

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 25, 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, Natasha Chalmers, Daniel Kunstler
Jeffrey Swisher, Brock Wagstaff

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

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The General Plan Steering Committee held two meetings focusing on the Circulation Element. The committee is working on updates and other issues that need to be addressed including reduction of vehicle miles travelled as a goal of the City, alternative transportation modes, enhancement of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the development of a Compete Streets Program. They are getting close to wrapping things up and then plan to start work on the Land Use Element. Staff is getting ready to release a Draft General Plan for public review by October.
- COVID-19 remains a challenge and the City continues to work with a reduction in staff due to retirements and furloughs.
- Permitting activity continues to be robust with an increase in Resale Inspections. Staff is also receiving a number of complaints about work being done without permits. Stop work orders are being issued. Assistant Planner Matthews has been taking on more tasks to support the permit process.
- He will be scheduling a Public Workshop with the Commission on the issue of Objective Development Design Standards. The County has taken the lead on developing a "tool box" and a design program that would allow cities to follow an objective, and not discretionary, process when approving mixed-use housing projects. There are opportunities to create standards that would encourage designs that might be more appealing to the community.

Commissioner Kunstler stated the retaining wall along the side of City Hall is being repaired. Planning Director Toft stated the new wall is a huge improvement over what was there.

Planning Director Toft left the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. **DR/FAR/HT #20-18, 75 Via Hermosa, Greenbrae (APN: 070-241-37); Kenneth Holder, Architect, Applicant; Greg and Casey Fulford, Owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicant is requesting the following permits to construct three (3) separate additions totaling roughly 769 square feet to an existing two-story 2,300 square foot home on a 9,017 square foot parcel: 1) Design Review (DR); 2) Floor Area Ratio Exception (FAR) to allow a FAR of 0.34 where a maximum of 0.26 FAR is allowed due to the slope of the lot; 3) Heritage Tree Removal Permit to remove a Lombardi Poplar with a circumference of 56 inches.**

Assistant Planner Matthews presented the staff report

Commissioner Kunstler asked if staff's reference to the "westerly exterior wall of the addition" was the master bedroom. Assistant Planner Matthews stated "yes". Commissioner Kunstler asked if the placement of the addition is so far to the west of the property that it enhances the distance to the easterly wall. Assistant Planner Matthews referred to Sheet A1.1 and stated the rear addition is stepped back from the existing wall and the neighbor to the west.

Chair Tauber opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Kenneth Holder, architect, made the following comments:

- This is a modest addition to an existing property.
- The owners were trying to be careful about impacting the existing fabric of the neighborhood.
- The house did not have a true master suite.
- The willingness to stay single story in relation to the back yard is a tremendous benefit.
- They decided they needed more living space off of the public area which led to the small addition of a den on the easterly property line.
- These are small structures that are barely visible from off-site.
- The plan is to remove the existing pool and return as much of the site to more of a natural landscape.
- Due to Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) guidelines, the decision was made to use artificial turf. It is permeable
- Rather than adding a second story they agreed to extend the lower level into the crawlspace.
- A new bedroom is being formed by taking out some of the crawlspace and adding a small secondary entry. This could be used as an au pair unit or an attached dwelling unit.
- The master suite is straight-forward.
- The focus of the house is the connection to the yard.
- He discussed the landscape plan and stated it was coordinated with the Fire Department.
- The Vegetation Management Plan reduces fire risk and bio-mass.
- They are replacing windows and doors throughout with a plan to capture the views.
- There will be no change to privacy for the side yard neighbors.
- The feedback from the downhill neighbors was positive and supportive.

Commissioner Kunstler referred to the downstairs addition (bedroom/media room) and asked Mr. Holder if the wall was a full height wall. Mr. Holder stated it varies from four feet down to twelve inches. It is a very small wall. Commissioner Kunstler asked if there was any other natural light going into that space. Mr. Holder stated "no", they chose to make that dependent on the door. They wanted to minimize the height of that wall. Commissioner Kunstler asked if they thought about using this space as a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). Mr. Holder stated "no" but he would defer to the owner.

Mr. Greg Fulford, owner, made the following comments:

- They are flexible in terms of the use of the downstairs addition. It could be a media room or a private room for relatives to use. Commissioner Wagstaff noted an ADU would need to have a kitchen of some sort.
- He would not want to put in an additional kitchen because the room is small.
- They wanted to keep the expansion in line with the neighborhood.

Chair Tauber closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Swisher provided the following comments:

- This is a great design.
- He likes the way the space is used.

- He likes the exterior of the house a lot.
- He supported the project and could make the findings.

Commissioner Wagstaff provided the following comments:

- They will probably want a door into the master bedroom closet at some point.
- They did a nice job on the house.
- He supports the FAR Exception.
- He could approve the project.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- This project is non-controversial.
- The design is compliant with the Design Review Guidelines.
- The exterior treatment is very attractive.
- There is a thoughtful use of the space.
- He supported the removal of the non-native tree.
- He could make the findings to approve the project.

Commissioner Chalmers provided the following comments:

- She agreed with the other Commissioners.
- The overall design is compatible with the neighborhood.
- She really likes the design.
- The additions are modest and will not be visible from the street.
- She could make the findings for removal of the tree.
- She supported the project.

Chair Tauber provided the following comments:

- She likes the design.
- The impact to the neighbors will be minimal.
- She could make the findings to approve the project.

M/s, Swisher/Kunstler, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR/FAR/HT #20-18, 75 Via Hermosa, Greenbrae, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of the August 11, 2020 draft meeting minutes

M/s, Kunstler/Wagstaff, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes from the meeting of August 11, 2020 meeting as submitted.

2. Planning Commissioners Reports

There were no reports.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 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 September 8, 2020.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristin Teiche".

Kristin Teiche, Senior Planner