

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 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 (arrived 7:03), Laura Tauber

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft
Planning Consultant Lorraine Weiss
City Planner Kristen Teiche
Associate Planner Anna Camaraota
Public Works Director Mary Grace Houlihan

Chair Ziesing clarified for the audience that Business Item #1 is not a public workshop session but rather a verbal update by Public Works Director Houlihan on the Community Facility Design Process.

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Interviews will be conducted this Friday at the Recreation Department Community Room for the open Associate Planner position.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS

1. **DR/H 15-04: 95 Laurel Avenue (AP# 020-232-20); Ken Linsteadt Architects, applicant; John and Sasha Larson, property owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicant is requesting approval for minor modification of the southerly basement level elevation of a historic residence. Modifications include excavation of soils to lower the finished floor and increase the basement ceiling height, new doors and windows. Note: This project was reviewed by the Heritage Preservation Board on March 12, 2015.**

Chair Ziesing asked if anyone in the audience would like to address this application. There were no comments.

On the Consent Calendar, M/s, Kunstler/Tauber motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR/H 15-04, 95 Laurel Avenue, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report..

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

2. **DR/FAR 14-26 (AMEND); 106 William Avenue (AP# 021-104-27); Geoffrey Butler, applicant; House Properties 77 LLP, property owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Request for an amendment to a previously approved application for the following permits to allow demolition of an existing 1,525 square foot, single family home and construction of a new 2,892 square foot, two-story home on a 6,429 square foot lot: 1) Design Review; and 2) Floor Area Ratio Exception to allow an FAR of 0.45 where a maximum 0.40 is**

allowed. Note: This application was initially approved by the Planning Commission on their regular public hearing of October 14, 2014. The purpose of this application is to provide accurate story poles and to implement modifications required as conditions of approval. As a result of the corrected story pole locations, the second story rear deck projection has been reduced from 6'-1/2" to 3'-6".

Planning Consultant Weiss presented a staff report.

Commissioner Sandoval asked if staff had an idea of the number of metal roofs in the neighborhood. Planning Director Toft stated staff did not look into the number of metal roof. Commissioner Kunstler stated the remodel on Holcomb Avenue (around the corner) has a metal roof.

Chair Ziesing opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Geoffrey Butler, architect, made the following comments:

- He apologized for the surveyor's error in the original placement of the story poles.
- The master bedroom deck was originally on posts, came to grade, and was 6 ½ feet deep into the yard. It has been reduced to a balcony that is 3 ½ feet deep and allows the bi-fold doors to swing out onto the deck. There should not be any privacy issues.
- Today he submitted a revision to the deck railing – it has been changed to an almost solid lattice structure to provide more privacy.
- The arborist felt that the proposed patio in the grove was not appropriate and suggested a deck at grade that could be modified over time.
- The packet contains a drainage plan including two bio-swales on either side of the house. Water draining from the roof and site would percolate into the ground and/or gravity flow to the street.
- The soils and structural engineer would try to mitigate concerns regarding proximity to the Redwood grove in the back yard. Borings indicate it is a wet site.
- A mat slab with a thickened perimeter would be the least obtrusive.
- He referred to the request for the historic review and noted he was not asked to revise the drawings to reflect the clerestory windows on the east side of the property or lower the tower. However, both have been done for this presentation.

Commissioner Deignan asked Mr. Butler if he simply corrected the story pole location and shortened the deck on the second story- nothing has been expanded. Mr. Butler stated "yes"- the previous plans were accurate except for one tree location and the story pole locations.

Commissioner Sandoval asked Mr. Butler about the depth of excavation for the foundation. Mr. Butler stated the perimeter would be 24" and the slab would be 30" above grade- the intrusion would be about 2' into the ground.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if there would be any impact to the seismic stability to the home using that type of foundation as opposed to using piers. Mr. Butler stated a mat slab is preferable given the moist soil conditions.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if the proposed lattice work was for the east end of the balcony. Mr. Butler stated it was for all three sides.

Ms. Cheryl Tanasovich, Monte Vista Avenue, made the following comments:

- At the last meeting she brought up issues of privacy from the second story. The height of the windows would not solve this issue.
- The full length windows on the back of the project would look into her family room.
- There will be a distinct loss of privacy in her family's most private space.
- The second story would give her home a "boxed in" feeling.

- The roof material is popular in commercial areas but not appropriate for this quaint neighborhood.
- Future homeowners could change the railing.

Ms. Lynn Eubanks, Monte Vista Avenue, made the following comments:

- She is concerned about Ms. Tanasovich's privacy.
- The story poles (east side) go up through the trees and are very close to the roots.

Mr. James Holmes, Larkspur, made the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made about the roof.
- There are no metal roofs or towers in the neighborhood.
- The structure is not unattractive but is too large and obtrusive for the lot.
- The tower is exacerbated by the roof.
- The trees pre-date 50 years (an assertion made by the arborist) and he suggested a modification of the condition for the tree protection warning sign- the signs should be in English and in Spanish.

Chair Ziesing closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- He read the previous minutes and listened to the tapes.
- The tower seems to be one of the elements that have been problematic.
- The project is massive because of the tower element. It is a vertical mass.
- There are ways to camouflage the apparent mass.
- He has not fully investigated the property and could not really comment on the neighbor's privacy concerns.
- He supported the proposed reduction of the deck.
- The metal roof does lend itself to the architecture but draws attention.
- He is not opposed to a modern theme but it is inconsistent with the neighboring properties.
- He supports the changes but is uncomfortable about the architecture.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- The new story poles correctly reflect what is intended.
- He referred to the privacy issue and stated the second story would look into the rear end of the back yard from a distance.
- The Commission has looked at a number of standing seam metal roofs and it provides a mix of different style. It is not inconsistent and the slope and appearance would fit in as they have in other neighborhoods.
- He can make the findings for approval.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She commended the applicants for being pro-active and changing the story poles.
- She voted to support the application at the last meeting.
- She is sympathetic to the privacy issues.
- The project has been improved in terms of encroachment and privacy concerns.
- She could support the application.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He supported the application at the previous meeting
- He is sensitive to privacy and view issues. They are handled differently when the terrain is flat.

- He wished the second car were not in front of the home- it is not necessary. It detracts from the attractiveness of the home.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- He previously supported the application.
- The changes make the project better.
- The metal roof is an interesting issue and it could be seen as the next progressive set in Larkspur's tradition. It is a good mix.
- The Redwood trees provide a "lift and verticality" to the property and the project tries to aspire to that "lift".
- He likes the fact that there has been a pullback around the Redwood trees.
- He supports the application.

M/s, Deignan/Kunstler motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR/FAR 14-26 (AMEND), 106 William Avenue, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

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

- 3. DR/H/V 14-50: 14-50; 143 Madrone Avenue (AP#021-082-10); Keith Fontana, applicant/ property owner; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicant is requesting permits to move the structure to correct an encroachment on the neighbors lot, rehabilitate the historic residence, add an approximately 60 sq. ft. second floor addition at the south (rear) elevation, and add a new westerly facing roof dormer to allow conversion of the attic to a bedroom. Note: This project was reviewed by the Heritage Preservation Board on March 12, 2015.**

City Planner Teiche presented a staff report.

Commissioner Kunstler referred to page 5 of the staff report and asked for clarification about the location of the encroachment (southeast or southwest rear corner). City Planner Teiche stated it was on the southeast and the structure is being moved 6.75' to the east.

Commissioner Tauber stated the creek was very close to the house and she understood the need to move it. She was unclear about the preferred location of the structure. City Planner Teiche stated the City Engineer noted the rear yard gets deeper to the east and she wanted it pushed over to the east in the deeper part of the lot. It would remain in the front yard. Planning Director Toft stated it seemed the intention of the City Engineer was to slide the home to the east portion of the lot to get it as far away from the creek bank as possible.

Commissioner Sandoval referred to the encroachment and asked if it was a requirement to move the structure. City Planner Teiche stated it makes it easier to do the foundation work and repairs to the back of the house. It would also allow ongoing maintenance without getting into a dispute with the adjacent property owner.

Chair Ziesing opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Keith Fontana, applicant, made the following comments:

- He bought the house in May and intends to move into it with his family.
- He would like to get some separation between the adult and children's bedrooms.
- The steep pitch of the roof would allow a small 12' X 14' master bedroom.
- The neighbor directly behind the property has some concerns. He met with the neighbor several times and has tried to accommodate his concerns. He moved the bathroom to the front of the house and eliminated the windows in the addition.

- He will use insulated glass to help mitigate any noise issues.
- He has addressed the noise and privacy issues.
- He was able to obtain 43 signatures in support.
- The shed roof for the dormer is the most appropriate. A gable roof dormer would not be consistent with the neighborhood and would restrict the usable space in that room.
- Moving the house 6.75' to the east was reasonable. There is no real issue with the creek bank.
- He has submitted a design with drilled pier foundation with grade beams.
- This plan works well with the needs of the family and the neighborhood.
- He pointed out the open railing that was recommended by the Heritage Preservation Board.

Commissioner Sandoval stated he understood the applicant's need for space but was troubled by the dormer. He disagreed with the opinion of the Heritage Preservation Board and noted it was a Victorian cottage that should have cross gables or small dormers for the attic spaces. He asked why the applicant had not considered centering the upper level and employing a cross gable to create more space. He referred to the primary character defining features from the street and sidewalk and stated what was proposed was extremely obvious. He stated the property merits the Secretary of the Interior Standards but there were no references to the Historic Building Code. Mr. Fontana stated they were trying to get approval on the design and would address the proper building codes when the time comes.

Commissioner Sandoval stated moving the structure one foot would clean up a lot of things and he asked if there would be any grade difference. He noted the plan was to salvage as much of the materials as possible and he asked if the preservation architect would be monitoring the project. Mr. Fontana stated the staff report depicts how the process would occur including routine visits from the City's consulting historic architect. The materials they plan to remove are falling off of the structure- they will not remove or throw anything away that they do not have to.

Commissioner Sandoval referred to Sheet A3.1 and noted the stair detail had the guardrail at 3' in height- the residential code calls for 42". This would change the appearance of the structure. Mr. Fontana stated the current heights are 26" or 28". Commissioner Sandoval asked if 42" would look appropriate. City Planner Teiche stated the Historic Building Code would apply to those types of elements and the historic architect would review the construction plans and require compliance.

Planning Director Toft asked the applicant if he could address the question regarding placement of the dormers and the suggestion to centralize the floor space and simply add dormers front and back. Commissioner Sandoval asked if alternatives were reviewed such as a gable, cross gable, or another way to achieve a similar interior volume with out using such a pronounced element. Mr. Fontana stated they have explored many alternatives and he displayed a drawing of what a gable would look like. City Planner Teiche referred to a cross gable and stated the historic architect was not keen on the idea of changing that front elevation and wanted the applicant to focus on the west side as the location for new dormers. Any change to that approach would need to be re-evaluated. Commissioner Sandoval stated there were other options that would provide a better solution. This element seems out of place.

Mr. Tom Murphy, Madrone Avenue, made the following comments:

- He lives immediately west of the proposed project.
- He strongly supports this project.
- He referred to the encroachment issue and stated he recently did a lot line adjustment. Problems were resolved, his lot was expanded, and his property and his adjacent neighbor's property were enhanced.
- He encouraged the Commission to eliminate encroachments.
- There are no privacy concerns to the east or north of this project. He would be the neighbor most affected by the improvements.

- The shed dormer for the room upstairs would directly face his house and look down into his bathroom. He has no concerns about privacy.
- The applicant reduced the size of the windows to the south by about three-quarters. This is an over-arching adjustment and concession.
- He pointed to a bend in the creek and noted it was on the south side- the creek moves to the south and not the north.
- This house is falling apart and it is an attractive nuisance. It is an eyesore.
- The applicant plans to complete the project by the fall if possible.
- He encouraged the Commission to move expeditiously.
- The house already has two shed roofs (front porch and back porch) and they have become a part of the history of the building.
- A shed roof on the second floor would be barely visible.
- The proposal for the dormers makes sense.
- Adding a pitched dormer in the front would be a bad idea- it would significantly change the front elevation and the historic nature of the house.
- He urged the Commission to approve the project.

Ms. Pam McClain, Madrone Avenue, made the following comments:

- This is a wonderful opportunity to save a lovely, historic, small bungalow.
- She lives directly to the west and understood the concerns about the shed dormer. However, the gable style addition would be unattractive. A shed roof would accommodate modern living.
- There are two, existing shed roofs.
- She is not opposed to the proposed shed roof and noted it would not be visible.
- Parking is not an issue in the neighborhood and she is glad there is no insistence in creating off-street parking.
- This house is falling apart and she urged the Commission to act expeditiously.
- She urged the Commission to approve the project.

Mr. James Holmes, Larkspur, made the following comments:

- There is public interest in rehabilitating this resource.
- The historic evaluation understates the significance of the house.
- This is a unique instance of a cottage constructed in the canyon- all the other small cottages were craftsman. This is a "mini-Victorian".
- He referred to the Parking Variance and stated the Public Works Department's position was unfortunate. Moving the house over creates an ideal public parking space.
- Someone attempting to rehabilitate an historic resource faces two, conflicting mandates- the additions need to be sympathetic and consistent with the resource and the additions should stand out as being different from the resource.
- The shed roof is most characteristic of a craftsman style but he knows of two instances of similar shed roofs involving Victorians.
- A good argument could be made that it is better to have a relatively simple structure as opposed to a gable structure. A gable would be more articulated and possibly detract from the resource.
- A shed roof could be made much less visible by painting it the color of the roof and not the color of the walls on all sides. This would make it look more connected with the roof and not the walls.

Chair Ziesing closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He approached this application by postulating that the design of the dormer with the shed is a concession. There might be some objections to the design of that element. However, the project accomplishes the rehabilitation of an historic asset and the elimination of blight from the neighborhood. These two points vastly outweigh any architectural objections.

- The project is not out of scale with the use
- This is a modest home with a modest footprint.
- He commends the desire to rehabilitate a resource of great historic value to the City.
- He agreed with Mr. Holmes' idea of an alternative paint color for the dormer, but it did not rise to requiring a condition of approval.
- He supports the application as it stands.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Kunstler
- She is happy that this historic house has been bought by individuals who are interested in rehabilitating it.
- She is not that concerned about the dormer. There is a need to make it a livable house.
- Her biggest concern is about the creek and possible erosion of the bank.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- We live in a world of compromise.
- The applicant is willing to preserve a contributing structure with a small concession to make it livable.
- The neighbors do not have a problem.
- A gabled cross dormer would be more consistent but at the same time more complex and draw attention and detract from it.
- It is not unusual to see a simple roof form added to an old building.
- The shed dormer is a good answer.
- He liked Mr. Holmes' suggestion about painting the dormer but felt it did not rise to the level of a condition of approval. It would not be that visible from the street.
- He could make the findings for the Variance- the lot is unusually shallow and they are moving the house.
- This is a great project that he could support.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- He commended the applicant in his effort to restore this structure.
- He is involved in a lot of preservation issues. There are multiple ways to achieve a win-win situation.
- The proposal for a shed dormer is inconsistent with the architecture.
- The deck with the pickets is a nice feature but would simply collect leaves.
- He could approve the variance due to the constraints of the lot.
- It would be ideal to add parking to the site- but it was not mandatory.
- He could not support the application as it is configured.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the staff report.
- This is a property that is calling out for help and resurrection.
- He liked the vision of compromise in terms of keeping the spirit of the property alive and bringing the property back to life.
- He understood the concerns about the shed roof. He is fine with it.
- There are a lot of constraints on this property- lot size, the physical size and historic nature of the house, the condition of the house, etc.
- He could make the findings for the variances.
- He could support the project.

M/s, Deignan/Tauber motioned and the Commission voted 4-1 (Sandoval voted no) to approve DR/H/V, 143 Madrone Avenue, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

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

- 4. DR/EXC 14-57: 45 Corte Del Bayo (AP#022-273-40); Jeff Gustafson, applicant; Michael and Deborah Dean Revocable Trust, property owner; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Request for the following permit approvals to allow substantial remodeling and 197 square-feet of additions to an existing single-family residence, and construction of a new 15-high, 436 square-foot detached guest cottage with an attached, partially enclosed, 213 square-foot covered patio: 1) Design Review; 2) Exception Permit to allow alteration to doors and windows located within existing non-conforming setbacks along the east and south facades of the dwelling,**

Associate Planner Camaraota presented a staff report. She noted the Larkspur Marina Property Owners' Association has signed off on the project.

Commissioner Sandoval asked about the overhang of the roof. Associate Planner Camaraota stated it goes up to 3' on the cottage. The setback of the cottage is 6' and the roof extends 3' to maintain a 3' setback from the property line. Commissioner Sandoval asked if there was any concern about the fire rating. Associate Planner Camaraota stated it has not been raised as an immediate concern by the Building Official. The project will be reviewed for code compliance at the time of the Building Permit phase. Commissioner Sandoval stated the eve would have to be set back or have one hour construction since it is closer than 5 feet.

Commissioner Kunstler stated there was mention of a Grading Permit in the staff report but no mention of removal or addition of soil. Associate Planner Camaraota stated there is not a significant amount of grading- it is simply preparation for the cottage foundation and proposed hardscape and landscape improvements.

Chair Ziesing opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Michael Dean, Madrone Avenue, made the following comments:

- His desire is to have one single floor.
- The bungalow/guest cottage would be used by the grandchildren.
- They tried not to overextend on the property.
- The highest point is 17'.
- They are far below the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Mr. Louis Tannenbaum, Corte de Bayo, made the following comments:

- He has reviewed the plans and agrees with staff's assessment.
- This is a modest and appropriate renovation for the lot and the neighborhood.
- It would be an upgrade for the neighborhood.

Chair Ziesing closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- This is a great design.
- He does not have any concerns.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Sandoval.

- The application makes sense.
- The guest cottage should not be turned into a rental unit.
- He supported the project.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She could not see the story poles from the street- this is a good sign that the project would have a low impact.
- The project makes sense.
- It is nice to see a neighbor in support of a project.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- The fence in front of the house is quite long. He asked if the part of the fence in front of the entryway could be made wrought iron or some material that would mask the appearance.
- He did not have any issues with the project.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- He liked the fact that they are not splitting this double lot.
- The water has a wonderful effect on the property.
- The design fits into the neighborhood.
- He supports the project.

M/s, Kunstler/Sandoval motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR/EXC 14-57, 45 Corte del Bayo, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

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

Commissioner Deignan excused himself from the meeting as he had a night-time work project to oversee.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Community Facility Design Process Update. A presentation by the Public Works Director on the On-going process for the design of the Community Facility Parcel project.

Public Works Director Houlihan presented an update on the process for the design of the Community Facility Parcel project. There were two community workshops, results from a Survey Monkey, many Technical Team meetings, and meetings of the Advisory Committee. A building program has been developed including space requirements and relationships of spaces to one another, and an existing condition site analysis has been performed. Two design options were discussed with the community at the February 17th workshop. She presented a Powerpoint presentation. The City Council took action on March 4th on a few items: 1) Solidified the building program; 2) Identified that the project would be a single story facility; 3) Gave direction to look at how the facility could potentially be expanded in the future; 4) Approved the parking (60 spaces on site). One more public workshop is planned at or around the site sometime in April. This would include elevations and concepts for the facility. The formal submittal for Design Review would come next. She gave a quick recap of the process including adoption of the Master Plan in 2013, the building program, and comments made by the public. They are looking at a facility a little over 20,000 square feet which would include one 1,500 square foot room and two, 750 square foot rooms. She briefly discussed design Option A (Nooks and Crannies) and Option B (Porch and Promenade), the parking scheme, and view and wind corridors. The desire is to take the best parts of the two options and come up with a design. The facility would be environmentally, economically, and culturally sustainable with a minimum of LEED Silver Certification. She indicated that LEED Gold is typically achievable with today's construction standards and available materials.

Commissioner Sandoval stated he was glad to see the design opened up to the downtown and the views.

Commissioner Kunstler asked about the next steps. Public Works Director Houlihan stated a formal Design Review application will be submitted to the Commission by the end of April. She stated April 16th was the tentative date for the joint meeting with the other boards, commissions, Council, and public.

Commissioner Kunstler asked whether the Library consultant could be available for the meeting. Planning Director Toft stated the parameters of the Commission's review would be about design, zoning, setbacks, impacts, etc. It would not focus on the adequacy of the programming of the spaces per se. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the Council has largely approved the space programming through the extensive community engagement and outreach, and coordination with the Library and Recreation departments.

The Commission thanked Mary Grace for her efforts on the project. They looked forward to an upcoming workshop on the matter.

2. Commissioner Reports

There were no reports.

3. Approval of minutes of Planning Commission meeting on March 10, 2015

M/s, Ziesing/Tauber motioned and the Commission voted 4-0-1 (Deignan Absent) to approve the March 10, 2015 minutes as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis,
Recording Secretary

Minutes adopted as amended 5-0 on April 14, 2015

*Neal Toft
Director of Planning & Building*