

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 14, 2016

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

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

Commissioners Absent: Todd Ziesing

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft  
Senior Planner Kristin Teiche  
Assistant Planner Nicholas Armour

### OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

### PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- He gave the Commission an update on the City Hall construction. The balcony should be completed by the end of the month in time for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. The kitchen/copy room area and meeting room will be done towards the end of the month.
- The Larkspur Community Foundation will be holding a Community Pot Luck in the downtown City Parking Lot on a Sunday night in August or September. More details to come!
- The City Council will be holding a Joint Meeting with the Corte Madera Town Council regarding the feasibility of a combined Fire Department on July 6<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 p.m. at the Corte Madera Town Council Chambers.
- A dedication for the new Piper Park Tennis Deck/Platform was held on June 11<sup>th</sup>. This was a project done by Eagle Scout Jono Chu.

### PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. **DR/FAR/V/EXC #15-47; 22 Heather Way (AP# 021-201-08); Pacific Design Group, applicants; Andrew and Allison Revell, property owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Request for approval of the following permits to allow proposed ground story renovations and rear addition to an existing 1,565 square foot single family residence and an 772 square foot upper floor addition, resulting in a 2,422 square foot single family residence on a 5,500 square foot lot: 1) Design Review; 2) Floor Area Ratio Exception to allow an FAR of .44 where .40 FAR is the maximum allowable by code; 3) Variance to required parking to allow one covered and two uncovered spaces, where four are required; and 4) Exception Permit to retain a non-conforming front yard setback. Note: This item was continued from the May 10, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.**

Commissioner Sandoval stated he would step down from the dais since he did not participate in the original hearing.

Assistant Planner Armour presented the staff report.

Chair Tauber opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Ed Blankenship, architect with Pacific Design Group, made the following comments:

- At the last meeting they discussed the impact of the upper floor to the adjacent neighbor at 20 Heather.
- They reduced the square footage on the upper level - he pointed out an area that was pulled back and noted the staircase now has the opportunity to get a lot of ambient light due to the addition of two windows.
- They pulled the master bedroom extension on the west side back to help alleviate the neighbor's concern.
- The style of the home has been maintained.
- They have been able to incorporate the neighbor's concerns and create a pleasing design and a great floor plan for the homeowners to enjoy.

Commissioner Kunstler asked how far the roof eave behind the bathroom (not the master) projected out toward the north. Mr. Blankenship stated the overhang was two feet- it matches the existing on the lower level.

Chair Tauber closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- The architects took the Commission's and the neighbor's concerns to heart and have come up with a good solution.
- Based on the staff report, he could make the findings.
- He could support the project.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Deignan.

Chair Tauber provided the following comments:

- She could support the project.

M/s, Deignan/Kunstler motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Chair Ziesing absent and Sandoval recused) to approve DR/FAR/V/EXC #15-47, 22 Heather Way, based on the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

1. Review of proposed color change for the mixed use (commercial & residential) project located at Magnolia Avenue

Senior Planner Teiche presented a staff report.

Commissioner Kunstler asked when the project was approved by the Commission. Senior Planner Teiche stated it was approved in 2014. Planning Director Toft stated the applicant asked staff to administratively approve a change to the colors. While staff agreed that the approved color palette did not quite work, staff did not feel comfortable with the solution they have come up with. What is proposed is attractive, but the concern is that it is such a dark approach. Staff is looking for feedback from the Commission.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if the approvals that were made were binding. Planning Director Toft stated it was not entirely binding- the Planning Director is authorized to approve minor modifications, such as color changes. However, barring an acceptable alternative, the approved color scheme is binding. Staff is considering a modification to the color scheme and is asking the Commission to provide staff, and the applicant, some feedback and guidance.

Mr. Shawn Gorman, project applicant, made the following comments:

- This is the end of a very long process and often colors that look good on paper do not look good on buildings.
- The originally approved colors present a very dramatic contrast.
- One of the original goals has been the integration into the historic district and the adjacent buildings.
- The proposed color scheme actually softens the front of the buildings and creates a calmness which allows the buildings to relax into the setting.
- The white trim color really pops out. This is not the goal.
- The back buildings blend into the landscape but would “scream” if the original color palette was used.
- The proposed color scheme is balanced and an elegant solution.

Commissioner Sandoval referred to the awnings and asked if there was an approved signage program. Mr. Gorman stated they have not worked out the design parameters. They are looking at an awning that has a valance in the front that would be around 8” to 9”. They will be working on fonts that fit within that valance. Commissioner Sandoval asked if there would be illumination. Mr. Gorman stated they were planning on using LED’s behind and underneath to create soft light pointed down. They do not want any up-lighting.

Planning Director Toft stated staff’s concern was the aesthetics plus the extent of the change, including proposed black awnings. As awnings and signage would go through Zoning Administrator approval. Staff is looking for feedback on whether or not this is an adequate approach. He noted staff has received letters and comments from the public in support of the proposed color change.

Commissioner Sandoval provided the following comments:

- He was never a fan of the architecture.
- The darker color is much more accommodating to the downtown- the buildings now recede into the site.
- The awnings, signage, and lighting for the buildings are very important.
- The original palette was too garish.
- There needs to be a great deal of attention to refining this and they want to be sensitive to the collection of buildings.
- The awnings style, how they are illuminated, and the signage are questions that need to be looked at more thoroughly.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Sandoval.
- He agreed with the comments made about use of the white trim (‘Going to the Chapel’).
- The proposed color scheme is more elegant, although there is a certain austerity to the visual appearance.
- It changes at different times of day and presents differently from different distances.

- He referred to the integration into the rest of the neighborhood and worried that the program in its entirety was a bit austere and asked staff to come up with ideas for the remaining elements that would remove some of that austerity.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- The current color scheme is attractive and he probably would have approved it if it had come before the Commission several years ago. It is more somber and muted.
- He would like more detail on the size of the awnings (how much of that front elevation they will occupy). He noted the proposed awning color was black and it seemed mono-chromatic. The amount of signage will be minimal and might provide a bit of relief.
- The awnings across the street are black but they are against an almost white building.
- He did not like the idea of black awnings.

Chair Tauber provided the following comments:

- She understood why they did not want the white color- it was too much contrast with the dark color.
- She thinks the proposed colors are elegant but also very dark.
- Black awnings would be too dark. She likes the idea of striped awnings since it would break up the darkness in the background.
- She is looking for something lighter in color- maybe a middle ground that provides some contrast.
- A lot of this depends on what the City wants for this area- an elegant “boutique feel” vs. harmonizing with the buildings across the street.

Planning Director Toft stated staff’s concern was whether or not this complimented the retail character of the streetscape.

Mr. Gorman made the following comments:

- The overall design process led them to a very successful project.
- He pointed out that they have not started doing the landscaping in the front of the buildings. Three trees will be in the front setback areas and there are trees proposed for the front of the sidewalk.
- The buildings will almost become “background” given the proposed landscape. This is part of the Garden District concept.
- They will take a look at ideas for the awnings so they are in harmony with the building and the surroundings.
- One of the things that will become apparent once the businesses occupy these spaces is the setbacks in the front will be another outdoor living room for the community. The colors will start to fade in importance with the project.

Planning Director Toft thanked the Commission for their comments- staff had adequate direction by which to proceed.

## 2. Commissioner Reports

There were no reports.

## 3. Approval of minutes of Planning Commission meeting on May 24, 2016

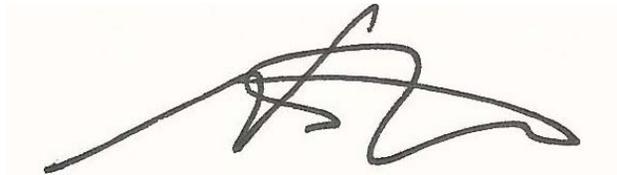
M/s, Kunstler/Deignan motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Chair Ziesing absent, Sandoval abstained) to approve the May 24, 2016 minutes as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis,  
Recording Secretary

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Larkspur Planning Commission on June 28, 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light beige background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'NT'.

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Neal Toft, Planning Director