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JANUARY 16, 2007

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MINUTES

REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

JANUARY 16, 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 7:35 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by CHAIRMAN REIN.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

CHAIRMAN REIN led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Southwell, O'Day, Vanden Bos, Bayer, Chairman Rein
Commissioners Absent: Conway
Staff Present: Planning Director Wahba, Associate Planner Thom,
Assistant Planner Masters

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS,

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF DECEMBER 4, 2006.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN REIN so ordered.

5. **AUDIENCE ITEMS**

None.

6. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

None.

7. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 19-05; APPLICANT: MR. PATRICK THEODORA; LOCATION: 4 PLEASANT HILL DRIVE; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY FOR DEMOLISHING AN EXISTING SINGLE-STORY RESIDENCE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TWO-STORY RESIDENCE AND PROPOSED POOL, SPA AND CABANA IN THE REAR YARD. A MINOR DEVIATION IS REQUIRED TO DECREASE THE FRONT YARD AREA BY LESS THAN 10% AND FOR AN ENCROACHMENT INTO THE REQUIRED FRONT YARD WHICH DOES NOT PROJECT CLOSER TO THE PROPERTY LINE THAN THE FORWARDMOST ESTABLISHED BUILDING LINE.

Associate Planner Thom gave a brief Staff Report, as per written material, and advised the Commission that copies of revised neighborhood statistics have been provided. Staff recommends approval with conditions.

COMMISSIONER BAYER asked when #6 Lazy Creek Lane (7,029 square feet) was approved. Planning Director Wahba responded that it was approved in the late '80s,

before his time with the Planning Department but after Neighborhood Compatibility went into effect. COMMISSIONER BAYER then asked about #10 Hidden Valley (6220 square feet). Planning Director Wahba responded that was approved approximately four to five years ago and came before the Planning Commission.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked whether the chimney height is restricted to 27 feet. Planning Director Wahba responded that there was a City Council Policy Determination three or four years ago, allowing chimneys to exceed when they need to within 10 feet of the structure. COMMISSIONER O'DAY further asked about the steep roof and how many others there are throughout the city. Planning Director Wahba responded that there are very few. COMMISSIONER O'DAY then asked whether the roof would be wood shake or slate. Planning Director Wahba responded that it would have to be a simulated wood shake.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY pointed out that the roof becomes such a prominent feature of the house and questioned whether it was in keeping with the neighborhood. Planning Director Wahba stated that Pleasant Hill is a mixture of different architectural styles.

CHAIRMAN REIN pointed out that this project is now a new design, new architect and new style. Therefore, whatever direction was given in May of 2005 referred to a different project. Planning Director Wahba pointed out that grading was an issue, and this project better respects the topography of the site.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked about the wall enclosing the forecourt, which is not a common feature in the city. Planning Director Wahba responded that it is permitted by right but suggested conditioning the approval on using materials consistent with the house.

At CHAIRMAN REIN's invitation, the architect, George Sweeney (3 Malaga Cove Plaza, Palos Verdes Estates), came forward with exhibits. Mr. Sweeney stated that the design will enhance the community and meets Neighborhood Compatibility. The natural appearance of the site has been retained, including vegetation. The hardscape has been reduced considerably. Rustic materials have been used. There are varied roof heights for a casual building massing with a more rural look. The design is moderately larger than an average home within a 500-foot radius but compares with recently constructed houses. The steep roof is essential for head height within the attic floor. The central mass of the house is set well back from street, and the attic story has exterior wall plates varying in height. The Staff Report refers to intruding closer to the street, but the project is well behind the 25-foot setback. The existing structure intrudes into the 25-foot setback, and the central mass of the house is beyond the existing front wall line of the structure. Pushing the house down and back creates a design with a casual rural look.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked whether there were any studies performed for different roof pitches. Mr. Sweeney responded that a lower pitch would make this design impossible. The ceiling heights would be too low, so the wall heights would have to go up, creating a greater apparent mass with a vertical element that has a taller plate height to the street. As the plate heights go down, the apparent size of the house is diminished. COMMISSIONER O'DAY stated that he likes the style and appreciates the classic Normandy design style home but recommended some solutions to the roof pitch.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked about the large chimney aspect, which stands out from the design and appears almost detached from the house. Mr. Sweeney and COMMISSIONERS VANDEN BOS and O'DAY discussed some possible solutions.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY stated that this is not a ranch-style neighborhood, and consistency for this neighborhood needs to be addressed. There are many European elements, and this house is a Normandy style home. While there are no others that are similar within the neighborhood, the most extreme elements are not seen from the street. In general, the roof pitch is uncommon, but the applicant has made a good argument.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS agreed, adding that the eclectic neighborhood has architecture all over the board, so there is more latitude. This is a tasteful design, and the more extreme elements are in the back. Also, making the motor court and garage perpendicular, rather than parallel, improves the overall look and makes it more consistent with the neighborhood. However, Staff should look at the chimney issue.

COMMISSIONER BAYER added that it's a pretty design, and the architect has done a nice job. COMMISSIONER BAYER appreciated the applicant coming back with a different design more compatible with the neighborhood. However, there are 85 homes on the chart attached to the Staff Report, and this would be the fifth home over 5,400 square feet. Bigger is not better, and this neighborhood may keep pushing the square footage up and up. This home won't look big or massive from the street, but it should be pared down.

COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL expressed mixed feelings and agreed that it's a nice design, but the house is a bit large for the neighborhood. Most of the larger houses are on lots that are at least 10,000 square feet larger than this lot.

CHAIRMAN REIN agreed that it's a very attractive design. It would be right at home in Westwood or Pasadena but not here. Neighborhood Compatibility doesn't apply to only one street. There are a lot of ranch style houses in that neighborhood. This home is not compatible with the city with its European architecture. Although it's beautiful, it's not rural. Also, the size is large. The concept of a rural community figures very prominently in the city's philosophy and General Plan. The compatibility and size issues should be addressed.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER O'DAY,

TO APPROVE PA 19-05 WITH CONDITIONS, AS STATED IN THE STAFF REPORT, AND THAT THE APPLICANT WORK WITH THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS THE CHIMNEY ISSUE.

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

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL,

TO CONTINUE PA 19-05 TO A DATE UNCERTAIN TO ALLOW THE APPLICANT TO REVISE PLANS, AS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF, AND STUDY REDUCING THE SIZE TO 5,000 SQUARE FEET OR LESS.

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

COMMISSIONER O'DAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS,

TO CONTINUE PA 19-05 TO A DATE UNCERTAIN TO ALLOW THE APPLICANT TO WORK WITH STAFF TO HELP BRING BACK A NEW PLAN THAT IS MORE IN LINE WITH THE INPUT OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION.

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

B. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 25-06; APPLICANT: MR. & MRS. ROBERT COLLINS; LOCATION: 4 RANCHVIEW ROAD; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY FOR A FIRST AND SECOND STORY ADDITION TO AN EXISTING SINGLE STORY RESIDENCE. A MINOR DEVIATION IS REQUIRED TO DECREASE THE FRONT YARD BY LESS THAN 10%.

Assistant Planner Masters gave a brief Staff Report, as per written material, and distributed a letter received by Staff addressing past flooding of Lower Ranchview homes, which has been resolved. Staff has reached compromise with the applicant, other than the driveway issue.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked for the slope. Assistant Planner Masters responded that it varies by section from 15% to 20%. Planning Director Wahba added that the slope can exceed 15% but could be mitigated by raising the garage another foot or so.

At CHAIRMAN REIN's invitation, Mrs. Collins (applicant) came forward and advised the Commission that a topographical survey has been done. This driveway comes off of a private road, and the length is longer than most of the driveways in the neighborhood with the point of access from the public road at 60 feet. Mrs. Collins would like to connect her property to have a front yard, which is more compatible with the neighborhood. Mrs. Collins looked at getting the angle right by raising the floor of the driveway, but there's an issue of a bump that has to be part of the driveway.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked if there would be a huge impact to bringing the garage back. Mrs. Collins responded that there isn't room. COMMISSIONER O'DAY disagreed, stating that the applicant does have the ability. Mrs. Collins responded that she is trying not to demolish all of the walls due to limited funds, but she and the architect had talked about eliminating the service porch area between the garage and kitchen. COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS then pointed out that the foundation would have to be redone anyway due to the second story addition.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY advised the applicant that the current parking situation is some of the best parking on that street, and the plan proposes going from superior parking to inferior parking in order to get a front yard. The Commission cannot sacrifice safety in this situation. Mrs. Collins responded that the side parking is not being removed, and the safety issue is that she has less visibility and has to back up from the garage around onto the street.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked about the City's potential liability by doing something that's not conforming. Planning Director Wahba responded that would be a question for the City Attorney but that's why the Code is written the way it is. What makes this different is that it's a private driveway coming in to access all these homes. Consistent with past policy, the front yard functions as what's on the other side of the private asphalt driveway, and the slope is not city property.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY then asked when the other homes were approved with the short driveways. Planning Director Wahba responded that they were approved in the late '50s or early '60s. The best solution would be to find a way to move the garage back for a 20-foot setback and make sure the slope is not more than 15%.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS pointed out that one of the issues is getting a car in a driveway less than 20 feet. Planning Director Wahba added that it becomes a fire code issue.

COMMISSIONER BAYER appreciated the applicant's difficult situation, but anything that can be done to make it safer needs to be done.

The architect, Janet Barton (26138 Barkstone Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes) came forward. The applicant is keeping the same floor plan, and the garage was built in the '50s and does not meet Code. Moving the garage would mean tearing it down and enlarging the walls 8 inches, which is cost prohibitive. The garage floor has been raised as far as possible; any further would make it higher than the house. The other driveways on the street are shorter, and no one else has additional parking. Cost efficiency for the owner must be taken into account.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked whether this is a redesign over 50%, mandating that the garage be brought into Code compliance. Planning Director Wahba added that if the project is approved, it would require a Variance for the driveway having less than a 20-foot standing area. COMMISSIONER O'DAY advised the applicant that she would have a hard time making the Variance findings, as described in the Code section.

COMMISSIONER BAYER advised the applicant that the Commission has no choice. If it's not legally permissible the Commission doesn't have the ability to approve it. COMMISSIONER O'DAY added that health and safety issues are significant and require serious determination by experts. Planning Director Wahba added that changing the direction of the driveway is trying to mimic the substandard condition that exists with other homes in the street.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS advised the applicant that there is a solution, but there's a cost associated with it.

Adele Packwood (6 Ranchview) came forward with concerns for the value of her property. The applicant is building approximately 11 feet away and covering the kitchen

window. Mrs. Packwood passed a letter to the Commissioners addressing her concerns. COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS pointed out that the second floor has been set back from the first floor, and there is no window to look down into the kitchen. Mrs. Packwood responded that it is still blocking the view of the sky. COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS appreciated the concerns, but the property owner has a right to build within the Code. COMMISSIONER O'DAY suggested that Mrs. Packwood go to City Council to address the ordinance not protecting the view.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER BAYER,

TO CONTINUE PA 25-06 TO A DATE UNCERTAIN TO ALLOW THE APPLICANT TO WORK WITH STAFF TO RESOLVE THE DRIVEWAY ISSUE.

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

C. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 26-06; APPLICANT: MR. & MRS. ALAN ABRAHAMSON; LOCATION: 4 PALOMINO LANE; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY FOR A SECOND STORY ADDITION OVER THE GARAGE.

Assistant Planner Masters gave a brief Staff Report, as per written material, and recommend approval with standard conditions.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked whether there is an exterior entrance to the staircase from the courtyard area and interior entrance next to the washer and dryer and whether the applicant is proposing moving the gable end of garage.

The architect, Roger North (2360 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance) came forward, stating that the Commission's issue with the exterior stairwell is where changes were made. It has been put on the other side of the garage and the interior of the existing garage. There is a new exterior entrance from the courtyard into a landing at the bottom of the stairs, with entries to the house and the stairs. Under the stairs is just a storage area. There is no change to the property footprint, other than the addition over the garage, but the square footage has gone down.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked whether the project would have open rafters or fascia board. Mr. North responded that it would be fascia board. COMMISSIONER O'DAY then asked whether there was any intention to build a kitchen. Mr. North responded that there was not.

Laura Abrahamson (applicant) came forward reminding the Commission about the need for the extra bedroom, bathroom and work area. The staircase was moved in response to the Commission's concerns. While there is still a concern over the wedding cake design, Staff supports that this addition is compatible with this neighborhood, and there have been letters in support of the project and none in opposition.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS stated that the issue is whether the Commission should insist on a the wedding cake design, as they've addressed all the other issues, and the project will end up having a very similar look to #2 next door.

COMMISSIONER BAYER stated that adding the dormers will make a tremendous difference, and she can support the project because of 2 Palomino and 14 Palomino and the staircase now being inside.

COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL agreed, stating the changes have made it acceptable.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY stated that this project is distinguished from #2 and #14 because the roofs are incorporated and are seen as a single home. This is a classic stovepipe addition, and there aren't any others similar to it, and the applicant hasn't attempted to modify that. It should be set back or incorporate other roof elements.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS is sympathetic to the homeowner wanting to do something cost effective. It kind of is and kind of isn't compatible with the other houses.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked if it would make sense to have a faux entrance, extending the existing house all the way across. Mr. North responded that it would create roof issues.

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL,

TO APPROVE PA 26-06 WITH CONDITIONS, AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT.

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

Planning Director Wahba explained the 20-day appeal period.

D. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 31-06; APPLICANT: MR. & MRS. LLOYD GOLDEN; LOCATION: 23 SHADY VISTA ROAD; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY FOR PROPOSED FIRST AND SECOND STORY ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING SINGLE STORY HOME. 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 stated that Staff has reached compromises on all aspects of the project and recommends approval.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked whether Staff had looked at the silhouette from the neighbor's house above, and Assistant Planner Masters responded that he couldn't get there because it's being sold. COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS then asked whether the uncommon balcony element was acceptable. Planning Director Wahba didn't think it would be visible from the street or close to another residence.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY asked about the aesthetics of the chimney. COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS stated that there are options with a wood burning fireplace.

The designer, Luis Cota (5542 W. 82nd Street, Los Angeles) came forward for any questions by the Commission.

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS asked about the chimney that's independent of the rest of the addition and whether there is a solution that wouldn't require such a gap. COMMISSIONER O'DAY added that it needs to be incorporated into the house and not standing alone. COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS stated that there should be a creative solution.

COMMISSIONER BAYER stated that it is nice to see that the applicant worked with Staff and had a meeting of the minds.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS,

TO APPROVE PA 31-06 WITH CONDITIONS, AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT, AND THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT THAT THE CHIMNEY ON THE RIGHT SIDE BE EITHER ELIMINATED OR INCORPORATED INTO THE REST OF THE HOUSE.

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

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

9. COMMISSION ITEMS

None.

10. DIRECTOR'S ITEMS

A. BROADCAST OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS

Planning Director Wahba advised the Commission that the City Council voted at their December meeting to broadcast all meetings, and they will be televised, but not live. The broadcasts may begin at the February 5 meeting; if not, then the February 20 meeting.

B. 2007 PLANNERS INSTITUTE & MINI EXPO

Planning Director Wahba informed the Commission of the expo in San Diego Wednesday, March 21, through Friday, March 23, and encouraged all Commissioners to attend.

11. MATTERS OF INFORMATION

A. CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS (DECEMBER 12, 2006)

COMMISSIONER VANDEN BOS moved, and COMMISSIONER BAYER seconded,
TO RECEIVE AND FILE ITEM 11A.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN REIN so ordered.

12. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:05 p.m. CHAIRMAN REIN adjourned the Planning Commission meeting to February 5, 2006, at 7:30 p.m.

Julie Cremeans
Minutes Secretary

Douglas R. Prichard
City Clerk