

CITY OF BELMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION
SUMMARY MINUTES

TUESDAY, MAY 01, 2012, 7:00 PM

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

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Mercer, Parsons, Horton, d'Souza, Frautschi
Commissioners Absent: Herbach, Reed

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), Associate Planner Gill (AP), Recording Secretary Turning (RS), City Attorney Renne (CA)

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS- None

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments)- None

4. CONSENT CALENDER

4A. Minutes of March 20, 2012

MOTION: By Vice Chair Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to accept the Minutes of March 20, 2012 as presented.

Ayes: Parsons, Horton, Frautschi, Mercer, d'Souza

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Herbach, Reed

Motion passed: 5/0/0/2

5. PUBLIC HEARING:

5A. PUBLIC HEARING- 49 Ralston Ranch Road

To consider a Single Family Design Review to construct a new 1,120 square foot single-family residence which is below the Zoning District Permitted 1,140 square feet for this site. (Appl. No. 2011-55)

APN: 043-072-740; Zoned: HRO-2 (Hillside Residential & Open Space)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303

APPLICANT/OWNER: Slim Lu

PROJECT PLANNER: Rob Gill, (650) 598-4204

Chair Mercer confirmed with the Commission that no one had any ex parte communication with anyone associated with this project.

AP Gill summarized the staff report, giving the details of the project. The subject property is located in a neighborhood of two-story homes with a mixture of stucco and wood exteriors. The 13,130 square foot lot is situated on the northern down-slope of Ralston Ranch Road and has an average slope of 33%. The lot has a descending down-slope from the front to the rear of the property. The site is not landscaped and has a variety of native grasses with mature Eucalyptus and Oak trees. The proposed two-story residence consists of one-level occupancy and an understory. The 690 square foot living space consists of kitchen and living areas with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. The project design includes a covered entry porch and a rear covered deck. The applicant also includes a 430 square foot two-car garage. The exterior materials of the proposed residence will include stucco walls painted a dark grey color, trim elements painted a light grey color, and tile roofing finished in a brown color. The City Arborist surveyed 13 mature trees within the project scope. Of the 13 trees surveyed, 3 protected trees are proposed to be removed. As a Condition of Approval, the applicant shall be required to plant mitigation trees for the trees lost or damaged during construction and pay in-lieu fees to the City's Tree Fund. Tree protection measures, as recommended by the City Arborist, have been included in the Conditions of Approval. The applicant proposes a landscape plan which includes new shrub plantings of 5 to 1 gallon size and three 15 gallon trees and ground cover. The project includes 62 cubic yards of cut and 62 cubic yards of fill resulting in net zero fill to be imported on site. All of the City's Geologist's recommendations have been attached in the Conditions of Approval. The applicant has appeared to have achieved the Neighborhood Outreach Strategy tasks. Staff believes all findings can be made in the affirmative and recommends approval of the Single Family Design Review application.

Commissioner Frautschi asked if there were any additional rules concerning trees in the public right-of-way being removed when they are technically not the applicant's property. AP Gill responded that the applicant is responsible for the care of the tree in the public right-of-way and that they would have to meet the rules and regulations of removing any protected tree. CDD de Melo stated that if the tree were to be removed the same rules would apply for mitigation plantings.

Commissioner Frautschi asked for clarification regarding the exact distance of the driveway from the left side of the property line. He questioned if it was 7 feet. Commissioner Frautschi wanted to know if the driveway could be shifted to the left and AP Gill responded in the affirmative however he wondered if the approach to the garage would be affected. Driveways are allowed to encroach into the setbacks.

Regarding the rear deck, Commissioner Frautschi questioned if the deck were made smaller and pulled forward and moved away from tree 10 would that tree be considered not a removal. AP Gill stated that if the deck were to be pulled in 8 feet the tree would be considered not a removal however the tree would be monitored for any impacts.

Commissioner d'Souza questioned at what deck dimension tree 10 would not have to be removed. AP Gill stated that the City Arborist declared it be pulled out 8 feet for the tree to be safe from removal. The design of the deck would require significant pruning of the tree in question and render it endangered therefore the City would consider that a removal.

Commissioner d'Souza asked if the applicant constructed a roof deck would that be considered another floor. AP Gill thought the design of the residence would not allow for that type of construction. In the Species Report a type of wood rat is considered a species of concern and has a nest located on the subject property. Commissioner d'Souza wanted to know if the fence had any impact on the species. AP Gill responded that essentially there was no impact on the rat. Commissioner d'Souza was concerned with the impact that the inclusion of pets would have on the wood rat.

Chair Mercer asked if the applicant was proposing to fence the property. AP Gill stated that he was not sure if the applicant was proposing to fence the front of the property. Chair Mercer questioned if there was a laundry hook-up in the garage. AP Gill directed that that question be answered by the applicant.

Frank Ho, the architect, commented on the project. Chair Mercer asked the architect if they were considering adding a laundry hook-up in the garage. Ho responded that they were planning on placing a small double stacked laundry machine in a closet somewhere in the residence but not in the garage. Commissioner Frautschi asked how one accesses the underside of the house to work on pieces of the residence. The architect stated that access would be located in the rear with a crawlspace. Regarding the landscape, Commissioner Frautschi had a couple of questions. One question being why the architect made the decision to remove a Eucalyptus from the property. He also wanted to know the distance of the driveway from the left property line and can it be shifted over to avoid the tree. Mr. Ho stated that the driveway is in very close proximity to the tree resulting in the loss of the tree. Commissioner Frautschi then questioned if the architect dealt with the issues surrounding the irrigation to trees 2 and 3. The architect stated that they had no problem following the recommendations of the City Arborist concerning irrigation.

The Commission received two speaker slips, one from Carol Rossi and one from Ann Maiman. Ms. Rossi stated that previously the house to the left borrowed square footage from the subject property in order to build a larger home. She questioned what the allowable square footage was that was left to build a house on this lot. Her second question concerned if the residence had been given a variance to build a larger home. CDD de Melo answered Ms. Rossi's questions. He stated that the applicant is allowed 1,140 square feet.

Ann Maiman was the last speaker. She wanted clarification on Lot 51, the lot to the left of the subject property. CDD de Melo clarified that that lot received a Floor Area Exception.

MOTION: By Commissioner Frautschi, seconded by Vice Chair Parsons, to close the public hearing. Motion passed 5/0 by show of hands.

Commissioner Horton started the discussion by stating that the residence was an extraordinarily small house. She took no issue with the removal of the Eucalyptus tree but wanted to see the Oak tree saved.

Vice Chair Parsons had major concerns. He thought that the Eucalyptus tree could be saved if the applicant narrowed the driveway down to the width of the garage and angle it to the left. He took issue with the fact that the deck was larger than the living space believing it to be excessively bulky. Vice Chair Parsons warned against having a large roof overhang because in the winter some areas of the house would get no sunlight. He could not make the findings believing the house was too bulky with a poor design.

Commissioner d'Souza thought the driveway could be narrowed in order to save the Eucalyptus tree. He also thought the deck could be pulled back 8-10 feet in order to save tree 10. Commissioner d'Souza also thought there should be a restriction put on the keeping of pets in order to protect the wood rat species. He liked the size of the project and how it conformed to the HRO standards.

Commissioner Frautschi supported the Arborists' mitigations concerning the storm drain infiltration trench construction and the irrigation plans around trees 2 and 3. He thought there was some value in saving tree 1. He was not a fan of Eucalyptus trees but thought the species of Eucalyptus was rare. He thought the Maple trees were a good choice but suggested that the trees not be planted so close to the doorway. Commissioner Frautschi thought the house was modest in design but that the deck should be reduced by 1/3 in size. He had problems supporting the project as it stands unless some aspects of the design were tweaked.

Chair Mercer thought the house was relatively well sited. She thought the design of the house was well integrated with the surrounding neighborhood. Chair Mercer was pleased that the backyard landscape was to remain natural but wished there was a different fence choice so that there could be circulation of wildlife. She thought some aspects of the plans needed to be clarified such as the laundry hook-up before the final plans were

submitted. She stated that the applicant might want to construct a wall between the toilet and the sink area for privacy. This idea is not a condition but a strong suggestion. She had no issue with the size of the deck due to the small size of the residence. Chair Mercer strongly suggested that the applicant reconsider covering the deck. She also suggested reducing the roof which would therefore reduce the bulk. Chair Mercer was not concerned with losing the Eucalyptus in the front of the residence. She was concerned with losing the Oak tree in the back. She thought that the planting of Maples was not enough mitigation planting for the removal of the other trees. These suggestions did not deter her from making the findings.

Before the motion was presented, CDD de Melo wanted to clarify the desired changes to the plans including a more complete landscape design that addresses the deck and profile of the driveway. Three Commissioners had difficulty making the findings concerning the bulk of the project. CDD de Melo stated that there could not be a restriction on the allowing of household pets on the property.

MOTION: By Vice Chair Parsons, seconded by Commissioner d'Souza, to continue the item to a date uncertain.

Ayes: Parsons, d'Souza, Mercer, Frautschi

Noes: Horton

Absent: Herbach, Reed

Motion passed 4/1/2

6. OLD BUSINESS

6A. 2035 General Plan Update- Discussion Regarding Project Approach/Schedule

CDD de Melo gave an update on the 2035 General Plan. CDD de Melo stated that staff will forward the Staff Report presented to City Council. There were three meetings since January with some progress made on some items. In March there were 9 overarching goals established for the 2035 General Plan. Staff proposed creating an approach that centered on the formation of focus groups to work on General Plan tasks and policies. The City Council concurred with the focus group approach. CDD de Melo stated that he wanted to transmit the Staff Report from the City Council. The focus group will consist of staff and will be served by one member of the Council, the Planning Commission, Finance Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Commission. The focus group will operate on a rotating basis with no more than four people meeting once or twice a week for a couple hours at a time. CDD de Melo attached a work plan for the entirety of the General Plan Update to the Staff Report. The General Plan involves 11 elements for update with 2 being focused on. These two elements include Land Use and Traffic and Circulation as well as the Introduction Section and Environmental Study. The focus group would center their attention on creating goals and policies for the Land Use Element as well as the Traffic and Circulation Element.

Commissioner Frautschi wanted to know how the City would create a fluid flow with individuals coming in and individuals coming out. CDD de Melo responded that he wanted to break policies down by task.

Chair Mercer asked if the different focus groups would work on their sections and those would be put together and be brought to the Commission. Then it would be incumbent on the Commission to ensure that it relates properly to each other and balances. CDD de Melo stated that the focus of the groups is to work not necessarily simultaneously but close together. CDD de Melo wanted to conduct the meetings during the day for a couple hours for a period of two weeks.

Commissioner Horton stated that due to her work schedule it would be impossible for her to participate in the meetings.

Commissioner Frautschi disagreed with Commissioner Horton that the meeting time would preclude working members. Drafts would be sent to Commissioners on the progress of the focus groups.

Chair Mercer wanted to know the reason why a focus group, if it involves a Planning Commissioner and a Council member, could not do the work over the weekend if it just meant them working out policy.

With respect to the Land Use Element, Vice Chair Parsons was interested in working on Residential and Commercial areas. Commissioner d'Souza was interested in all tasks except for five (Commercial and Industrial areas). Commissioner Frautschi wanted to work on any kind of Land Use. Commissioner Horton was interested in Commercial and Industrial areas if the group could meet in the evening. Chair Mercer was particularly interested in Village areas.

Commissioner Horton thought that the City has a serious traffic problem and that there are decisions to be made and Land Use policy to be crafted that address that specific issue. Vice Chair Parsons had an issue with Land Use being separated from Traffic and Circulation. CDD de Melo stated that Traffic Circulation policies have to mirror Land Use policies.

7. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES

7A. North Road Right-of-Way

No further report.

7B. Caltrain Modernization Program/High Speed Rail

The High Speed Rail draft business plan has become finalized and Caltrain made a presentation to City Council pertaining to budget issues and needs of trying to secure funding. Belmont has grave concerns about passing tracks on our segment. There will be

additional information on this matter coming out this summer. The High Speed Rail subcommittee has been put on hiatus for the time being. Chair Mercer stated that Colleen forwarded her an item about Caltrain's Memorandum of Understanding. One aspect of the memorandum that is unclear is that Caltrain is seeking upward of 700 million from High Speed Rail.

7C. Ralston/US-101 Landscape Project

No further report.

7D. Crystal Springs School Update

CDD de Melo reported that the Environmental Study is being finalized and will be released within the next week which will begin the 30 day review period. The project is on two parcels of land on Davis Drive zoned Executive Administrative which requires a General Plan Amendment and Rezone and the applicant has applied for Planned Development Zoning. There are some significant entitlements needed as well as Environmental Clearance. The project components are tentatively scheduled for review on June 19th. The project site is about 6.5 acres and there is a proposed gymnasium, pool, and all-weather surface field.

CDD de Melo noted an item not on the agenda was the Polystyrene Food-ware Ordinance outreach meeting is Wednesday May 2, 2012 at City Hall in the EOC room. Two sessions are planned, one from 2-3 PM and one from 5-6 PM. The Monte Cresta Roadway Plan item is being scheduled for the June 5th meeting.

Vice Chair Parsons asked about traffic lines being put across Hallmark. If they are doing speed counts than the location is fine but if they are doing traffic counts a large amount of cars are being missed from exiting Fox School.

8. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, MAY 8, 2012- 7:30 PM

Liaison: Commissioner d'Souza
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Horton

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.