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**GOVERNMENT CODE - GOV**

**TITLE 7. PLANNING AND LAND USE [65000 - 66499.58]** ( *Heading of Title 7 amended by Stats. 1974, Ch. 1536. )*

**DIVISION 1. PLANNING AND ZONING [65000 - 66342]** ( *Heading of Division 1 added by Stats. 1974, Ch. 1536. )*

**CHAPTER 9.3. Mediation and Resolution of Land Use Disputes [66030 - 66035]** ( *Chapter 9.3 added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 300, Sec. 1. )*

**66030.** (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) Current law provides that aggrieved agencies, project proponents, and affected residents may bring suit against the land use decisions of state and local governmental agencies. In practical terms, nearly anyone can sue once a project has been approved.

(2) Contention often arises over projects involving local general plans and zoning, redevelopment plans, the California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code), development impact fees, annexations and incorporations, and the Permit Streamlining Act (Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 65920)).

(3) When a public agency approves a development project that is not in accordance with the law, or when the prerogative to bring suit is abused, lawsuits can delay development, add uncertainty and cost to the development process, make housing more expensive, and damage California's competitiveness. This litigation begins in the superior court, and often progresses on appeal to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, adding to the workload of the state's already overburdened judicial system.

(b) It is, therefore, the intent of the Legislature to help litigants resolve their differences by establishing formal mediation processes for land use disputes. In establishing these mediation processes, it is not the intent of the Legislature to interfere with the ability of litigants to pursue remedies through the courts.

(*Added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 300, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 1995.*)

**66031.** (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any action brought in the superior court relating to any of the following subjects may be subject to a mediation proceeding conducted pursuant to this chapter:

(1) The approval or denial by a public agency of any development project.

(2) Any act or decision of a public agency made pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code).

(3) The failure of a public agency to meet the time limits specified in Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 65920), commonly known as the Permit Streamlining Act, or in the Subdivision Map Act (Division 2 (commencing with Section 66410)).

(4) Fees determined pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 17620) of Division 1 of Part 10.5 of the Education Code or Chapter 4.9 (commencing with Section 65995).

(5) Fees determined pursuant to the Mitigation Fee Act (Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 66000), Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 66010), Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 66012), Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 66016), and Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 66020)).

(6) The adequacy of a general plan or specific plan adopted pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 65100).

(7) The validity of any sphere of influence, urban service area, change of organization or reorganization, or any other decision made pursuant to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Division 3 (commencing with Section 56000) of Title 5).

(8) The adoption or amendment of a redevelopment plan pursuant to the Community Redevelopment Law (Part 1 (commencing with Section 33000) of Division 24 of the Health and Safety Code).

(9) The validity of any zoning decision made pursuant to Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 65800).

(10) The validity of any decision made pursuant to Article 3.5 (commencing with Section 21670) of Chapter 4 of Part 1 of Division 9 of the Public Utilities Code.

(b) Within five days after the deadline for the respondent or defendant to file its reply to an action, the court may invite the parties to consider resolving their dispute by selecting a mutually acceptable person to serve as a mediator, or an organization or agency to provide a mediator.

(c) In selecting a person to serve as a mediator, or an organization or agency to provide a mediator, the parties shall consider the following:

(1) The council of governments having jurisdiction in the county where the dispute arose.

(2) Any subregional or countywide council of governments in the county where the dispute arose.

(3) Any other person with experience or training in mediation including those with experience in land use issues, or any other organization or agency that can provide a person with experience or training in mediation, including those with experience in land use issues.

(d) If the court invites the parties to consider mediation, the parties shall notify the court within 30 days if they have selected a mutually acceptable person to serve as a mediator. If the parties have not selected a mediator within 30 days, the action shall proceed. The court shall not draw any implication, favorable or otherwise, from the refusal by a party to accept the invitation by the court to consider mediation. Nothing in this section shall preclude the parties from using mediation at any other time while the action is pending.

*(Amended by Stats. 2010, Ch. 699, Sec. 24. (SB 894) Effective January 1, 2011.)*

**66032.** (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, all time limits with respect to an action shall be tolled while the mediator conducts the mediation, pursuant to this chapter.

(b) Mediations conducted by a mediator pursuant to this chapter that involve less than a quorum of a legislative body or a state body shall not be considered meetings of a legislative body pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act (Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 54950) of Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5), nor shall they be considered meetings of a state body pursuant to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Article 9 (commencing with Section 11120) of Chapter 1 of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2).

(c) Any action taken regarding mediation conducted pursuant to this chapter shall be taken in accordance with the provisions of current law.

(d) Ninety days after the commencement of the mediation, and every 90 days thereafter, the action shall be reactivated unless the parties to the action do either of the following:

(1) Arrive at a settlement and implement it in accordance with the provisions of current law.

(2) Agree by written stipulation to extend the mediation for another 90-day period.

(e) Section 703.5 and Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 1115) of Division 9 of the Evidence Code apply to any mediation conducted pursuant to this chapter.

(f) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2016.

*(Repealed (in Sec. 1) and added by Stats. 2010, Ch. 496, Sec. 2. (SB 1456) Effective September 29, 2010. Section operative January 1, 2016, by its own provisions.)*

**66034.** If the mediation does not resolve the action, the court may, in its discretion, schedule a settlement conference before a judge of the superior court. If the action is later heard on its merits, the judge hearing the action shall not be the same judge who conducted the settlement conference, except in counties with only one judge of the superior court.

*(Added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 300, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 1995.)*

**66035.** The Judicial Council may adopt rules, forms, and standards necessary to implement this chapter.

*(Added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 300, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 1995.)*