

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 13, 2021

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

Commissioners Present: Acting Chair Laura Tauber, Natasha Chalmers, Jeffrey Swisher

Commissioners Absent: Daniel Kunstler, Chair Brock Wagstaff

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft
Senior Planner Kristin Teiche

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The Bon Air Bridge will be closed this week to vehicles. This should be the last closure of the entire road.
- The Building and Planning Department counter hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Staff anticipates opening up more hours as long as the COVID protocols remain in a positive trend. The Library's open hours are Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons.
- The County of Marin will be holding a workshop on its Reusable Food Ware Ordinance tomorrow night from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- At next week's meeting the City Council will discuss the Climate Action Plan and a possible Climate Emergency Resolution.
- Last Friday was the deadline to appeal the RHNA allocations to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The City of Larkspur submitted an appeal and a request for a reduction of about 250 units citing the significant amount of WUI high fire hazard areas and the potential sea level rise.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. **H/DR/FAR #21-18; 68 Madrone Avenue, AP #21-085-15; Polsky Perlstein Architects, applicant; Ari and Mead Blum, property owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicant is requesting the following permits to allow new ground floor and second floor additions totaling 527 square feet to the rear and easterly side of an historic single-family dwelling listed on the Larkspur Inventory of Historic Resources; 1) Heritage Review; 2) Design Review; 3) Floor Area Ratio Exception (FAR) to allow an increase in the existing 1,907 square foot home with a 0.41 FAR to 2,478 square feet and a 0.53 FAR, where 1,544 square feet and a 0.33 FAR is permitted due to the slope of the lot**

Senior Planner Teiche presented the staff report. The applicant had presented three dormer options to the Heritage Preservation Board. Option 1 was one approved by the Historic Architect and the new dormer expansion stepped back. The other two options were recommended by the architect. The Heritage Preservation Board recommended approval of the project with dormer Option #3. The applicant has revised the plans to reflect this dormer option.

Commissioner Swisher asked when the house was built. Senior Planner Teiche stated the Historic Architect is of the opinion that it was built around 1920.

Acting Chair Tauber stated she had read that the entry way to the house originally faced Onyx and she assumes that at one time the house had more land in front of it. This relates to the FAR issue.

Commissioner Chalmers asked if Option One, recommended by the Historic Architect, avoids removal of the existing dormer. Senior Planner Teiche stated it results in less modification than the original demo plan.

Acting Chair Tauber opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Jared Polsky, architect, made the following comments:

- They went through the Historical Review Process a short time ago.
- The Historic Architect's main concern was the shape and visibility of the dormer at the northeast corner.
- They presented three versions of the dormer.
- They are open to all three configurations.
- They are going to keep the left dormer intact.
- The Historic Preservation Board recommended Option #3. It is clean and simple.
- The addition fits well with the existing house.
- The house will not be perceived as being huge or massive.
- It is designed to meet the needs of a modern family.
- All of the neighbors have written letters of support.
- This house will not have the highest Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the area.
- The largely underground garage is 216 square feet or 4.6% of the FAR.
- The additions are barely visible from Madrone Avenue.

Mr. Ari Blum made the following comments:

- They purchased the house in 2008 due to the historic nature.
- The additional bedroom would be helpful to the family.
- He appreciates the neighbor's support.
- They would prefer Option #3 for the dormer but will go with whatever the Commission decides.

Acting Chair Tauber closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Chalmers provided the following comments:

- This is a beautiful property.
- They should not be required to conform to the on-site parking requirements.
- The Heritage Permit is a complicated issue.
- The three dormer Options look similar but Option #3 is the most attractive and makes the most sense.
- On the other hand, the Historic Architect noted that Option #3 does not conform to Guideline #9 of the Historic Standards.
- She referred to Design Review and stated the addition is compatible with the neighborhood, is attractive, and appropriately designed for this property.
- She referred to the FAR Exception and understood staff's concern about setting a precedent but is inclined to approve the request. This is a unique property.

Commissioner Swisher provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Chalmers.
- The parking issue is a “no-brainer”- it would be a travesty to try to put four parking spaces on this property. He could approve the waiver of this requirement.
- Option #3 is the most aesthetically pleasing and it would probably be problematic to try to put a gap between the two dormers.
- He referred to the FAR Exception and noted there is a 17% slope to the property. There is no massing problem.
- This is a nice design.
- He could make the necessary Findings.

Acting Chair Tauber provided the following comments:

- She does not want to second guess the Heritage Preservation Board.
- She supported Option #3.
- The biggest “hiccup” for her was the FAR Exception and the concern about setting a precedent.
- She was not sure how to accommodate the applicant’s wants and needs without having a higher FAR.
- This is a special situation- an historic house on a sloped lot.
- She could approve the project.

M/s, Chalmers/Swisher, motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Kunstler and Chair Wagstaff absent) to approve H/DR/FAR #21-18, 68 Madrone Avenue, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

Acting Chair Tauber stated there was a 10-day appeal period.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval minutes of June 8, 2021

M/s, Swisher/Chalmers, motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Kunstler and Chair Wagstaff absent) to approve the minutes from the meeting of June 8, 2021 as submitted.

2. Planning Commissioners Reports

There were no reports.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 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 July 27, 2021.



Kristin Teiche, Senior Planner