



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 13, 2020, 6:30 PM
Via Zoom Teleconference**

CALL TO ORDER

A scheduled meeting of the South Pasadena Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Braun on Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at 6:31 p.m. The meeting was held Via Zoom.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair: Janet Braun
Vice-Chair: John Lesak
Commissioners: Richard Tom, Lisa Padilla, Laura Dahl

City Staff

Present: Teresa L. Highsmith, City Attorney
Joanna Hankamer, Planning & Community Dev. Director
Kanika Kith, Planning Manager
Margaret Lin, Manager of Long-Range Planning & Economic Development
Malinda Lim, Associate Planner
Nick Pergakes, Contract Planner

Council

Present: Council Liaison: Diana Mahmud, Mayor Pro Tem

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Tom made a motion to adopt the agenda as submitted by staff
Vice Chair Lesak seconded the motion

Motion carried, 5-0

DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS

Commissioners Dahl, Tom, and Padilla drove by the sites. Vice Chair Lesak received an email against the Meridian project and two emails in support of item 3. Chair Braun drove by both sites and was added on emails sent to the Planning

Department.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. **804 Valley View Road, Project No. 2298-DRX/HDP/TRP - A Design Review and Hillside Development Permit for a New Single-Family Residence on a Hillside Lot and Tree Removal Permit Located at 804 Valley View Road (APN 5310-020-029) (Continued).**

Staff Presentation:

Contract Planner Pergakes presented the project. Staff found that the project will not create any potentially significant environmental impacts.

Recommendation:

Approve the Hillside Development Permit and Tree removal Permit for the project and approve the addendum to the 2017 Negative Declaration.

Questions for Staff:

Chair Braun clarified that 8 trees would be kept.

Commissioner Dahl asked what the preferred traffic route would be. Staff received public comments asking to avoid Meridian and whether project is accessible from the Valley View. Commissioner Dahl asked if this was a superior route. Staff clarified that Public Works Dept. staff found this route would have the least impact on traffic.

Commissioner Padilla asked if the drawings were the last updated version. Staff clarified that everything was the same except the tree report, but none of the design changed.

Public Comment:

Commenter was concerned about the possible ramifications for her property due to new developments that could shift the hillside. Additional concern was for the

noise of construction while residents were working from home. Final concern was regarding the legality of the sale history for the property.

Applicants Presentation:

Applicant David provided a prerecorded presentation and made himself available for rebuttal.

Applicant responded to the public comment on geology and stated that the site had been examined by a geological engineer in 2016 and received a positive report and the soil engineer found no evidence of landslides and the hill was stable, in fact the development would reinforce the hillside.

Applicant responded to comments about trees, stating that it was not historically significant.

Questions for Applicant:

No questions

Commissioner Discussion:

Vice Chair Lesak commented that the changes to the previously approved application better fit the neighborhood characters and was comfortable with the project.

Commissioner Dahl thanked the staff and applicant for their urgency in responding to public and commissioner concerns.

Commissioner Tom had some concerns about the historical significance of the trees but given the additional research feels comfortable about the project.

Commissioner Padilla thanked the applicant for being responsive and appreciated the background presentation and was excited about the rainwater retention system.

Chair Braun commented this was an example of how the community could help and appreciated the professionalism of all parties involved.

Vice Chair Lesak made a correction to condition P11. Staff clarified that the city uses the state standard and only needs a qualified architect and have worked with architectural historians before to assess items. Staff will move P11 as a condition to receive a building permit and P12 as a condition for a final inspection.

Motion:

Chair Braun made a motion to adopt an addendum to the Negative Declaration for the proposed project and approve the project as amended.

Vice Chair Lesak seconded.

Chair Braun asked for Roll Call.

Motion carried, 5-0

2. **1312 Meridian Ave, Project No. 2205-NID/HDP/DRX/VAR, Notice of intent to demolish Design Review, Hillside Development Permit, and Variance for modification and addition to a single-family residence at 1312 Meridian Avenue (APN:5319-029-017)**

Commissioner Padilla recused herself as her property is within 1000 ft. of the project.

Staff Presentation:

Associate Planner Lim presented the staff report.

At a previous CHC meeting, the project did not meet the criterion for historical properties.

Question for Staff:

Vice Chair Lesak asked for clarification on the height of the north elevation walls. Staff replied that the applicant was asking for a variance on the north, front, and south elevations.

Commissioner Dahl asked if there were any trees that needed to be considered for protection. Staff replied there were not.

Public Comment:

Commenter said the demolition and the construction would potentially damage her property and herself. Asked the commission if there were any safeguards.

Commenter Joanne Nuckols said that the property is actually historic and the increased size would not be in the character of the neighborhood. Various comments on new additions straying from the original design.

Commenter Delaine Shane and Susan Sulsky inquired about any plans for managing construction traffic on Meridian. Recommends that the Public Works Dept. collaborate with SPUSD to ensure students are not affected by the work. Finally added that the windows, half timbering should match the original.

Commenter Miluka Matlovsky says that she has protected trees that would be impacted by this project and wishes her written comments would be read.

Applicant Presentation:

Presented concerns about having no driveway on a busy street, as neighbors have driveways.

Architect Melissa Tsai responded to public comment and would be open to an arborist report if requested.

Chair Braun clarified that written comments are read prior to the meeting.

Architect Melissa Tsai responded to window comments, saying they are actually aluminum and they will be removed and grids will be added to all windows. Garage will have windows to allow for natural light. The massing of the roof was addressed by adding a dormer and splitting up the separate planes, and is sloping back. Asked the commission to consider that the drawings are 2D and multiple planes have been considered.

Architect Melissa Tsai clarified that a soil engineer and civil geologist have no concerns with the project. As stated, Architect reminded that an arborist could come and propose a plan. With regards to the pool, the soil engineer found bedrock very shallow that the pool could be anchored to.

Questions for Applicant:

Vice Chair Lesak asked about the door in relation to the stucco wall. Applicant showed it was to the left of the wall, and there is a sconce above the door. Vice Chair Lesak asked if there was enough landing space for a door to be added. Applicant said there was 3 feet inside. Vice Chair Lesak asked about the side windows. Applicant showed where the cantilever windows would be placed.

Commissioner Dahl asked how the project would be affected if the 15 ft. wall variance was to be denied. Applicant replied that the existing front side was already 15 ft. would be demolished. Dahl asked if the variance was applied only to the front side. Applicant replied no addition would be possible since the ceiling height would not meet code.

Commissioner Tom asked for the reason for the height variance. Applicant replied that due to the sloped property and remain in code with the street level garage, more massing was required.

Chair Braun asked if the roofline could come down a few feet. Applicant responded that the windows on the stucco wall were facing the living space, windows on the brick wall were the master bathroom and could not.

Commissioner Discussion:

Vice Chair Lesak stated his main issue was the height of the upper ridge, since he felt it could be brought down due to varying roof pitches. Added that with gables, the corner should come to the ground, but the walls seemed very high. Continued that the stairs felt awkward, as did the reorienting of the timbering.

Commissioner Dahl was concerned about the height of the south elevation with windows as it would reduce the privacy of the neighbors, and was unconvinced about the necessity of the height variance. Added it would be helpful if the findings for variances were separated instead of clumped in the report.

Commissioner Tom felt that the design could be thought through a bit more

Chair Braun agreed with Commissioner Tom and also felt that an arborist report was needed. Asked if it was allowed to send the project to the DRB. Staff replied that the commission could ask the DRB for a recommendation.

Vice Chair Lesak volunteered to lead a subcommittee.

Commissioner Tom thought moving it to DRB was more appropriate.

Commissioner Dahl also thought moving it to DRB was best, but if Vice Chair Lesak wanted to lead the subcommittee she would support him.

Chair Braun asked what the purpose of the DRB review would be. Staff answered that it would be mainly to assess the roof forms and bring the height down. Staff also felt the fastest way to get the project approved was to give direction to the architect so they present a revised plan to the DRB.

Motion:

Commissioner Tom motions to have the applicant work with the Vice Chair to redesign and present to the DRB and come back to the planning commission with an arborist report.

Commissioner Dahl seconds

Motions carries, 4-0

DISCUSSION:

3. Tenant Protection – Impacts of State Law relating to Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (AB 1482) on local tenant protection opportunity

1. Lisa Alexander expressed support.
2. Elizabeth Bagasao expressed support, especially as City Council has not passed previous meaningful renters protection.
3. Martine Turnan expressed support.
4. Diana Sussman expressed support.
5. James Lucero expressed support.
6. Robin Adelku expressed support, as her landlord has been defying COVID moratoriums and has illegally intimidated tenants.
7. Jan Marshall expressed support.
8. Brandon Young expressed support, said that a local landlord was able to serve 50 day notices to tenants using a renovation loophole.
9. Ella Hushagen disagreed with the legal analysis by staff on the relation between state and local ordinances.
10. Alan Ehrlich disagreed with the legal analysis by staff, claiming the commission is being misled.
11. Evelyn Zneimer expressed support.
12. Todd Edwards expressed support.
13. Katrina Bleckley expressed support.
14. Jacinta Linka expressed support

Staff recommends to table issue and revisit on a later date.

Councilmember Mahmud asked the City Attorney whether or not the California Department of Housing and Community Development has set outlines on significant renovations. Additionally, is there anything stopping the City Council from outlining their own definition of significant renovations.

City Attorney Highsmith clarified that there were clear outlines on significant renovation available and was unclear on what additional protections were desired.

Chair Braun reminded that the commissioners still have to decide to table the proposition or not.

Vice Chair Lesak asked about community outreach. Director Hankamer clarified it would be brought back to Planning Commission.

Commissioner Dahl stated that renters protection lead to a stable community.

Commissioner Tom asked staff if there was any deadline to take action. Director Hankamer clarified there is no time limit besides preventing more potential evictions from happening.

Commissioner Tom thought it would be useful to inform tenants faced with eviction what their courses of action would be. Additional public outreach as he did not pay much attention to rent control over the past few years.

Commissioner Padilla underscored the importance of the issue and would like to have a roadmap laid out for implementation.

Chair Braun feels that community input is needed to make an informed decision.

Chair Braun asked everyone for suggestions on how to move forward.

Commissioner Tom suggested that City staff participate in an outreach program to be able to properly address the issue and to understand how the city will engage with landlords in the future. Commissioner Tom asked staff if it could be done by November of this year. Director Hankamer felt November was too soon.

Commissioner Padilla asked if it would help if City Council took a look at the issue while staff worked on the ordinance Chair Braun suggested the commission make a recommendation to the City Council. Director Hankamer suggested 6-month time frame with regular updates. Commissioner Padilla noted that the previous materials were still available on the city website. Director Hankamer thought that additional outreach was still necessary.

Chair Braun motions to continue this item to a date uncertain and in the meantime ask staff to organize community outreach with a status report in November.

Commissioner Tom seconds

Motion carries, 5-0

ADMINISTRATION

4. Comments from City Council Liaison

Council Liaison Mahmud thanked the commission.

5. Comments from Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Dahl thanked Chair Braun and asked if the order could be switched up occasionally.

6. Comments from Staff

Director Hankamer provided an update on the RHNA appeals process. The City Council has ratified an additional 3 members to the committee. Director Hankamer listed a number of concerns the committee is looking at concerning water, public transportation, school capacity, and preservation of historic resources. A draft of the report will be submitted to City Council at the end of the week that will be submitted in a letter to SCAG.

ADJOURNMENT

7. Adjournment to the Special Planning Commission meeting scheduled on November 17, 2020.

There being no further matters, Chair Braun adjourned the meeting at 9:39 p.m.



Janet Braun, Chair