

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13, 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, Daniel Kunstler, Mark Sandoval

Commissioners Absent: Monte Deignan, Laura Tauber

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft
Assistant Planner Nick Armour

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- He introduced newly hired Assistant Planner Nick Armour.
- Two Larkspur Library and Community Center Facility Town Hall meetings have been held with the intent of providing the City Council with input on the "look and feel of Larkspur". The meeting held at the Central Marin Police Facility was particularly interesting because it included input from about 50 Hall Middle School students. The next Town Hall meeting was scheduled for Saturday, November 14th at the Drake's Cove Community Room from 10:30 a.m. to noon. He encouraged everyone to attend.
- The City Council will be discussing the issue of short-term vacation rentals at the October 21st meeting. The current code does not explicitly prohibit them but the code could be interpreted to say that they are not an approved use in the residential zone at this time. Commissioner Kunstler had questions about the options being presented to the Council.
- Staff is looking at renovations to City Hall related to repairs of areas that are suffering from dry rot and water intrusion. Significant work is planned for the kitchen/copy room area including replacement of windows, removal of walls, and reshuffling of workspaces. Commissioner Sandoval asked if they could also do some for seismic upgrades during these renovations. Planning Director Toft stated this has been discussed but the funds are not available to do the full seismic upgrade.
- City Hall will be closed from Thursday, December 24th through Friday, January 1st. The Library would be open for some of those days. Commissioner Kunstler asked if the Commission would be meeting on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Planning Director Toft stated he would keep the Commission apprised.
- The property owners at 31 Piedmont Avenue have been served a Notice of Violation for not reaching their final milestone. They have been provided an opportunity to achieve the goal by the end of October/early November. They are currently installing a curb, gutter, and sidewalk along with other frontage improvements. Chair Ziesing asked staff to calculate the percentage of completion. Planning Director Toft stated most of the "heavy lifting" is done and they are down to the detail work. They are approaching the 90% mark. Chair Ziesing asked about the deposit that was secured. Planning Director Toft stated it was a \$10,000 security deposit. Chair Ziesing had questions about the conditions attached to the deposit.
- Staff has received complaints about the condition of the Nazari property on Magnolia Avenue (in front of King of the Roll). Staff has had discussions with the property owner and has issued a Notice of Violation. The next step would be a hearing before the City Council.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. **DR/FAR/SUP/HTR 14-28 (AMEND); 6 Tamalpais Avenue (AP #020-231-05); Maureen Jochum Architects, applicant; Stephan and Eliza Turner, property owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. The applicants are requesting an amendment to a previously approved application for the following permits for Design Review, Floor Area Ratio Exception, Slope Use Permit, and Heritage Tree Removal to allow multi-level additions or 887 square-feet to an existing single-family home and construction of a new 269 square-foot single-car garage, resulting in 3,528 square-feet of floor area and an FAR of 0.34. These modifications include choice of window styles, exterior treatments including siding of the house and deck materials, modification of an outdoor stair entry, and a change to the color scheme. The proposed changes do not affect the size, height, or footprint of the house. Note: This application was initially approved by the Planning Commission at their regular public hearing on November 18, 2014.**

Assistant Planner Armour presented a staff report.

Chair Ziesing opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Eliza Turner, applicant, made the following comments:

- They have put a great deal of time and consideration into the project.
- Each small piece is part of a bigger puzzle, particularly the house color.
- The neighborhood overwhelmingly loves the project.
- The process has been friendly and positive in terms of the neighbors.

Commissioner Kunstler had questions about the length of the steps and whether a landing could still be incorporated into the new stair design. Ms. Turner stated they wanted a landing but ended up “scrunched” by the slope of the driveway and the overhang of the garage. They only had so much space. Commissioner Kunstler had questions about the façade materials. Ms. Turner discussed the treatment of façade materials under the entry staircase and how this could not be enclosed and needed to breathe. The siding underneath the deck was discussed in how it was changed from lap siding to stucco. Ms. Turner discussed the proposed plantings. She believes that the plantings and location of this part of the project will not be visible from the street.

Commissioner Sandoval asked about the height of the retaining wall that serves as a planter. Ms. Turner stated she did not know. Commissioner Sandoval stated it seemed to be about three feet in height. Commissioner Sandoval asked if the soil would obscure the wall. Ms. Turner stated “yes”.

Commissioner Sandoval stated they were increasing the cost of the project by adding the stucco. He wondered if they should continue with the Hardi plank siding down that east elevation. He asked if the stucco color would be white. Ms. Turner stated it was “old prairie” and they hoped it would not call attention to itself. They wanted it to be darker than the house but not appear as a “big band” holding the house. Commissioner Sandoval asked for a color board. He asked if the Hardi plank siding would be white. Ms. Turner stated it was a “white chocolate”. They were looking for something warm and welcoming. Commissioner Sandoval stated it would appear more dominant due to the change in the color scheme. This seems to be inconsistent with what was originally proposed- more earthen tone that would recede into the landscape. He asked if they would consider toning it down. Ms. Turner stated they put a lot of thought into the colors. Commissioner Sandoval had questions about the deck materials. Ms. Turner stated it would be open Redwood.

Chair Ziesing closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- He was not present at the former hearing.
- There seems to be a disconnect with the colors and some of the changes. He would prefer something that blends in with the landscape as opposed to something more upfront and visible.
- There is a disconnect as far as what was the original design intent. The original design included a traditional silhouette with traditional use of more historical window elements. The original vertical pickets work with the gables at the front and keeps it in that building vernacular of a historical, woodsy feeling. The Stone gives it a platform for the house to sit and gives it a grounding effect to it.
- He appreciates the desire for a Redwood deck allowing water to accumulate but there are ways to work around that.
- The stucco material will read flat. Being that the stucco is white, it is accentuating the structure.
- He would have liked more consistency with what was originally proposed.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He would not characterize the original building as traditional in style.
- He is not bothered by the new treatment of the railing in front of the house.
- He is torn with regard to the plaster even though it will be obscured by vegetation. It might stick out like a “sore thumb”, having that plaster at the base of the house.
- The east elevation was never intended to be a stone veneer.
- He is on the same page as staff with regard to the stairwell. It is a fairly long run of stairs- it is somewhat “in your face”. He is not sure what can be done without imposing an undue burden on the applicant.
- He is inclined to support the application for the modifications.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- There is a progression and a rolling of hills in the neighborhood. This house is in the middle.
- There were initial concerns regarding the cut and fill of the proposal and about the garage placement and having it remain in this flow. There was a “Larkspur feel” to it. When the first revision came back, he thought the proposal flowed well with the hillside and the neighborhood.
- He is having trouble with the change in the “temperature” of the house from what it was before to what it is now.
- The changes in the stucco, movement to horizontal lines on the deck, and the straight up shot from the walkway are harder than what was there before. The previous design was softer.

- He is a bigger fan of the previous design. However, he probably could support the modifications.
- He is not in favor of the change in the windows- this was a key element and brought the house together. This changes the design from an “easy to see” Larkspur house to a more contemporary/angled Larkspur house.
- He could approve the application even though he would prefer the previous application.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- The original design had a more organic feel and kept within the flowing context of the site. It made more sense and had a charm and gracious feeling.
- He asked if stucco would be use for the retaining walls. Ms. Turner stated some would be cement and the rest would be dry-stack stone.
- He is bothered by the color palette- it is too bright. The use of stucco should be limited to the front and not used on the side. It should also be a dark color to give it some contrast.
- The materials that would be applied to the cement retaining walls and staircase should also be dark to blend in with the site.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Sandoval.
- Ms. Turner stated they could change the color but felt it would look like a “big stripe”. She reiterated that the stucco would not be seen from the street.
- The commissioners felt it would feel like a bigger stripe if it is a lighter color as opposed to dark.
- He would feel more comfortable if the stucco in the front were darker.

He could support the application. There is a certain amount of trust involved. Since Eliza’s intent is in line with the Planning Commission’s desire not to have that striping effect, he feels he could support it.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- He asked Ms. Turner if she would consider returning to a palette more consistent with what was originally proposed and a dark shaded stucco.
- He asked about whether the deck wood posts would be stained. Ms. Turner stated it would be a dark gray color.

Planning Director Toft noted:

- One thing to keep in mind is that the City doesn’t enforce the color of a house through its lifetime. He wanted to make sure that the Commissioners understood that the windows originally were a white trim, and from the architect’s description, there was a need to revisit the color scheme with the change to the windows to a dark framing.

Commissioner Sandoval replied with the following comments:

- He is concerned about the light color and reflectivity of the base of the house.
- He questioned how the color palette would coordinate with the retaining walls.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- The prior palette was very complimentary and flowed nicely from the roof to the rock.
- The new palette is very contemporary with a dark roof and a light house.
- He is inclined to support the application.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- The more he looks at the color palette the less he is bothered by it.
- He is confident that the intention of the applicant is to create something that works with the neighborhood and the natural surroundings.

M/s, Kunstler/Sandoval motioned and the Commission voted 3-0 (Deignan and Tauber absent) to approve DR/FAR/SUP/HTR 14-28 (AMEND), 6 Tamalpais Avenue, based on the findings and conditions in the staff report.

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

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Commissioners Reports

Commissioner Kunstler reported he attended the recent Marin Transit Authority (MTA) meeting and they reviewed close to 70 transit projects. He was interested in how local projects would affect the City’s ability to implement the Housing Element.

2. Approval of minutes of Planning Commission meeting on September 8, 2015

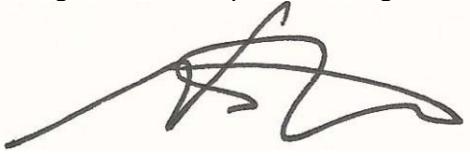
M/s, Sandoval/Kunstler motioned and the Commission voted 3-0 (Deignan and Tauber absent) to approve the September 8, 2015 minutes as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis,
Recording Secretary

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at the regular meeting of the Larkspur Planning Commission on November 11, 2015.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neal Toft', is written over a light beige rectangular background.

Neal Toft, Planning Director