

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 24, 2015

The Larkspur Planning Commission was convened at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers by Chair Ziesing.

Commissioners Present: Chair Todd Ziesing, Monte Deignan, Daniel Kunstler,
Mark Sandoval, Laura Tauber

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft
Public Works Director Marygrace Houlihan

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The City Council held a Public Hearing on February 18th on the Draft Housing Element to a full Council Chambers. There was a lot of testimony both in favor and in opposition and residents expressed similar concerns that were raised at the Planning Commission's public hearing on the matter. The City Council ultimately voted 4-1 to approve the draft for submittal to the State Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). Staff anticipates returning to the Planning Commission (with comments made by HCD) in early May order to adopt the element by May 31st.
- On March 4th the City Council will be conducting a site review of the Community Facility Parcel on the Rose Garden development. The "tour" would start at 5:30 p.m. at the corner of Doherty Drive and Rose Lane.

Chair Ziesing stated he attended the Council meeting on February 18th and he commended the Planning Department on breaking the Housing Element down to its essential points. The discussion was balanced and moved along nicely. Planning Director Toft noted staff simply had to update the document that has been created and developed over the last several decades through the hard work of past Planning Commissioners, Councilmembers, and staff.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

- 1. DR 14-59: 18 Acacia Avenue (AP #021-184-08); Lisa and Eric Schrupf, applicants/property owners. Request to allow construction of a 610 square foot addition and reconfiguration on the lower floor and 960 square foot addition and reconfiguration of the second floor to an existing 2,181 square-foot two-story, single-family home and related modifications.**

Planning Director Toft introduce Ms. Lorraine Weiss, planning consultant. Planning consultant Weiss presented a staff report.

Commissioner Sandoval stated he did not have elevations for the new construction at the back of the house. He has only the north elevation (SD-6) and the west elevation (SD-7). The other Commissioners indicated that they did not have the south and east elevation in their plans set either. Planning Consultant Weiss stated those elevations were on the wall and she would had a set to provide to the Commission.

The Planning Commission spent some time reviewing the elevation set provided by staff.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if it should be noted in the staff report that the Myrtle tree was not a Heritage tree. Planning Consultant Weiss stated none of the trees were Heritage trees.

Chair Ziesing opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Eric Schrupf, applicant, made the following comments:

- He thanked staff for their time and energy.
- The intent is to preserve the feel and character of this 100-year old house in a neighborhood with an eclectic style of architecture.
- The remodel will add more space and functionality to the property.

Commissioner Sandoval stated it appears there are two different slopes for the proposed roof- a 6:12 (consistent with the existing architecture) and a lower slope on the porch area (north elevation). The front elevation (SD-7) appears to have a slope that is inconsistent with the existing roofline (a lower pitch). Mr. Feldman stated the slope was 3-3/4:12 for the upper roof and the porch roof. Commissioner Sandoval referred to SD-7 and noted there appeared to be a horizontal band that goes across a deck element but it seems to be in a different location on the front elevation. Mr. Feldman stated the idea for the band was to reduce the sense of vertical scale. They wanted to maintain as much of the original look of the house as possible on the front elevation. The existing two gables on the front remain intact and the integration of the new with the existing dictated where the horizontal band would be in the front. Commissioner Sandoval referred to Sheet MD-3 (existing) and stated there was no horizontal band. Mr. Feldman stated the band does not exist on the original house. Commissioner Sandoval stated he was focused on the side elevations where there is a certain degree of verticality due to the wall and the division. He asked if it would be more suitable to use a more classic form of architecture such as a “belly band” that divides the floors and reduces the amount of vertical emphasis on the lower portion. Mr. Feldman stated he could see this point of view. It was an aesthetic judgment call in his part.

Commissioner Deignan asked if the neighbors to the north and south attended the “Open House” held at the end of January. Mr. Feldman stated “yes” and they had no objections. He stated one neighbor to the rear had a concern about pushing the garage structure to the Loma Vista side of the house- they are not doing that so this became a “non-issue”. Commissioner Deignan commended them on reaching out to the neighbors.

Ms. Stephanie Dawson, Acacia Avenue, made the following comments:

- She lives on the north side of the property
- The remodel is in keeping with the current style of the house.
- She will not experience any loss of privacy.
- She welcomes the project. It is beautiful.
- Everyone on the street is happy with the transition.

Chair Ziesing closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- There were some small details related to proportions that could be worked on.
- The project is suitable and sensitive.
- He noted the age of the house and asked staff if the Historic Architect reviewed the application. Ms. Weiss stated the Historic Architect had reviewed the house in conjunction with a previous application and determined the structure was not historic.
- He could support the application.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- This is a very sensitive and compatible plan that fits in well with the neighborhood style.
- They have not “maxed” things out or taken it to the limit.
- There were ways to break up the mass but there were no complaints from the neighbors.
- He could support the project.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She walked the site and noted the property was large.
- She likes the design and thought it was in keeping with the original structure and feel of the house.
- She was happy they reached out to all the neighbors who were in support of the design.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He could find nothing objectionable to the project.
- This is an upgrade of the existing style that accommodates a modern living environment while at the same time respects the scale of the neighborhood.
- He appreciated the outreach to the neighbors.
- He could support the project.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by the other Commissioners.
- He loves this old house on this big lot. It is classic Larkspur.
- He loves the spirit of what they are trying to do.
- The setbacks are very generous.
- The structure and the lot compliment each other
- There were no view obstructions.
- He likes the project and could support it.

M/s, Deignan/Tauber motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR 14-59, 18 Acacia Avenue, subject to the findings and conditions in the staff report.

Chair Ziesing stated there was a 10-day appeal period.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Commissioner Reports

Public Works Director Houlihan gave a status report on the Larkspur Community Facility process and gave a Powerpoint presentation. The two public workshops had great attendance and staff and the consultants received a lot of wonderful feedback. There will be a presentation to the City Council on March 4th after a site walk that starts at 5:30 p.m. The Council will be considering and hopefully giving approval of the program, the single-story design element, and the parking count. The consultants will take the concepts that have been developed, the community input, and the technical information that has been gathered and develop the next step. This will be presented to the Commission as the first step in the Design Review process. This should occur in late March or early April. Staff hopes to bring this to the Council for approval in June. She discussed the Master Plan and how it identified a generalized program for the facility. They have spent a lot of time refining that program over the last couple of months. She noted the rooms in the facility would be flexible spaces and would provide different opportunities for the public to meet, learn, and engage. There has been a lot of discussion about the outdoor space and how it should be integrated with the indoor space. The Advisory Committee, Technical Committee, and consulting architects have identified a 20,000 square foot facility. This includes three flexible community rooms (one 1,500 square foot room and

two 750 square foot rooms). The facility would be single-story due to operations and functionality and would allow a better integration of indoor and outdoor space. It would also be more cost effective. This is not intended to be a stand-alone facility that would duplicate other options for serving the public. She displayed a slide of the proposed floor plan, pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connectivity, view corridors, etc. The Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP) notes that the Lucky shopping center would be redeveloped in the future and would serve to connect the downtown to the facility. She displayed a slide depicting two concepts and discussed the various advantages and disadvantages of each.

Commissioner Deignan asked if the consultants have identified other facilities in the Bay Area that would be similar in order to make a “real world comparison”. Public Works Director Houlihan stated staff visited other facilities but the goal was to create a vision that would reflect Larkspur.

Commissioner Tauber asked if the schematics were to scale. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes”. Commissioner Tauber noted the facility would be one-story and asked if there would be enough room for some outdoor space after they put in a parking lot, etc. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the comments from the public indicate they do not want this to be a “park” but rather a facility with an indoor/outdoor presence. Both of the options reflect this desire. There are no plans for big grassy areas. Commissioner Tauber stated she did not see the need for a big grassy space but would love to see performance space, a children’s play area, etc. Public Works Director Houlihan stated they are looking at a more intimate outdoor space. Chair Ziesing stated there was a large performance space at Redwood High School and the committee did not want to replicate that. The goal was to make the indoor/outdoor activities passive and not active in order to respect the Rose Lane neighborhood. Planning Director Toft noted that noise was a concern due to the proximity of residential properties, and this would be one particular item of consideration in their upcoming review.

Commissioner Kunstler stated he understood the concerns about a second two-story but noted it could provide isolation of noisy vs. quiet areas. Public Works Director Houlihan stated this is achievable in a single story structure by creating flexible areas, etc. Commissioner Kunstler had questions about the collections/sorting area of the Library.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if any thought had been given to shielding or screening the parking area. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes” thorough fencing, plantings, etc. Commissioner Kunstler stated having the entrance to the facility on the Rose Lane side as opposed to the Doherty Drive side might serve the purpose of deflecting jaywalking. Public Works Director Houlihan agreed. She displayed a slide that depicted the proposed entrance areas.

Chair Ziesing stated there was a general desire expressed to utilizing “high spaces” to create light, views, volume, space, etc. This could not be as easily accomplished in a two-story structure.

Commissioner Tauber asked if they had thought about a rooftop garden. Public Works Director Houlihan stated they have not gotten that far in the process.

Commissioner Sandoval referred to Option B and asked about the hours of the outdoor activities. Public Works Director Houlihan stated that would be decided in the Design Review process. Commissioner Sandoval stated the orientation of the building would be critical. Flipping Option B would allow a greater expansion of the building and provide more outdoor space that could be controlled. Public Works Director Houlihan noted these were concept plans and some type of hybrid plan would probably be created.

Chair Ziesing stated the Lucky shopping center area could be redeveloped in the near future and this provides an opportunity for the CLASP to influence this change. They should think about these possibilities when designing this facility.

Public Works Director Houlihan stated staff would be submitting the Design Review application to the Commission sometime soon.

2. Approval of minutes of Planning Commission meeting on January 27, 2015

M/s, Kunstler/Tauber motioned and the Commission voted 4-0-1 (Sandoval abstained) to approve the January 27, 2015 minutes as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis,
Recording Secretary

Minutes adopted 5-0 on March 10, 2015

*Neal Toft
Director of Planning & Building*