

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 28, 2018

The Larkspur Planning Commission was convened at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers by Chair Deignan.

Commissioners Present: Chair Monte Deignan, Daniel Kunstler, Laura Tauber, Ignatius Tsang, Todd Ziesing

Staff Present: Senior Planner Kristin Teiche
Assistant Planner Nicholas Armour

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There was no report.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS

- 1. SIGN/V #18-15: 2020-2060 Redwood Highway (APN: 021-261-22/23); Cynthia Reese-Mckersie, applicant; Larkspur Real Estate partners/Blum Properties, property owners; R-1 (Single Family Residential) Zoning District. Applicants are seeking approval of the following permits to allow demolition of existing business center sign and construction of new business center monument sign at the Cost Plus Plaza: 1) Sign Review; 2) Variance to sign standards to allow a new business center monument sign 20-feet in height and a total of 95 square feet of sign area, where 10-feet in height and 50 square feet of sign area are the maximum permitted by L.M.C. Chapter 18.60**

Chair Deignan asked if anyone would like to comment on this item. There was no response.

On the Consent Calendar, M/s, Tauber/Kunstler, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve SIGN/V, #18-15, 2020-2060 Redwood Highway, based on the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

Chair Deignan stated there was a 10-day appeal period.

- 2. DR/FAR #18-26: 70 Francis Avenue; (APN 020-061-02); Todd and Katherine Taber, applicants and property owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicants are requesting the following permits to allow construction of a new one-story addition to an existing single-family residence: 1) Design Review; and 2) Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Exception to allow a total of 1,862 square feet and an FAR of 0.31, where 1,394 square feet and an FAR of 0.23 is the maximum allowed by code due to the slope of the lot.**

Chair Deignan opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Todd Taber, owner, made the following comments:

- They are excited about the plan- it is a fun, innovative design.
- They tried to be respectful of the neighbors.
- They met with the neighbors and have five letters of support.
- The addition is meant to be integrated.

- Commissioner Kunstler asked about the drainage off of the addition's flat roof. Mr. Taber stated there are drains that run down and tie into the drainage basin. There will be an exhaust in the front of the yard. There is a French drain that goes along the side of the house.

Chair Deignan closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She agreed with the staff- she could make the findings for Design Review.
- It is a small house.
- This is an innovative solution.
- She could make the Floor Area Ration (FAR) Exception findings.

Commissioner Ziesing provided the following comments:

- She agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Tauber.
- This is a challenging lot- a funky shape with not a lot of space.
- The lot is also impacted by the grade.
- This is an innovative design and he could make the Design Review findings.
- The design would be a nice compliment to the neighborhood.
- He could support the removal of the trees.
- He could make the FAR findings.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He is supportive of the project.
- It is an innovative design and the approach works nicely.
- This is a modest project on a small lot.
- He supports the application.

Commissioner Tsang provided the following comments:

- The architecture is interesting.
- He referred to the layout and wondered why they kept the kitchen upstairs.
- He supports the project.

Chair Deignan provided the following comments:

- He has no issues with the application.
- The FAR is modest in an area with a wide range of houses.
- The proposal is well-shielded from view.
- The neighbors are not concerned.
- The project would be a reasonable fit.
- He could make the findings for Design Review and the FAR Exception.
- He could support the project.

M/s, Kunstler/Tsang, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR/FAR #18-26, 70 Frances Avenue, based on the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

Chair Deignan stated there was a 10-day appeal.

3. **DR/FHE: #18-04: 422 Alexander Avenue (APN: 021-233-06); Polsky Perlstein Architects, Applicants: George Persky, Property Owner; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Applicant is requesting the following permits to allow construction of an approximately 1,500 sq. ft. two story addition at the northwesterly rear corner of an existing single story, single family residence, and to legalize an existing shrub row fence and driveway entry arbor that exceed the 42 inch height limit for fences in front yards: 1) Design Review; 2) Fence Height Exception Permit.**

Senior Planner Teiche presented the staff report.

Commissioner Tauber asked if the applicants cut back on the Privet hedges for the two driveways. Senior Planner Teiche stated it was shown on the site plan. The Public Works Department was satisfied that this would improve site lines.

Commissioner Kunstler referred to the Tree Ordinance and asked if it deals with a Heritage tree being threatened over a long period of time. Senior Planner Teiche stated this was addressed through Design Review. She noted there was only a one foot setback to the roof eave on one of the trees. Commissioner Kunstler asked if there was an ordinance that addressed this. Senior Planner Teiche stated the Design Guidelines require that new additions keep out of the drip line

Commissioner Kunstler referred to page 5 of the staff report which discussed the light invasion from vehicles coming up Taylor and asked if this would be a problem. Senior Planner Teiche stated the light from vehicle headlights tends to spread but there would probably be some light spillage into the home.

Chair Deignan opened the Public Hearing.

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

- The existing house presents as a simple Mission style home with an out of character box-like addition at the back.
- It is a relatively small house on a large site.
- The owners want a real family home with an appropriately scaled family room, a breakfast area, a reasonable master suite, a guest bedroom, and three bedrooms for the kids.
- The arborist suggested a pier and grade beam foundation because it would span over the Redwood tree roots and not overly interfere with the trees. He reviewed the initial drawings and recommended they give it a bit more space for the tree. They cut the eaves back to give the tree room to grow.
- They wanted to create simple gable forms clad in beige stucco with clay tile roofs.
- The siting of the additions keeps the mass away from the neighbor to the east. It should not impact her privacy.
- The neighbors to the west and northeast will not be impacted due to the distance.
- The additions are located at the rear of the house.
- It is not uncommon for the Mission style homes to have asymmetric massing.
- They are not asking for any variances, are four feet below the height limit, 300 feet under the FAR, 1,100 square feet under the allowable lot coverage, and the proposed additions are well outside any setbacks.
- The proposal is in keeping with the neighborhood and will be a welcome addition.

Commissioner Ziesing asked about the height of the hedge at 426 Alexander. Mr. Polsky stated he did not know.

Mr. George Persky, owner, made the following comments:

- They have three children. The existing house has only three bedrooms.

- They have elderly relatives who may share the home with them some day.
- They need to expand the size of the house.
- They resubmitted the roof eaves in May as a result of the arborist's report.

Mr. Whitney Potter made the following comments:

- He read a letter from the owners of 21 Bayview Avenue.
- They are concerned about the significant impact of the proposed two-story addition. It would impact their views and privacy.
- The second floor of their home contains the kitchen, living room, dining room and two bedrooms- it is where they spend about 80% of their time.
- The expansion towards the west will aggravate the existing poor drainage situation.
- They are asking the applicants to shift a portion of the second story addition from the north to the south side of the home.
- They are asking for the following conditions of approval; 1) Necessary changes to the landscaping for screening and privacy on their side of the shared fence line at the applicants cost; 2) Access to the drainage pipe on the applicant's property that currently empties onto Alexander to mitigate the dam effect; 3) An agreement that any exterior lighting on the second story would be downward facing and not kept on past a reasonable hour.

Chair Deignan closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Tsang provided the following comments:

- The application meets all the criteria but the end result seems like "coloring by numbers".
- As a whole it does not look like something that fits into the site.
- The existing single story is very foreign with the new addition.
- He does not get a sense that this is one integral house.
- There is no transition between the single story and the second story.
- He is not concerned about the Fence Height Variance.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He is troubled by the front view of the house.
- The overall style is generally compatible with the neighborhood.
- He is bothered by the massing effect on the other sides of the home- it makes the structure look institutional.
- He is disturbed by the overall effect of the house on the property.
- He is loath to discount the impact on 21 Bayview.
- He is a bit bothered by the Fence Height Exception. The Commission does not support fences that make a property look like a compound. This could be somewhat alleviated by shortening the length of the hedgerow. He would like to see something lower.
- He finds the application problematic.

Commissioner Ziesing provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by the other two Commissioners.
- The proposal "checks all the boxes" in terms of FAR, lot coverage, allowable height- but not in the best way.
- The thing that troubles him the most is the trees. There is enough room on the property to orient the addition differently to allow the trees to have more space.
- A nicer design would be to shift the addition in such a way that it is more contiguous with the house and look more uniform.
- He is uncomfortable with the shear massing effect that the rear neighbor would feel.
- He can not support the Fence Height Exception. They ordinance discourages fences or hedges that would create a "Beverly Hills" effect. He wants an open neighborhood.

- There is a lot of room for improvement. It is a really cute house.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Ziesing.
- She has an issue with the scale of the addition relative to everything else that is going on with the property.
- She is concerned about the proximity of the trees.
- Maybe the addition is too big- it could be pulled back, lowered, etc.
- The City has a policy that discourages fencing off the view of homes from the street. She noted the hedgerow was on City property.
- She could not support the application as presented.

Chair Deignan provided the following comments:

- The Mission style can have box elements off to the side- there is some historical precedence.
- The addition is tucked into the trees and might be less conspicuous.
- The addition could be better integrated.
- The proposal is below the height and FAR limits.
- He might be able to live with the proposal but the other Commissioners did bring up some valid points.
- He agreed with the comments about the hedgerow- it should not create a “compound” look.

He asked staff if the application could be continued. Senior Planner Teiche stated the applicant has already agreed to a 90-day extension of processing time. It would be worth continuing the application if the Commission was looking at just minor modifications.

The Planning Commission discussed whether to continue or deny the application. Given the comments of the Commission, Chair Deignan suggested that a denial without prejudice would allow the applicants modify the project to address the Commission’s comments. Otherwise they could appeal the matter to the City Council. Chairman Deignan asked the applicants if they would prefer the Commission to continue the project or deny the project without prejudice.

Mr. Jared Polsky, architect, indicated they would prefer a denial.

M/s, Tsang/Tauber, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to deny without prejudice DR/FHE #18-04, 422 Alexander Avenue based on the Commission’s concern about massing, composition, and the integration of the existing building with the proposed addition.

Chair Deignan stated there was a 10-day appeal period.

Senior Planner Teiche noted that staff will return with findings and the 10-day appeal period will apply after the findings are adopted.

- 4. DR #18-34: 2801 Larkspur Landing Circle; Bldg. A (APN 018-191-01); Mr. Kenneth Holder, Holder Design on Behalf of “Design Within Reach”, applicant; Marin Country Mart LLC; property owners; PD (Planned Development) Zoning District. The applicant is requesting design review approval of exterior remodeling of 2801 Larkspur Landing Circle (Building A) located in the Marin Country Mart Shopping Center (previously Asher Clinic). Exterior improvements include adding a horizontal cedar louvered screening around the exterior of the structure, replacing existing windows and doors, new exterior paint, an enclosed outdoor patio on the northwest corner of the building, removal of the existing landscape island and restriping of the parking spaces.**

Senior Planner Teiche presented the staff report.

Commissioner Ziesing referred to staff's concern about the closeness to the parking spots and asked if the parking spots could be shifted out and a painted area for a walkway could be created. Senior Planner Teiche stated there was not enough room. Commissioner Tsang stated installing concrete wheel stoppers would help. Senior Planner Teiche stated they have a tendency to become a trip hazard.

Chair Deignan opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Leif Saag, DFA Architects, made the following comments:

- When he saw the building he wanted to "bring it back" to the stronger days of architecture. This included adding screens to the outside of the building.
- He wanted to give the building a simplicity and elegance that would catch the eye.
- The proposal uses cedar to keep it natural.
- They worked closely with Mr. Rosenfield, the landlord. He is very supportive of the design.
- The proposal includes outdoor space to create a sense of a courtyard/garden.
- The proposal includes the use of steel for the planters that will eventually have an orange/rusty color. They plan to use indigenous plants and vines.
- They are thinking about redoing the landscaping on the other side of the building.
- They want the building to feel like a beautiful home.
- The previous tenant installed a drop ceiling- they plan to remove it and install double height ceilings.
- They are adding skylight windows to bring in more natural light.

Commissioner Tsang noted the screens come all the way down to the ground and he asked if they thought about setting a base with the planters to create an integrated design. Mr. Saag stated the original design was exactly as explained by Commissioner Tsang with the planter areas cut out in the concrete and the plants just coming out from the concrete. They decided not to go in that direction because the business owners insisted on using these planters and the scale was more like a courtyard/patio. In addition, they had to value engineer out a large percentage of the concrete and what was originally a concrete sidewalk is now wood.

Commissioner Tsang asked if they had thought about using solar panels on the southwest elevation. Mr. Saag stated that was a discussion they could have with the landlord.

Chair Deignan closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Ziesing provided the following comments:

- This was a pleasant application to review.
- He understands what they want to do and thought it would be very compatible with the existing area.
- He likes the way they have incorporated a living feel to a commercial building.
- He has concerns about the parking but it was up to the applicant and the landlord to work out.
- He can approve the Design Review and Sign application as presented.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comments:

- He agreed with the comments made by Commission Ziesing.
- This is a substantial enhancement of an existing situation.
- The design is innovative and more magnetic than what currently exists.
- He agreed with the concerns about the parking abutting the louvers.
- He can support the application.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She really likes the design- it is very attractive and speaks to what is in the building (modern and contemporary).
- The outdoor space is a clever solution to what currently exists.
- She supports the application.

Commissioner Tsang provided the following comment:

- He loves the simplicity of the design- it is beautiful.

Chair Deignan provided the following comments:

- The design is not inconsistent with the Marin County Mart- it is a good fit.
- The parking situation is up to the applicant and the landlord to work out.
- He can make the findings for approval.

M/s, Ziesing/Tauber, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR #18-34, 2801 Larkspur Landing Circle, Building A, based on the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

Chair Deignan stated there was a 10-day appeal.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Commissioners Reports

There were no reports.

2. Approval of minutes of Planning Commission meeting on August 14, 2018

M/s, Tauber/Tsang, motioned and the Commission voted 4-0-1 (Chair Deignan abstained) to approve the minutes from the August 14, 2018 meeting as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 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 11, 2018.



Neal Toft, Planning Director