

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 11, 2020

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

Commissioners Present: Chair Todd Ziesing, Daniel Kunstler, Ignatius Tsang,
Laura Tauber, Brock Wagstaff

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft
Planning Consultant Lorraine Weiss

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The Bon Air Bridge Rehabilitation Project is on target with traffic moving to the north side (the new span). The south side is now being demolished. Regulations limit work in the water for the next six months.
- Staff has hired Aaron Matthews to the Assistant Planner position. Aaron is very talented and comes with a strong educational background in urban planning and design, but is fairly new to local planning agency work. He is being trained up and should be presenting projects to the Planning Commission soon.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

- 1. DR/SUP #19-39; 80 Corte Baristo (APN: 070-362-21); Pacific Design Group, Applicant; Gavin and Christina Charlston, Owners; R-1 (First Residential) Zoning District. Request for the following permits to allow remodeling, a 157 square-foot addition within the unimproved lower level of the existing 3,212 square foot single family residence resulting in a 3,338 square foot home on an 8,885 square foot parcel, and new retaining walls and site work in the rear yard: 1) Design Review; 2) Slope Use Permit (SUP) to allow excavation totaling 114 cubic yards, reuse of 75 cubic yards on site as fill, and off haul of 39 cubic yards on an 8,885 square foot parcel with an average grade of 32%.**

Planning Consultant Weiss presented the staff report.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if the Fire Marshal's recommendation to remove some pyrophitic trees was a requirement. Planning Consultant Weiss stated "yes, it is a Condition of Approval".

Commissioner Tsang stated the additional square footage is in the basement and will not be visible. He was worried about privacy issues on the second floor and that the new windows on the west side would be looking down into the neighbor's property. Planning Consultant Weiss stated she walked the site and she did not think there would be any impacts. The adjacent neighbor has not expressed concerns.

Chair Ziesing opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Ed Blankenship, architect with Pacific Design, made the following comments:

- The home was built in the 1960's and has not been updated in a while.

- The family is expanding and needs more space. The owners were concerned about the size of the bedrooms, that the family room is disconnected from the kitchen, and that the two bathrooms have to work as a powder room.
- This is a split-level home with a lot of land underneath.
- He developed an access path that works its way from the main entry down to a lower level that has an existing room/office and garage. They converted a hallway that works its way down to access the lower southwest corner of the home. He was able to place two bedrooms and a bathroom in this area.
- The earthwork that is required would allow for the development of a small, level backyard.
- Placing two bedrooms on the lower level allows for an expansion of the master bedroom.
- The windows on the west side will bring light into the master bedroom, closet, and master bath.
- The proposed powder room is a small space in the garage.
- The new deck is in the same location.
- He discussed the retaining walls in the side and rear yard setbacks.
- They are minimizing the heights as much as possible.

Commissioner Tsang asked if the new storage room next to the two bathrooms was accessible to the patio. Mr. Blankenship stated it was accessible by an access door. He discussed the grade level and retaining walls.

Chair Ziesing closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Wagstaff provided the following comment:

- This is a good solution.

Commissioner Kunstler provided the following comment:

- There is nothing objectionable about the application

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comment:

- This is a nice solution and a well thought-out plan.

Commissioner Tsang provided the following comment:

- His concern about the windows has been eliminated by the architect's comments.

Chair Ziesing provided the following comments:

- He loves the fact that this is a modest plan that takes some disorder in an older house and "re-orders" it to make it workable.
- He likes the way the cut will be used for fill.
- He has no problem with the 33% lot coverage.
- He supports the application.

M/s, Tauber/Kunstler, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to approve DR/SUP #19-39, 80 Corte Baristo, subject to the findings and conditions set forth in the staff report.

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

BUSINESS ITEMS

1 Election of Officers for 2020 (Chair, Vice Chair and Chair Pro-Tempore)

M/s, Tsang/Kunstler, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Commissioner Tauber as Chair.

M/s, Ziesing/Tauber, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Commissioner Tsang as Vice Chair

M/s, Ziesing/Tsang, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Commissioner Wagstaff as Chair Pro-Tempore.

2. Annual Progress Report on the General Plan and Housing Element for Calendar Year 2019

Planning Director Toft presented a staff report.

Chair Ziesing referred to the remediation of the Sanitary District property and if there have been comments or complaints about the truck traffic. Planning Director Toft stated “no”. Chair Ziesing asked when the property would be ready to be developed. Planning Director Toft stated the remediation would be completed by next summer or fall. There is a lot of interest in doing something that “moves pieces around in the site”.

Commissioner Wagstaff asked if the City tries to identify areas that would allow for denser housing. Planning Director Toft stated “yes”. A major part of the next Housing Element update will include identifying housing opportunity sites.

M/s, Ziesing/Tsang, motioned and the Commission voted 5-0 to accept the Annual Progress Report on the General Plan and Housing Element for Calendar Year 2019.

3. Overview of Objective Design and Development Standards (ODDS) Project.

Planning Director Toft presented a staff report and handed out some informational materials. He discussed the collaborative effort being undertaken in the County with the assistance of a State grant for developing these standards, developing an ADU Workbook, and looking at inclusionary housing fees.

Chair Ziesing asked how the legislation handles Cities that are trying to attain certain goals but are built-out. Planning Director Toft stated there are two things they need to pay attention to: 1) Future legislation, and 2) The next Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) cycle. Prior numbers were fairly manageable but the expectation is that the numbers will double. The State is working through ABAG and MTC on developing numbers that marry jobs and housing with transportation.

Commissioner Kunstler asked to what extent does existing development around transportation hubs enter into the equation. Planning Director Toft stated existing conditions do come into play and past performance creates an expectation. Chair Ziesing stated it was not “thoughtful” to disregard already achieved density.

Commissioner Kunstler asked if the recent legislation invites speculation which could defeat the purpose of encouraging more moderate income housing. Planning Director Toft stated this is an area where local jurisdictions need to be strategic. This could be a part of an objective design standard that encourages compact units that are more affordable by design.

Commissioner Tauber stated part of the problem was the cost of construction. Planning Director Toft agreed. Commissioner Tauber stated this makes it unattractive to build anything other than high priced units. There were a limited number of parcels that allow for what staff was describing. Planning Director Toft stated the Housing Element update would include an analysis of sites and

what the market will bear. Commissioner Tauber stated she understood the idea behind objective standards but worried about it becoming very “cookie-cutter” and that it would only apply to the larger, special projects that require creativity to make them work. There needs to be some flexibility to achieve goals. Planning Director Toft stated he did not disagree.

Chair Ziesing stated the goal was to create more housing but they were applying one set of goals uniformly across different communities- this does not respect what is already there.

Chair Ziesing asked if local architects, etc. could provide some input in the County’s collaborative effort. Planning Director Toft stated he was forming a technical advisory committee and will hold some workshops with the Commission. This could be a year-long process. Chair Ziesing stated he would like the citizen input to come “sooner than later”.

Commissioners Wagstaff and Tsang agreed to serve on the advisory committee for the project.

4. Approval of the December 10, 2019 draft meeting minutes

M/s, Kunstler/Wagstaff, motioned and the Commission voted 4-0-1 (Tauber abstained) to approve the December 10, 2019 minutes as submitted.

5. Planning Commissioners’ Reports

Commissioner Tsang asked about the status of the 5G small cell wireless deployment. Planning Director Toft stated the Council adopted a resolution requiring standards for development, etc. The City has not received any applications from any telecommunications company. Chair Ziesing asked staff to keep the Commission posted.

Commissioner Kunstler stated the recently installed “No right hand turn” signal opposite the entrance to the Ferry Terminal was on the far side of a very wide boulevard. Chair Ziesing agreed- it should be in the middle of the road near the barrier. Planning Director Toft stated the Public Works Department Website has a “citizen request” section.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 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 February 25, 2020.



Kristin Teiche, Senior Planner