

CITY OF BELMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION
SUMMARY MINUTES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2010, 7:00 PM

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

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Frautschi, Mayer, Horton, Parsons
Commissioners Absent: Mercer, Mathewson, Reed

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

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) – None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

- 4A. Minutes of September 7, 2010**
- 4B. Minutes of September 21, 2010**

Motion: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to accept the Minutes of September 7, 2010 and September 21, 2010 as presented. Motion passed 4/0/3 by a show of hands, with Commissioners Mathewson and Mercer and Vice Chair Reed absent.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

5A. PUBLIC HEARING – 1036 Lassen Drive

To consider a Single Family Design Review to construct a 594 square foot addition to the existing 2,610 square foot single family residence for a total of 3,204 square feet (3,465 square foot maximum building size permitted for this site). (Appl. No. 2010-0033)
APN: 043-152-040; Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)
CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303
APPLICANT/OWNER: David Chen
PROJECT PLANNER: Rob Gill, (650) 598-4204

AP Gill summarized the Staff Report, recommending approval with the conditions attached to the draft resolution. He noted that the hardscape is calculated at 57%, which includes the footprint of the dwelling, the addition and the proposed deck; he believed that the high percentage is due the lot size. If the Commission is concerned about the overall hardscape for the site, he believed that small amounts of hardscape could be reduced in the right side and rear yards.

Commissioner Parsons asked if the previous playroom addition also included relocation of the master bedroom and addition of a bathroom on the 2nd floor, since there would have been no other way to support the bedroom. AP Gill stated that he did not believe that was shown in the plans.

The applicant declined the opportunity to make a presentation.

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

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed 4/0/3 by a show of hands, with Commissioners Mathewson and Mercer and Vice Chair Reed absent.

Commissioner Horton stated that she could not accept the design because of the gable roof overlapping a hip roof, which creates a 7' gap between the two buildings and 3' open to the air with windows looking into it. She suggested that it needs to be a lowered hip roof so that there would not be the severe cut-off at the ends and would blend in more. She did not believe the proposed addition would add any value to the home.

Commissioner Parsons concurred, adding that he had a problem with the bulk and buildability of the property. Water will come off of the upper roof against the wall of the house and the front porch. He questioned if the windows up against the property line and square footage of glass would meet building codes for seismic stability, and believed that the next door neighbor would object to the windows being right up against the property line. The proposed front porch would drain into the side of the house, would widen the walkway, which would be additional hardscape, and the door is off-center. He could not make the findings to approve the project and thought it was badly conceived and which would devalue all the homes in the neighborhood as well as the subject house.

Commissioner Mayer agreed the roof did not make any sense in terms of the rest of the structure and concurred with the comments that had already been made.

Chair Frautschi concurred with staff's recommendation to lower the profile of the front porch; it has to be integrated in a different way. He felt that the landscape proposed for the back of the house is sufficient, but the current rendition of the roofs appear too bulky in the front. He was not comfortable with the statement in the condition that the Community Development Department could approve it – if it is not going to come back to the Commission then the Community Development Director would need to have the ultimate responsibility. For the reasons stated by the other Commissioners, he could not find for Findings B or E.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to continue for redesign the project at 1036 Lassen Drive (Appl. 2010-0033) to a date uncertain, based

on the conditions cited by the Commission and a review of the hardscape and a landscape plan around any changes to the front of the house.

Ayes: Parsons, Horton, Mayer, Frautschi
Noes: None
Absent: Mercer, Mathewson, Reed

Motion passed 4/0/3

5B. PUBLIC HEARING – 2607 Lincoln Avenue

To consider a Single Family Design Review to construct an 826 square foot addition to the existing 1,594 square foot single-family residence for a total of 2,420 square feet that is below the zoning district permitted 3,500 square feet for the site. (Appl. No. 2010-0038)

APN: 043-233-090; Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303

APPLICANT/OWNER: Donn S. Levine

PROJECT PLANNER: Damon DiDonato, (650) 637-2908

SP DiDonato summarized the Staff Report, recommending approval of the attached draft resolution subject to the conditions of approval attached. Responsive to an earlier comment from Commissioner Parsons regarding the potential for converting the basement area into a living space, he suggested that a condition could be added requiring that the applicant consult with the Building & Planning Division prior to making an improvements in the basement, adding that the area is accessible only from the outside of the residence, has an extremely low ceiling height and is unimproved.

Responding to Chair Frautschi, SP DiDonato stated that the 19 x 20 garage space was not held in reserve in this case because the project is 1500 square feet below the maximum for the site.

Sarah Levine, applicant, gave the history of their purchase of the home, adding that their intention is to keep the spirit of the home as it is and was when it was built 60 years ago, including the garden, and to keep the house as small as possible. Don Levine related his love of the Japanese garden and gazebo, noting that they are adding only 366 square feet of internal living space.

Chair Frautschi opened the Public Hearing. There were no speakers.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed 4/0/3 by a show of hands, with Commissioners Mathewson and Mercer and Vice Chair Reed absent.

Commissioner Mayer liked the concept and could make the findings. He suggested that improvement of the fences would enhance the appearance of the property.

Commissioner Parsons thought that a condition restricting conversion of the crawl space would be appropriate but he could make the findings.

Commissioner Horton felt that this is a sensitive update of the existing house and that connecting the garage to the house added a lot to the appearance.

Chair Frautschi concurred with staff's recommendation to include a condition regarding the hardscape removal and thanked staff for the hardscape illustration. He suggested that this should be a part of all projects. He would like to see mention of the garage space being held in reserve and wished that they were stepping the garage back further from the house next door. He liked the tea house and concurred with staff's addition about the pervious surfaces and the hardscape. Regarding Finding F and the landscape plan, he noted that it does not have a key and it is not clear to him what is already there, what will be added and where, and it lacks a clear irrigation plan and a strategy for dealing with deer. He was also concerned that they will not know if landscaping destroyed during construction will be replaced and pointed out that there are watering requirement conflicts with some of the plantings. He would like to see a landscape plan that addresses these issues returned to the Commission.

Commissioner Horton commented that the property is fully landscaped and that the landscaping is mature and the irrigation is working.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons to adopt the Resolution approving the Single-Family Design Review at 2607 Lincoln Avenue (Appl. No. 2010-0038) with the conditions attached and with an additional condition that the additional landscaping that is proposed be identified and brought back to the Commission, that the site be thoroughly photographed so that when the siding and exterior remodeling is done if there are damaged plants they can be replaced in kind, and an addition on the title that underground space of the basement will not be converted into usable living space.

CDD de Melo interjected that if the deed restriction is imposed the owners of the property would not be allowed to propose additional floor area under the house even though they have the right to seek 1500 square feet of additional habitable space. He added that the deed restriction language could require that prior to any conversion of crawl space floor area, the applicant is required to seek building or design review permits.

Motion failed for lack of a second.
Chair Frautschi requested another motion.

MOTION: By Commissioner Horton, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to adopt the Resolution approving a Single-Family Design Review at 2607 Lincoln Avenue (Appl. 2010-0038).

Ayes: Horton, Mayer, Parsons, Frautschi
Noes: None
Absent: Mathewson, Mercer, Reed

Motion passed 4/0/3

Chair Frautschi announced that this decision is appealable within 10 days.

5C. PUBLIC HEARING – Zoning Code Amendments

To consider Zone Text Amendments to Sections 2.94, 2.96, 8.2.6, and 8.3.2 of the City of Belmont Zoning Code as follows: the “*Parking Area, Private*” definition, the “*Parking Space*” definition, the “*Location of Required Parking Facilities*” and “*Access*” Sections as related to the disposition of semi-circular driveways

and access to parking spaces within Residential Districts. (Appl. No. 2010-0004) CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15308

APPLICANT: City of Belmont

PROJECT PLANNER: Carlos de Melo, 650-595-7440

CDD de Melo summarized the staff memorandum and responded to Commissioners' questions regarding:

- 1) the need for 37' curb cuts;
- 2) adding circular driveways to lots that have reduced side yard setbacks;
- 3) adding circular driveways on sloped lots;
- 4) storage of vehicles, recreational equipment and/or things that do not move on circular driveways;
- 5) the finding that the request must meet the objectives of the Zoning Plan and the General Plan;
- 6) possible conflicts between public right-of-way parking vs. private paving; and
- 7) treatment of corner lots, two frontage lots and flag lots.

Chair Frautschi opened the Public Hearing.

David Marzelli addressed the Commission in order to clarify two points:

- 1) The Planning Commission Minutes of March 2, 2010 noted that CDD de Melo stated that there should be a front landscape requirement, which was not included in tonight's Staff Report. Mr. Marzelli would like to see specific reference to a landscape or greenscape recommendation. CDD de Melo confirmed that it was not proposed but was referred to as a potential based upon Commission discussion.
- 2) Referring to page 4 of the Staff Report, bullet point #5, which states that "Legalization, establishment or modification of a semi-circular driveway shall be subject to the Building and Encroachment Permit processes for the City," Mr. Marzelli questioned if this would require that a survey or plot plan accompany an application. CDD de Melo responded that it does not specifically require it but it is routine for the Building Division to require surveys when there are property line conflicts. Staff did not believe it appropriate to specifically layer in the survey requirement but it could be included if the Commission or Council so desires. Mr. Marzelli questioned how they would know if there is a conflict unless they do a survey.

Charles Rinaldi, Belmont resident, commented as follows:

- 1) It is all about the design, functionality and making a property look the best it possibly can. The design provided by staff is based on an "H" house plan and an "H" horseshoe driveway while his lot is a circular driveway that doesn't have 17' from the garage area all the way down to the street. He felt that the designs provided by staff are boxed-shaped diagrams that do not add anything to the community of Belmont and cause more hardscape than he wanted to build.
- 2) He asked if speakers are expected to be part of the community, noting that the previous speaker lives and resides in Boston and to his knowledge has no interest in the property next door to him even though the March 2nd minutes indicate that he is a resident of Belmont.
- 3) He had a picture available of a corner lot that had what he considered an excessive amount of hardscape. He invited Commissioners to visit his property and had pictures available, stating that each property on Escondido is unique – his is a ranch styled elongated property that could have a larger setback on the left side and minimal one on the right, adding that it would never happen that two people would put two circular driveways on Escondido.

Chair Frautschi suggested that they not close the Public Hearing so that it can be continued to a future meeting when more Commissioners are present.

Discussion ensued, with each Commissioner stating his/her position on the proposed zone text amendment.

Chair Frautschi:

- Confirmed that a permit will be required for all circular driveways, and suggested that the permitting process should involve a site visit by staff.
- Parking pads, whether in public right-of-way or not, have to be considered as hardscape.
- He would prefer that the hardscape figure be reduced to about 35%.
- 60' and 70' frontage lots should be pulled or crossed out so that it is clear that they are not included.
- It might be clearer if it referred to single and duplex residences rather than two-family residences.
- Perhaps ramps should be mentioned, and he questioned if the 42" width is compliant.
- The comma after the word "area" in first sentence of Section 2.94 needs to be removed.
- Agreed with Mr. Rinaldi that designs that staff come up will look static and they are basically interested only in the dimensions; design would be part of staff's review.
- Mr. Marzelli's comment about the survey requirement needs to be clarified with the Building Division.

Chair Frautschi summarized the other Commissioners' comments as follows:

Commissioner Horton:

- The semi-circular driveway would not count as a parking space.
- Require a landscape plan in a half circle, possibly a tree.
- Should not be used for storage of recreational vehicles.
- Slope is an important issue
- Hardscape for heavy traffic locations, and make the determination as to whether the variance process can handle that.

Commissioner Parsons:

- With 40% hardscape there should be a whole landscape plan involved.
- 37' curb cut is excessive; 27 maximum is a more realistic number.
- Corner lots should not be allowed to have circular driveways spanning from one side to the other.
- Concurred with Commissioner Horton regarding parking satisfaction and storage of boats and campers.
- Circular driveways should not be permitted on properties with over a 10% minimum grade.

Commissioner Mayer:

- Wants a complete landscape plan.
- Slope issue is important, and excavation should be limited.
- Parking not a concern for him; it could be handled by the Commission having a requirement that the circular part of the driveway must remain unobstructed at all times.
- Concurred with Commissioner Parsons regarding corner lots.
- Asked if there is any instance where this would require a Design Review other than a Variance. CDD de Melo stated only if it meets the Design Review threshold; i.e., damage to a protected tree or the amount of grading.

Commissioner Parsons added that circular driveways should not be used for any type of storage structure.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to continue the recommended zone text amendments to a date uncertain. Motion passed 4/0/3 with Commissioners Mercer and Mathewson and Vice Chair Reed absent.

6. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES:

CDD de Melo reported as follows:

6A. Ralston/US-101 Landscape Project

No new report at this time.

6B. San Mateo Development – North Road/43rd Avenue

Staff met with owners and operators of Planet Granite to review moving the dumpsters off the street. It will be a challenge as the area where it needs to go has a slope and will need a retaining wall. Plans are being prepared with an engineer and architect. Code enforcement letters have been sent to two properties on the north side of North Road.

6C. Parking Study – Downtown Village Areas

No new report at this time.

6D. Emmett House

He met at the site with Commissioner Parsons the day previous to the meeting. He and Commissioner Horton have made some edits to the landscape plan but all the trees are going to remain on the site. Interior is looking nice and perimeter fence is nearly finished.

6E. US-101 Pedestrian/Bike Bridge Project

Commissioner Mayer asked about the detour signs going up. CDD de Melo did not have all the details but there definitely will be lane closures.

6F. High-Speed Rail (HSR)

Council updates available every two weeks. Draft letter on funding will be brought to Council. There has been some discussion about installing story poles but there are liability concerns. Ad Hoc Committee is just about formed – the plan is to submit applications to Council for confirmation at its 11/9 meeting.

Reminders:

Next Tuesday, 10/26, Council will be hearing the NDNU/Koret field appeal.

Regular meeting of November 2 meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 1 due to the election. Packets will be available to be picked up a day earlier than usual – Wednesday, October 27th.

Chair Frautschi asked that CDD de Melo let Park and Rec know that the tree across from the handicap zone in the City Hall parking lot is dead.

7. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2010

Liaison: Commissioner Mayer
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Parsons

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Monday, November 1, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

Carlos de Melo
Planning Commission Secretary

*CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the
Community Development Department.
Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.*

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