

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13, 2020

The Larkspur Planning Commission was convened at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Tauber via teleconference due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Commissioners Present: Chair Laura Tauber, Daniel Kunstler, Jeffrey Swisher

Commissioners Absent: Brock Wagstaff, Natasha Chalmers

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft  
Senior Planner Kristin Teiche  
Assistant Planner Aaron Matthews  
Planning Consultant Lorraine Weiss

### OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

### PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The General Plan Steering Committee met last night to review the Administrative Draft of the General Plan Update. Minor formatting still needs to be done. They reviewed the Sustainability Element, a new chapter added to the General Plan. Staff plans to present the draft document to the City Council next week. The public process and environmental review timelines would also be presented at this meeting. Staff will schedule some workshops that will include the Council and the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will hold Public Hearings to review the draft General Plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
- Today the City Council held a Special Meeting to review a letter to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) expressing concern about the methodology used for the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) numbers. The next cycle of RHNA numbers will be significantly higher than what has come out of ABAG in the past. Much of this is driven by the recent housing legislation packages. Larkspur's number for the next cycle is 1,020 new units. The final methodology was a surprise - he was anticipating between 600 to 800 units. He will send a copy of the letter to each Commissioner.

### PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. **DR/FAR #19-27; 32 La Cuesta Drive, (APN: 070-263-09); Jeffrey S. Cavener, Architect, Applicant; Mauro and Beverly Passetti: Owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicants are requesting the following permits to construct a 24 square foot second story addition and a new 200 square foot ground story garage/addition to an existing two-story residence on a 15,202 square foot parcel: 1) Design Review (DR) for additions and exterior modifications to an existing single family dwelling; 2) Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to increase the existing 3,801 square foot residence with a 0.25 FAR to 4,025 square feet and a 0.26 FAR where 0.17 FAR is permitted due to the slope of the lot.**

Planning Consultant Weiss presented the staff report. During its first review, the Commission made comments about the garage addition and the deck extension. The applicant submitted revised plans which included a reduction in the height of the garage addition, elimination of the roof deck extension, and the addition of frosted glass to the deck railings. There were also a number of architectural details that have been modified including wrapping the siding around the eastern

façade of the building. She noted staff received three pieces of late mail. She recommended the following additional Condition of Approval: The plantings proposed on the west side shall be placed on the applicant's parcel.

Chair Tauber opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Jeff Cavener, project architect, made the following comments:

- They lowered the proposed garage addition by 2 ½ feet.
- They eliminated the increase in size to the roof deck.
- They are replacing the 36" high wood picket railing with a 42" high frosted panel. This will reduce the visual mass.
- They extended the siding on the 40 La Cuesta side of the house to create a more cohesive upgrade. There is now consistency on all four of the elevations.
- The proposed garage addition is 17' to the right corner property line and 22' to the front corner.
- The height is based on the strongest aesthetics.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if they considered having a different set up in the front of the garage other than a garage door to give it less of an institutional look. Mr. Cavener stated "no"- the program directive was to provide a viable third garage stall. It is a 10' X 20' garage addition with an 8' X 8' garage door. Commissioner Kunstler asked if they looked for a wider garage door that would accommodate the entry instead of having two separate doors. Mr. Cavener stated "no"- one cannot buy a garage door of that dimension without getting into commercial installations. This would not be an appropriate aesthetic. The garage addition is stepped back two feet from the existing front elevation of the house. The electric panel is located on the side wall and they did not want to get involved with relocating the electrical service.

Ms. Mara Passetti made the following comments:

- Her parents have lived in the home for 30 years.
- The current square footage is 3,320 square feet.
- This remodel will benefit the neighborhood.
- They have an open permit for the waterproofing of the back deck. There have been inspections.
- They have been cooperating with the City and the neighbors.
- They eliminated the deck extension and lowered the height of the new structure.
- She displayed some photographs.
- There is eighteen feet from the back story pole to the fence.
- The Pittosporum will provide privacy between the two properties.
- She mentioned a letter she had sent and discussed some contentious issues her parents have had with one of the neighbors.

Planning Director Toft stated staff received a letter from Ms. Passetti on Saturday and he asked her if it should be a part of the record and she responded "no". The letter was not directed to the Planning Commission. He could forward it to the Commission now. Ms. Passetti asked Planning Director Toft to share the letter with the Commission.

Ms. Karen McConnell made the following comments:

- She discussed some contentious issues her family has had with one of the neighbors.
- She is opposed to the addition because it exceeds the Floor Area Ratio (FAR).
- She is concerned about setting precedence.
- The garage is a massive bulk even with the slight reduction in height.
- It is inappropriate to have a thirteen-foot high garage. It should be maxed out at nine feet.
- She would like a sloped roof. She wants to prevent anyone from using the roof of the garage as an addition to the deck.

- There should be no windows in the additional garage. That would allow it to be used as a living space.

Chair Tauber asked the public to focus on the merits of the project and not personal issues.

Mr. Kent Browett made the following comments:

- He asked if the Commission received a copy of his email. Chair Tauber stated “no”.
- He is concerned about the height of the garage.
- The Pittosporum would be an acceptable screen in place of the bamboo.
- There is an elevation change between his yard and the subject property.
- He asked Planning Consultant Weiss if she had a chance to see the story poles. She stated “yes”.

Planning Director Toft stated staff he just discovered the late mail from Mr. Browett he would forward it to the Commission now.

Mr. Kevin Haroff, La Cuesta, made the following comments:

- He lives immediately adjacent to the subject property.
- He and several of his neighbors submitted letters expressing similar concerns about the project.
- He has concerns about the scope and design of the project and whether it meets the Design Review Standards and whether or not the Floor Area Exception Findings could be made.
- The belated placement of the story poles reinforces the neighbor’s concerns.
- The proposed garage and deck expansion is unnecessarily bulky, intrusive to neighboring residences, and out of character with the neighborhood.
- He had doubts that the Conditions of Approval would be implemented in the absence of substantial compliance enforcement on the part of the City.
- The project should not be approved.

Mr. Peter Whelen, La Cuesta, made the following comments:

- He sent a letter to the Commission expressing concern about the height of the garage addition.
- The rest of the design is very attractive and will be a great addition to the neighborhood.

Chair Tauber closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Swisher provided the following comments:

- The initial objections by the Commission were legitimate.
- The applicant responded appropriately to these objections.
- Any construction and enforcement issues will have to be handled by staff.
- He agreed with the staff report and would be in favor of approval.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He continues to be troubled by the design particularly the garage addendum.
- It would have a looming impact over the property to the west.
- It represents additional bulk and detracts from the architectural balance of the house.
- He has no issue with the east side. The siding is attractive.
- The impact to the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) would be minimal.
- There have been improvements.
- This is “close, but no cigar”.

Chair Tauber provided the following comments:

- The biggest issue with the neighbors is the garage.
- She is not convinced that stepping it down further would help with the aesthetics.

- A garage does not have to be 13'10".
- She is having trouble approving the application due to the height of the garage.
- The story poles are very high.
- If the garage were the height of the eyebrow it would be much better.
- The applicant tried to address the Commission's concerns.

Senior Planner Teiche stated the applicant has already agreed to a 90-day extension of time and it took several months to refile. Chair Tauber asked the applicants if they were willing to modifying the project.

Mr. Cavener displayed an alternative schematic design that included lowering the roof two feet to the eyebrow. He stated that they thought the higher roof provided a better aesthetic and scale.

Ms. Passetti stated her parents have given up a lot but might agree to this revision.

Planning Director Toft stated that if the Commission thought the reduced height was acceptable, they could simply implement that as a condition of approval. A two-foot reduction is a straightforward adjustment, that could be applied as a condition.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comment:

- He would like to see the revision on a new set of plans.

Chair Tauber provided the following comment:

- She would like to see new story poles.

Commissioner Swisher provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments by the other Commissioners.
- He would like to schedule the next meeting as soon as possible.

M/s, Swisher/Kunstler, motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Chalmers, Wagstaff absent) to continue DR/FAR #19-27, 32 La Cuesta Drive, with a resubmission of plans indicating the new height of the garage and the placement of new story poles.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

### **1. Approval of the September 8, 2020 and September 22, 2020 draft meeting minutes**

M/s, Kunstler/Tauber, motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Chalmers, Wagstaff absent) to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 8, 2020 meeting as submitted.

M/s, Kunstler/Swisher, motioned and the Commission voted 2-0-2-1 (Chair Tauber abstained, Chalmers, Wagstaff absent) to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 22, 2020 meeting as submitted.

### **2. Planning Commissioners Reports**

Commissioner Kunstler stated the updated General Plan is a superb document- the City should be proud!

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 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 October 27, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'NT', written over a horizontal line.

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Neal Toft, Planning Director