is abandoned, erosion approaches Hwy 1 real fast and the Fairway and south Palmetto neighborhoods are in trouble.

We have talked to a number of homeowners and businesses. They are very concerned their property values will take big hit. Their view is “managed retreat” is a code word for give up---on their homes and the town itself. Without firm protection measures in place, property owners seeking to sell will have to disclose fairly soon the erosion threat to their property. Who would buy anything under that threat? But if you are in the east side of town, at elevation, you also would see home values decline. If Pacifica becomes known as The Town Eroding into the Sea, who will buy anywhere in a dying town, with travel out of town on Hwy 1 in jeopardy of ocean erosion, with its central core falling apart and infrastructure damaged?

The technology to protect our shoreline and our homes exists, but we need the leadership. The clock is ticking. City Council must adopt a policy that says Pacifica will pursue all available resources and grants from federal, state, county and local sources to protect our shoreline, homes, businesses and infrastructure. We need to tell these committees where Pacifica stands.

Let’s support Congresswoman Jackie Speier in her ongoing work to fund the Beach Blvd seawall repair. Let’s join Senator Jerry Hill, Assemblyman Mullin and Supervisor Horsley as they advocate for a protected Pacifica in front of these two study committees.

Above all reject managed retreat. No one suggests SFO, 101 or Google offices be subjected to “managed retreat” Neither should Pacifica.

-30-

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From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Agenda Management Support](#)
Subject: Item 40 comment_Benhari, T
Date: Monday, March 24, 2025 9:46:42 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: Ted Benhari <tbenhari@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Sunday, March 23, 2025 6:51 PM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Keep Supervisor Cummings on the Coastal Commission

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Dear Supervisors, we urge you to keep Supervisor Justin Cummings on the California Coastal Commission. He has been doing a terrific job, and especially now, with the Commission under attack from powerful forces, we need a strong and experienced representative on the Commission.

- Ted Benhari

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Agenda Management Support](#)
Subject: item 40 comment_Scott, B
Date: Monday, March 24, 2025 9:47:49 AM

From: Barry Scott <barry_scott@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Sunday, March 23, 2025 9:05 PM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Please approved the nomination of Justin Cummings to remain on the Coastal Commission

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Supervisors,

The work of the California Coastal Commission is increasingly essential to protecting public access to coastal features, preventing beach erosion, and expanding housing for local families, students, and others.

Our representative should have a background in the sciences and a track record of fighting for public rights to beaches, beach walkways near properties, and managing the many housing units lost to out-of-town investors.

Justin Cummings is the only nominee before you who checks all the boxes above and will deliver for our current and future residents and visitors to our very special coastal community.

Specific to our County, we will need a representative on the Commission who will support the Coastal Trail and the Zero Emission Passenger Rail project, which require various approvals from the Commission.

I cannot support the nomination of Supervisor Koenig as his background doesn't qualify him and he hasn't demonstrated the characteristics that make for a champion of the coastal environment and our residents' rights to share equal access to its beauty.

Supervisor Cummings is uniquely qualified to remain our representative on the Coastal Commission.

Many thanks,

Barry

--

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