



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, April 1, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M.

VIA ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Hill called the Regular Design Review Board meeting on Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 6:38 p.m. The meeting was conducted remotely by video conference pursuant to the Executive Order N-29-20 issued by Governor Newsom. The Council Chambers, located at 1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, California, were closed. Members of the public attended the meeting via ZOOM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Joe Carlson, Board Member
Mark Smeaton, Board Member
Melissa Hon Tsai, Vice-Chair
Samantha Hill, Chair

ABSENT:

Kay Younger, Board Member

COUNCIL LIAISON

PRESENT:

Diana Mahmud, Mayor, Council Liaison

STAFF

PRESENT:

Kanika Kith, Planning Manager
Malinda Lim, Associate Planner
Lisa Krause, Contract Planner
Veronica Ortiz-De Anda, Contract Planner

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Majority vote of the Board to proceed with Board business.

There were no changes requested and the Agenda was approved as submitted.

DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS

Disclosure by Board of site visits and ex-parte contact for items on the agenda.

Vice-Chair Tsai said she lives within the vicinity of the Orange Grove Place project so she will recuse herself from the discussion of that project.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment – General (Non-Agenda Items)

None.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Housing Accountability Act

Associate Planner Lim introduced the prerecorded presentation. She stated that it was originally presented at a City Council meeting and had been recently seen by the Planning Commission and Cultural Heritage Commission.

Assistant City Attorney Aleks Giragosian made the presentation.

Chair Hill asked if the Board Members could ask questions or if the presentation was only informational.

Associate Planner Lim stated that the presentation was informational but that the Board can provide comments and questions and staff would send them to the Planning and Building Director, Joanna Hankamer and to the City Attorney.

Planning Manager Kith added that questions, in addition to comments, were welcome and that if the Board could email them to staff who will forward them to the City Attorney.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Project No. 2343-SGN (Continued) – Sign Permit for an existing grocery store, Pavilions Grocery Store, located at 1213 Fair Oaks Avenue.

Recommendation:

Approve, subject to conditions of approval.

Presentation:

Board Member Smeaton recused himself since his office was within 1,000 feet of the project site.

Chair Hill asked Associate Planner Lim that if Pavilions wanted to continue this to a future meeting or if the Board should still discuss the item tonight.

Associate Planner Lim said that it was up to the Board if they wanted to hear the staff report this evening. She added that the Board could vote to continue the item to the next Design Review Board Meeting in May.

Chair Hill asked if the applicant was present this evening.

Associate Planner Lim stated that the applicant was not present.

Planning Manager Kith stated that since the applicant was not available this evening, Staff recommends that the Board continue the item to the May DRB meeting. She added that this way the applicant could be available to hear the Board discussion.

Chair Hill said that her recommendation would be to continue the item to the next meeting. She then ask Vice-Chair Tsai what her opinion was about discussing the item now or continuing the item.

Vice-Chair Tsai stated she was fine with continuing the item to the next meeting.

Planning Manager Kith asked Chair Hill to take a vote to continue this item so that staff does not have to re-notice the project.

Chair Hill asked for vote from the Board to continue the item to the next Design Review Board Meeting.

Action:

Chair Hill called for a vote by taking roll call to continue the item to the next Design Review Board Meeting. The Board voted 3-0, to continue the project to the May 6, 2021 Meeting.

3. **Project No. 2379–NID/DRX/TRP – Notice of Intent to Demolish a single-story home and detached garage, Design Review for a new 3,467 sq. ft. two-story residence with an attached garage, and Tree Removal Permit for three non-native trees, located at 822 Orange Grove Place.**

Recommendation:

Form a subcommittee and continue the item to the next meeting.

Presentation:

Vice-Chair Tsai recused herself as she lives within 1,000 feet of subject property.

Board Member Smeaton rejoined the meeting.

Contract Planner Krause presented the staff report.

Board Member Smeaton stated he had issues with this house and that Ms. Krause's list of "fix-it" items for the property are a good starting point.

Chair Hill asked staff for clarification about the setback at the second story.

Contract Planner Krause stated that the standard for the second story setback is 3-feet from the first story.

Planning Manger Kith addressed Chair Hill and reminded her of a project on Bank Street which the Board had recently reviewed. She said that there was a similar concern that they did not step back the second story edition and just had a vertical straight wall.

Public Comments:

With no requests to speak, the public comment portion of the hearing was closed.

Applicant Presentation:

Chair Hill asked if the applicant was on the line and if she had a presentation.

Contract Planner Krause said that homeowner/architect/landscape designer Katie Chiu was on the line and played the applicant's presentation.

Board Member Smeaton asked the applicant about rafter tails. He stated she mentioned them in her presentation but he did not see them in the presentation.

Ms. Chiu said the rafters were dark brown so they meld into the rendering.

Board Member Carlson asked Ms. Chiu about the entryway. He said the Planning Commission made a comment about the scale of the entryway and that it seemed a little understated and lost in the front of the house. He commented that he wondered if there was a way to give the entryway a little more presence.

Ms. Chiu said she could definitely work on revising the entryway.

Chair Hill mentioned that the eaves of the roof seemed very short, especially from the side, and that adding depth would add a nicer shadow line. She also stated that she agreed with Board Member Smeaton and did not understand the corbel's relationship to the other details and Craftsman style and asked the applicant to expand on the reasons behind the design.

Ms. Chiu addressed Chair Hill's first concern about the roof's short eaves and said she could revise it. She asked Chair Hill which corbel was she referring to—was it the concave roof on the second floor patio area.

Chair Hill asked the applicant for confirmation that what she was stating was that because she had already set the house back seven feet she did not set the second story back the required additional three feet to accentuate a variation of the massing but just continued the wall.

Ms. Chiu said that if the Board did not think it was appropriate, she could add a porch and put the air conditioner and trash bins there and there would be a cover up so there would not be a big flash wall in that area. She stated this could be an option for her to consider.

Board Member Discussion:

Board Member Smeaton stated when comparing the street elevation of the massing compared to the two adjoining homes, it feels very overbuilt whether by right or not. He summarized by stating the design would need to be reworked and he would not approve the project in the current condition.

Board Member Carlson stated he played with the design in Photoshop and squished the design down by 20% that made it lower and flatter and then reduced the front roof portion dramatically since the roof currently looked massive. He said that he was speaking to scale and if the building was a little flatter and wider and the front section was taller with less roof, more windows and a little bigger entryway, it would make a big difference.

Chair Hill commented that the overall massing does not fit with the style of the home and the Craftsman and East Asian elements. She noted that staff had suggested the Board form a subcommittee and then continue the item for further development. She stated they would probably continue the project since it the Board does not seem comfortable with the current design proposed. She added the design was massive for the lot and oversized for the neighborhood but she clarified that the actual square footage itself was not the issue. She would recommend forming a subcommittee or have the applicant continue the item and make changes or if appropriate, form a subcommittee to work with the applicant and then continue the item or just do a Chair Review. She asked Planning manager Kith for clarification of the process.

Planning Manager Kith stated that staff was not recommending approval this evening nor were they recommending approval with a subcommittee. She stated Staff is recommending forming a subcommittee to help the applicant redesign the project and continue the item to a future Design Review Board Meeting.

Chair Hill asked Board Member Smeaton and Board Member Carlson if they wanted to form a subcommittee and continue the item or just continue the item and the applicant could make changes on her own based on feedback.

Board Member Smeaton said he was not in favor of forming a subcommittee but would recommend Ms. Chiu go back and give it a whole another round before we evaluate. He added that the Ms. Chiu has heard the concerns and the Board can

see what the applicant brings back before deciding if they need to form a subcommittee to tweak the project. He stated it is not the role of the Board to design the project for the applicant.

Board Member Carlson agreed with Board Member Smeaton's opinion.

Planning Manager Kith addressed Chair Hill and asked that the Board provide some direction on the design to the applicant.

Board Member Carlson added that in terms of overall scale of the front elevation, the building feels too tall and like a big square while the style of architecture seems quite horizontal. He suggested that they could bring more of the horizontal feel to it.

Board Member Smeaton stated that he liked all of staff's recommendations. He said his additional recommendations would be to lower the roof pitch to stretch the house out a bit and make house less vertical. He noted that with Craftsman architecture, you could create an entire second floor in a roof by dropping plates down in a way that the second floor is more into the roof as opposed to all roof above the plate line. He added that rafter tails are important and that rafter tails and corbels do not mix.

Board member Carlson stated that by comparison, the east elevation is a more comfortable scale than the front of the house. He added that the amount of roof that you are seeing and the scale feels so much nicer than the front.

Chair Hill stated that she did not understand the 5-foot overhang over the garage door on the front elevation. She added that when she sees it in the renderings of the front elevation, it looks more like a perspective. Chair Hill added she was not sure how the overhang would work with the garage door since it is so prominent. She added that it looks like there is a deck on top and that it has a 5' setback. She was trying to understand the south elevation—she thought it was a perspective view.

Chair Hill recommended to the applicant relook at the entry to the garage. She stated that the garage is going to be prominent so if it is set back, the overhang looks like a bit of an afterthought. Chair Hill added that between the overhang of the garage and the lower roofline, the building is so massive and work needs to be done to fix the front.

Chair Hill asked if any Board Members wanted to make a motion to continue the project.

Board Member Smeaton made a motion to continue the project.

Planning Manager Kith interjected that perhaps Board Member Smeaton could amend his motion to continue this project to a specific date. She added that it could

be next month, May, if the applicant thinks she has enough time to turn it around, or June. She further explained that Staff would like the date to be certain so they do not need to republish it in the newspaper.

Chair Hill asked to return to the motion made earlier by Board Member Smeaton.

Motion and Action:

MOTIONED BY BOARD MEMBER SMEATON AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER CARLSON, CARRIED 3-0, to continue the project to the May 6, 2021 Meeting.

Chair Hill noted that they had already approved a motion and asked if they could close this discussion and bring Vice-Chair Tsai back into the meeting.

Planning Manager Kith brought back Vice-Chair Tsai back into the meeting.

CONSENT ITEMS

None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Incorporation of Public Arts in Development Review

Recommendation:

Discuss and provide feedback.

Discussion:

Planning Manager Kith introduced the discussion by recapping that the Design Review Board asked the staff to see if there was a way to incorporate public arts into the development review process before it comes to this Board for review and approval. She stated that if the applicant is subject to public art, they are given the option of paying an “in lieu” fee if they do not have the space to provide the public art.

Board Member Smeaton stated that the Pavilions Project had a big wall with a lot of space for art and the applicant had artwork created that was unfortunately a rendering of a Pasadena Bridge rather than a South Pasadena landmark. He commented that it was a lost opportunity and since Pavilions did not want to deal with having other artwork created, they paid the fee and moved on. Board Member Smeaton stated it was easier to pay a fee and recommended simplifying the process so that it is not so cumbersome.

Chair Hill added that now that the Design Review Board has been looking at larger projects like Pavilions, we do not want to miss an opportunity to add art. She stated that when she worked with LA City and LA County, on large projects, developers opted to provide the art and worked with some great artists.

Chair Hill stated that the 1% of total cost requirement for on-site installation of approved site-specific public artwork was very minimal and not enough to provide a great piece of art. She stated that she knew that it was part of the code and might not be easy to change. She added that LA County required a minimum amount rather than a percentage spent on art, if a project was of a certain size. She commented that this was something we could consider.

Board Member Carlson stated he agreed wholeheartedly with Chair Hill about the incorporation of the art in the beginning of the design phase and that by the time the Board was considering the mural on Pavilions it seemed like an afterthought. He added that having the artist work with the architect early on is a great idea.

Vice Chair Tsai said her thoughts mirrored what the other Board Members said about the benefit of bringing in the artist early. She commented that she worked on a project where the developer was also a designer/builder and the art element was incorporated into the structure by being hung from the building.

Planning Manager Kith suggested a joint meeting between the Design Review Board and Public Art Commission. She stated that she and staff would think about all of the comments presented today and that she would report back to this Design Review Board as well as the Public Art Commission as to next steps.

ADMINISTRATION

5. Comments from City Council Liaison

City Council Liaison, Mayor Mahmud, stated that, approximately two years ago, when the City Council approved the Public Art Ordinance, Staff had done a survey of what other cities were charging and that is how they came up with their fee. She stated that perhaps Ms. Margaret Lin could contact the three large project developments that have been approved so far: Seven Patios, the Senior Housing project behind 625 Fair Oaks, and Mission Bell and get clarity on each of their proposals for art.

City Council Liaison Mayor Mahmud told the Board that the City has to approve the Housing Element by the fall and they have to accommodate 2,000 plus housing units over the next 8 years. She added that it is highly likely that the major construction in town will occur on main thoroughfares so it certainly would be advantageous to incorporate art, as they will be very visible. She thanked the Board for bringing these issues up.

6. Comments from Board Members

None.

7. Comments from Subcommittees

None.

8. Comments from Staff

Planning Manager Kith stated that at the last City Council Meeting, the City Council made a motion to adopt the Draft Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance that had been recommended by the Planning Commission. She added it was going back to City Council on April 7 for a second reading of the Ordinance. Planning Manager Kith also stated that on April 7, City Council would be getting a presentation and recommendation for the adoption of the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

ADJOURNMENT

9. Adjourn to the regular Design Review Board meeting scheduled for May 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

There being no further matters, Chair Hill adjourned the Design Review Board meeting at 8:25 p.m.

APPROVED,



Samantha Hill, Chair – Design Review Board

10/5/23
Date