

**CITY OF BELMONT**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**

**SUMMARY MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2011, 7:00 PM**

Chair Reed called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, City Hall Council Chambers.

**1. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Reed, Mercer, Parsons, Horton, Mayer

Commissioners Absent: Wheeler, d'Souza (arrived at 7:05)

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), Senior Planner DiDonato, City Attorney Rennie (CA), Recording Secretary Turning (RS), Planning Intern Nelson (PI)

**2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None**

**3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) - None**

**4. CONSENT CALENDAR - None**

**5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**5A. PUBLIC HEARING – 2729 Waltham Cross Drive**

To consider a Single Family Design Review to construct an approximately 1060 square foot second story addition to the existing 2,232 square foot single family residence for a total of 3,292 square feet. (3,500 sq. ft. maximum building size permitted for this site). (Appl. No. 2011-0041) APN: 054-412-080;

Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303

OWNER: Liz and Ramesh Bhatt

APPLICANT: Dan Winklebleck

PROJECT PLANNER: Julia Nelson, Intern (650) 595-7453

Chair Reed determined that no one on the Commission had any ex parte communications with any one involved with this project.

Commissioner Parsons stated that he liked the project but recused himself from the discussion because he lives within 300 feet of the project.

CDD de Melo introduced Julia Nelson, intern for the Community Development Department. She had prepared the Staff Report and will be making her first presentation.

IP Nelson summarized the Staff Report, recommending approval subject to the conditions attached.

CDD de Melo confirmed for Vice Chair Mercer that there is a condition requiring that existing landscaping be replaced in kind, and that a standard condition requiring photo documentation of existing landscaping could be added.

Chair Reed opened the Public Hearing. There were no requests to speak.

Commissioner d'Souza arrived at 7:05 p.m.

**MOTION: By Vice Chair Mercer, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to close the Public Hearing.**

**Ayes: Mercer, Mayer, d'Souza, Horton, Reed**  
**Noes: None**  
**Recused: Parsons**  
**Absent: Wheeler**

**Motion passed 5/0/1/1**

Dan Winklebleck, designer of the project, stated that he and the owners had worked hard to conform to the City's requirements and to propose a project that looks good in the surrounding neighborhood.

Ramesh Bhatt, owner, stated that he enjoys the neighborhood and that they did their best to accommodate his family's needs as well as fit into the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Mercer commented that she appreciated the initiative in putting another tree in the front yard and asked Mr. Bhatt how he arrived at the choice of a California Bay Laurel. Mr. Bhatt responded that they had selected it from a list of amenable trees and also that it could be used in their new kitchen.

Vice Chair Mercer could make the findings, but was concerned about the California Bay Laurel because of recent reports that these trees are considered culprits in causing the Sudden Oak Death Syndrome. The neighborhood is trying hard to get an Oak population going. In addition to the suggestion that there might be a different tree they could pick, she would like the addition of a condition requiring either a more detailed landscape plan or photo documentation with the requirement that it be replaced in kind.

Commissioner Mayer had the same concern about the landscape plan and the Bay Tree because of all of the recent controversy. He suggested that there are two ways to look at it – either the Bay tree is a host to the fungus or whatever it is that causes the Sudden Oak Death or vice versa, depending on which tree is regarded as more important. He added that there are recommendations in many circles that Bay trees should actually be destroyed and taken out, suggesting that it might be wise to think of another species. He also suggested that the applicant consider addressing the landscape issues with more drought-proof plantings, similar to the home across the street from this project. Other than that, he liked the project and could make the findings.

Commissioner Horton had no issues and thought it is a design that fits in nicely with the neighborhood and will be a good addition.

Commissioner d'Souza concurred with the landscape issues brought up by Vice Chair Mercer and Commissioner Mayer.

Chair Reed could make the findings.

**MOTION: By Vice Chair Mercer, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to adopt the Resolution approving a Single-Family Design Review at 2729 Waltham Cross (Appl. No. PA 2011-0041) with Condition 6 amended to require that the property be fully landscaped and the term "in kind" be deleted from that condition.**

**Ayes: Mercer, Horton, d'Souza, Mayer, Reed**  
**Noes: None**  
**Recused: Parsons**  
**Absent: Wheeler**

**Motion passed 5/0/1/1**

Chair Reed announced that this item can be appealed to City Council within 10 calendar days.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

Commissioner Parsons returned to the dais.

### **6A. Residential Design Guidelines**

SP DiDonato summarized the memorandum noting the Planning Commission reviewed the "beta" version of the Residential Design Guidelines and updated the text at the July 7, 2011 meeting.

Staff had modified the text in accordance with the Commission's direction and prepared the latest version for review by the Commission.

Chair Reed thanked SP DiDonato for his great work on the document.

Discussion ensued. Final comments and direction was provided to Staff by the Commission.

The entire Commission commended staff for a great product.

SP DiDonato confirmed that this was a living document and the Council could revise it as needed by a resolution.

A final revision would be forwarded to the City Attorney and City Council for review of the Zone Text Amendment and Residential Design Guidelines.

## **7. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES:**

CDD de Melo reported as follows:

### **7A. Cal Train Underpass Landscape Replacement**

He received a communication from Daniel Ourtiague of the Parks and Recreation Dept. that he has been trying to work with Cal Train on the property north of the grade separation portion north of Ralston. There are 5 or 6 trees that are not doing well and will be removed and replaced. Vice Chair Mercer commented that there are sticks that have been on the south side of Ralston for about 12 years. Irrigation seems to be the issue.

### **7B. North Road Right-of-Way**

No update at this time.

### **7C. Ralston/US 101 Landscape Project**

No update at this time.

### **7D. Sixth & O'Neill Reconstruction Project**

The road continues to be closed with limited access. Public Works expects that the paving should be completed by the end of the month.

Commissioner Parsons commented that cars are cutting across the Safeway parking lot and suggested that temporary stanchions be placed there to make drivers slow down through the parking lot. Chair Reed suggested that stepped up enforcement might a better answer for the two-weeks remaining before completion of the project.

### **7E. US 101 Pedestrian/Bike Bridge Reconstruction Project**

The grand opening will be on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

Commissioner Mayer asked if the City has considered any sort of temporary screening to conceal the "hideous" chain link fence that is between the homes and the project area. CDD de Melo replied that it is hoped that this will be a component of the landscape plan for the 4 quadrants to be negotiated with the City of Redwood City. The new Public Works Director and City Engineer will be taking an active role in the discussions with Redwood City. Vice Chair Mercer pointed out that the prime planting season is here and that nobody wants to see another year go by without the landscaping. CDD de Melo stated that it would be a challenge to have it done by this winter knowing that they have to hammer out an agreement between the City Councils of both cities for the use of the funds.

### **7F. High-Speed Rail (HSR)**

The Ad Hoc Committee met that morning. They talked largely about assisting Council in preparing a response to the press release issued by Eshoo, Simitian and Gordon about how to deal with the blended system and how, if high-speed rail is to be construed, it should be done within the bounds of the current right of way. There have been some clarifications to their statement over the last few months but cities are starting to respond to that press release and Belmont wants to get on that band wagon so they are going to use the leverage of the Ad Hoc Committee to try to assist Council with their response and take a position. Productive meeting this morning. Next meeting is scheduled for November 15.

The City continues to host Peninsula Consortium meetings. The first one was on the first Friday of October and the next one will be held November 4<sup>th</sup> at 8:15 a.m. in the Council Chambers. All are welcome to attend.

**8. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2011 – 7:30 P.M.**

Liaison: Commissioner Mercer  
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Wheeler

Commissioner Mercer cannot attend the meeting. If Commissioner Wheeler is not available, Chair Reed stated that he will attend.

**8. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, November 1, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

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Carlos de Melo  
Planning Commission Secretary

*CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the  
Community Development Department  
Please call (650) 595-7417 to schedule an appointment.*