

MINUTES

REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

JUNE 18, 2007

1. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 7:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by CHAIRMAN O'DAY.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

CHAIRMAN O'DAY led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Southwell, Conway, Vanden Bos, Bayer, Rein, Chairman O'Day
Commissioners Absent: Golida
Staff Present: Senior Planner Cutler, Assistant Planner Masters, Associate Planner Thom

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER GOLIDA,

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF APRIL 30, 2007.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN O'DAY so ordered.

5. **AUDIENCE ITEMS**

None.

6. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

None.

7. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 15-07; APPLICANT: MR. & MRS. GREGORY BECKER; LOCATION: 56 BUCKSKIN LANE; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY AND GRADING APPLICATION FOR A MAJOR REMODEL (ONE- AND TWO-STORY) AND RELATED SITE IMPROVEMENTS TO AN EXISTING TWO-STORY RESIDENCE. A MINOR DEVIATION IS REQUIRED FOR A DECREASE OF NOT MORE THAN 10% OF THE REQUIRED FRONT YARD.

Assistant Planner Masters gave a brief Staff Report, as per written material, and advised the Commission that Staff is not in support of the project but is in support of the Minor Deviation.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked for clarification of the grading that has already taken place, and Assistant Planner Masters advised that it was not done pursuant to a permit or grading application.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY asked why the application is before the Commission if Staff does not support 4 out of the 6 objectives for Neighborhood Compatibility . Senior Planner Cutler responded that the application is at a standstill, and the applicant was eager to get the project before the Commission, so it was scheduled for the next available meeting.

At CHAIRMAN O'DAY'S invitation, Jeffrey Dahl, Architect, 18681 Amalia Lane, Huntington Beach, architect for the project, came forward and addressed the Commission. Mr. Dahl summarized the purpose of the remodel and explained the eastern seaboard equestrian inspiration. Mr. Dahl explained that this design is the best solution, due to the narrow width, and a wedding cake design would look more awkward. This approach achieves the same objectives with more variety. Other projects have different styles but the same concept. Redesigns were previously made to the project based on other Staff's concerns. Mr. Dahl presented a watercolor rendering to help the Commission visualize the project. The negative comments in the Staff Report were a complete surprise to the applicant, and the report wasn't received until Friday. The applicant was completely caught off guard and had very little time to prepare for this meeting. Mr. Dahl stated that he feels he has been blind-sided. Planning Director Wahba had previously expressed that the architecture was beautiful. Mr. Dahl provided supporting letters from neighbors who could not be at the meeting, introduced supporting neighbors that are present at the meeting and pointed out that there are no neighbors opposing the project.

CHAIRMAN O'DAY asked if there was support from the homeowner's association, and the applicant advised that he had not approached that yet. CHAIRMAN O'DAY then pointed out that the association and the city are not looking for eclectic designs, but, in fact, quite the opposite, they strive to achieve similar character—single-story ranch homes. The question becomes how to achieve that look with a two-story home, and homes in the neighborhood often have a single-story appearance from the front but are two stories.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS commented that the Commission does not dictate architectural style, but rather comments on whether it meets the city ordinances or not. CHAIRMAN O'DAY added that there are laws and ordinances because the general population doesn't want to see the comparison and contrast of the homes that are different styles. The Commission also hopes to make it so homes are not clearly dated by when they're constructed, but instead achieve timeless and classic styles. This is a beautiful style, but Dapplegray is not the neighborhood that it fits into.

Tiffany Becker (applicant) came forward and presented her perspective. Mrs. Becker expressed her love for the city and the neighborhood. In this redesign she is looking for something that meets the needs of her family and preserves the quality of the neighborhood. The neighbors feel the design is in keeping with neighborhood.

Gregory Becker (applicant) came forward and pointed out the neighbors in attendance who are in support of the project. Mr. Becker commented that he is blown away by the abrasive and confrontational nature of the proceedings. In response to CHAIRMAN O'DAY'S concern, Mr. Becker stated that the homeowner's approval will be addressed directly with the Association and not the Commission.

A. J. Pullin (24 Buckskin) came forward and stated that he understands the rules that are in place. Mr. Pullin does not get the appearance of a large house when looking at the applicant's home. This home has a Nantucket look, a cute little home with character.

CHAIRMAN O'DAY clarified that the Commission is not considering not allowing an addition; only the elements of the addition are in question.

Paul Langland (8 Buckskin) came forward and agreed that this house is not out of character with the neighborhood, but other houses there are.

Julie Hatch (73 Dapplegray) came forward. Ms. Hatch is on the Trail Committee and commented that this design looks great. Ms. Hatch's home has a view of the project from the back, and the silhouettes look fine. This is the way the neighborhood is going, and it fits in and looks great.

Craig Killam (60 Buckskin) came forward and expressed his support of wedding cake designs and asked that the meeting be less confrontational. Mr. Killam suggested a list of things to disagree on.

Kirk Retz (18 Dapplegray) came forward. Mr. Retz is the President of the homeowner's association, but he is not in attendance in that capacity . Mr. Retz commented that he was pressured to speak and doesn't know much about plans, but the applicants are great folks and good neighbors.

Michelle Collins (64 Buckskin) came forward and stated that she was one of the first to sign the plans. There have been many changes in the neighborhood over the years, and there's so much contrast in the neighborhood anyway. Mrs. Collins and her husband are in support of the project and request that the Commission see beyond the red tape and consider that the neighbors are in attendance to support the applicants. Mrs. Collins does not mind that it's not a wedding cake approach, appreciates that it's different and doesn't want all the homes to be the same.

Greg Becker (applicant) re-approached the Commission and stated he felt that the architect has done an excellent job designing a beautiful home.

CHAIRMAN O'DAY discussed the size of the lot and explained that the laws of the city require the Commission to look at the project as new construction because of the percentage of remodel being done. CHAIRMAN O'DAY further suggested requests for changes in the laws be taken to City Council.

Mr. Becker further discussed being caught off guard by the Staff Report and the time and expense spent on civil engineers to create a grading plan.

COMMISSIONER REIN again questioned why the applicant is before the Commission with Staff not recommending 4 of the 6 objectives. Mr. Dahl re-approached the Commission and stated that Staff has had the plans for months, and the applicant assumed they were ready for this meeting and did not know about the negative Staff Report until the last minute.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY stated that he appreciated the statements made by Mrs. Becker and her passion for the neighborhood and the city. The Commission has the same passion, as evidenced by their years of voluntary work. However, the Commission is compelled to follow the Neighborhood Compatibility ordinance and is taken aback by two-thirds of it not being supported by Staff. There are difficult concerns, and it might benefit both parties to spend some time and go over the Staff Report and have a list of items at issue, which don't appear to be a lot. The size of the building does not seem to be an issue. This is an attractive design but can't be supported because of Neighborhood Compatibility.

COMMISSIONER BAYER stated that homes need to be proportional to the size of the property. The city is trying to avoid overbuilt lots and overbuilt houses.

For the benefit of the audience, COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS summarized the issues in the Staff Report.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY expressed his appreciation for the applicant's patience and stated that he has better understanding of the applicant's position and is compassionate with their perspective. However, more time needs to be spent with Staff to get some issues resolved. If the issues cannot be resolved, the applicant should come back, and the Commission will either support or deny the application, which can then be taken to City Council.

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS,

TO CONTINUE PA 15-07 TO A DATE UNCERTAIN TO ALLOW TIME FOR THE APPLICANT AND APPLICANT'S ARCHITECT TO GO OVER THE ISSUES FURTHER WITH STAFF, AND SPECIFIC LINE ITEMS BE DRAWN UP PRESENTING ANY UNRESOLVED ISSUES TO THE COMMISSION FOR ASSESSMENT.

AYES: Southwell, Conway, Vanden Bos, Bayer, Rein, Chairman O'Day
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Golida

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

9. COMMISSION ITEMS

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked that Planning Director Wahba provide the Commission with an update on the Linares property, and Senior Planner Cutler noted the request.

COMMISSIONER REIN updated the Commission on the results of the City Council meeting debating the Peninsula Village plan. A 45-day moratorium was denied on the basis that it would have provided no positive outcome considering that no projects are in the works to be approved in the next 45 days and that once used, a moratorium could only be used again in the future after a two-year hiatus and even then, only if based upon different findings. Also, the Peninsula Village Overlay Zone was abandoned, as the plan mutated into something other than its original intention, which was to put boundaries on the scope of the redevelopment of the Peninsula Center, and all projects are now going to be viewed on a project-by-project basis with no overlay plan in place.

All Commissioners discussed the effect of this decision.

10. DIRECTOR'S ITEMS

Senior Planner Cutler advised the Commissioners that there will be a Chandler First Look Joint Planning Commission/City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 26, at 6:00 p.m. and asked that they all be in attendance. CHAIRMAN O'DAY advised that he will not be in attendance.

11. MATTERS OF INFORMATION

None.

12. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:15 p.m. CHAIRMAN O'DAY adjourned the Planning Commission meeting to June 26, 2007, at 6:00 p.m.

Julie Cremeans
Minutes Secretary

Douglas R. Prichard
City Clerk