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REGULAR PLANNING MINUTES

JUNE 2, 2008

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MINUTES

REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

JUNE 2, 2008

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 CONWAY.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

COMMISSIONER SCOTT led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: O'Day, Southwell, Bayer, Rein, Scott, Chairman Conway
Commissioners Absent: Golida
Staff Present: Planning Director Wahba, Assistant Planner Masters

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER O'DAY,

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF MAY 5, 2008.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN CONWAY so ordered.

5. **AUDIENCE ITEMS**

None.

6. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

None.

7. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

- A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 13-08; APPLICANT: MR. CHRIS GIORDANO; LOCATION: 80 DAPPLEGRAY LANE. A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION FOR FIRST AND SECOND STORY ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING SINGLE-STORY HOME. MINOR DEVIATIONS ARE REQUIRED TO 1) DECREASE THE REQUIRED FRONT YARD AREA BY LESS THAN 10% AND 2) DECREASE THE SIDE YARD SETBACK BY 10%.

Assistant Planner Masters distributed to the Commission lists of the largest homes in the neighborhood by home size and by lot size and gave a brief Staff Report, as per written material. Assistant Planner Masters added that upon further review Staff has noticed that the proposed residence would be the largest in the neighborhood for lots under 18,000 square feet and pointed out that a neighbor had raised an issue with west facing windows on the second floor addition. Assistant Planner Masters suggested that the Commission may wish to continue the application to allow the applicant further time to reduce the square footage, compatible with that lot size.

Planning Director Wahba clarified that Staff is not of the opinion that there is a privacy impact with the west facing windows.

CHAIRMAN CONWAY asked for clarification of the departure in Staff's position from the written report.

Planning Director Wahba stated that the proposed living area is not typical on a lot of this size. There are a number of skinny lots with steep topography, but this is slightly different, as it is almost square and flat. What's not comparable is that there is no buffer to the rear of the home and is right at the minimum required setback. The applicant was able to meet the zoning requirements, with the exception of the Minor Deviation for the side yard, but the issues come into play with respect to being at the minimums with a large house.

CHAIRMAN CONWAY and COMMISSIONERS REIN and SCOTT discussed side yard setbacks and horsekeeping area requirements, the spirit of the horsekeeping code and the City's desire to foster equestrian elements of the community.

Planning Director Wahba advised that the proposed configuration is a compromise, and the horsekeeping area has gotten bigger and more regular and meets the Code but is not the ideal situation.

COMMISSIONER SCOTT observed that with this proposal and what's been done at 84 Dapplegray recently, the City is seeing much larger houses put on these lots. Also, with the setback and square footage of the house at 78 Dapplegray someone will eventually want to rebuild and not honor the setback from the side, raising the issue of what that would do to the horsekeeping area if a smaller side yard setback at 78 Dapplegray and leave no room for a horse shed at 80 Dapplegray.

COMMISSIONER SCOTT pointed out that in that situation the next-door neighbor would require a Variance because of what this neighbor is doing.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY agreed that is an interesting issue that requires further investigation of whether designation of a horsekeeping area impinges or impacts property rights of neighbors.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY noticed that the new chimney is shown as brick in the front and rear elevations, but in the side elevation it is specified as stucco. The Dapplegray Owners Association has noted changes made to accommodate the HOA, but to the extent possible the project needs to match the new chimney with the existing chimney.

COMMISSIONER BAYER asked to what extent the applicant had worked with Staff and modified their original plans.

Assistant Planner Masters responded that the plans have changed significantly, moving forward from the rear, decreasing living size and incorporating a wedding cake design, but the size of the home was a last-minute concern and had not been previously discussed with the applicant.

COMMISSIONER BAYER voiced her concern that the houses are getting bigger and bigger in the neighborhood.

At CHAIRMAN CONWAY'S invitation, Christopher Giordano (applicant) came forward and summarized the evolution of the project. Mr. Giordano clarified that he approached the neighbor about the window issue because he thought it might be a good idea to offer suggestions, as it may cause some privacy issues with her swimming pool area. It was not brought up by the neighbor. The house is beautiful and proportional with the neighborhood. The design has accommodated close to 1,100 square feet of horsekeeping area, which would accommodate two horses. When you look at the numbers and compare lot size to house size, it does look like a concern, but the silhouette looks good, and there is no negative feedback or anyone opposing the project.

CHAIRMAN CONWAY confirmed that the Commission is concerned with the perception of an overbuilt lot, and standard applications of the guidelines need to be applied to all the applications that come before the Commission. Also, the location of the horsekeeping area has a required 35-foot setback from an inhabited dwelling and may influence the ability of the adjoining landowner to expand on their lot. It's by the application of these guidelines that make the neighborhood as good as it is.

COMMISSIONER BAYER expressed her appreciation of the applicant's understanding and cooperation. COMMISSIONER O'DAY added that the applicant has done a good

job matching the style and architecture of the neighborhood, and COMMISSIONER SCOTT concurred.

Robert Mosebacker (Architect, 304 Via Linda Vista, Redondo Beach, 90277) came forward and discussed the many different cycles the drawings have been through to try to get the small lot to work. If the house is reduced, the entryway squeezing down and the garage and living room coming forward would look bad, so it would have to come off the back of the house or upstairs.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY discussed the large common area and the small bedrooms with Mr. Mosebacker.

COMMISSIONER REIN asked about a possible mistake on the survey and stated that it brings credibility of the document into question.

CHAIRMAN CONWAY restated that Staff has requested to continue the item to address the building size in proportion to the lot, to seek more detail on the horsekeeping setback area and its effect on the adjoining property, to review a more practical configuration for the horsekeeping area, to look at chimney materials and siding along the garage to ensure consistency, to perhaps look at the windows on the second story to address privacy and exiting issues, and to confirm reference dimensions on the survey for any errors.

COMMISSIONER O'DAY commented that he did notice the relative ratio of the lot to house size, but found it to be close to within reason. What's really important for the Neighborhood Compatibility ordinance and massing is how the lot appears from the street, and this would not look out of place on Dapplegray. It's mass would look comparable to other houses. It's not visually apparent from the outside that the lot isn't as deep as the other Dapplegray lots.

COMMISSIONER SCOTT commented that he had looked at the neighborhood and what this massing proportion issue means within Neighborhood Compatibility. Among many of the very larger houses on Dapplegray are one-story façades towards the street, going back down the hill. There is a relatively small number of homes that are massive two-story structures near the street, and this house is on the crown of the hill, so its mass will be magnified by its location. The silhouette does not look as bad as the drawing, but it is a large mass that will loom over the street.

COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL agreed, adding that when looking at the ratio of home square footage to lot size on Dapplegray Lane, 80 Dapplegray would be the second largest lot coverage out of 176 homes, and the two neighbors at 84 and 82 Dapplegray are among the biggest lot coverages; therefore, the lot coverage on that part of Dapplegray has become overbuilt.

COMMISSIONER REIN pointed out that silhouettes are not very representative of what's going to be built. They give perspective, but the mass cannot be appreciated; whereas with the elevations you get more indication of the mass, and this does look like it needs to be scaled back.

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER O'DAY,

TO CONTINUE PA-13-08 TO A DATE UNCERTAIN TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES AS OUTLINED BY CHAIRMAN CONWAY AND COMMISSIONER O'DAY.

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

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS
None.

9. COMMISSION ITEMS

COMMISSIONER O'DAY expressed his appreciation for follow-up on the vacant home at Conestoga and Estribo Drives, which now has a fence around the property.

COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL asked for an update on the house on Gaucho, and Planning Director Wahba advised that a number of the items have been resolved, but there are a couple more items pending information.

CHAIRMAN CONWAY advised Staff of a community member who walks PVDE and PVDN picking up debris, cans, etc. every weekend, and CHAIRMAN CONWAY would like to somehow recognize her devoted efforts that are benefitting the entire city. Planning Director Wahba suggested that CHAIRMAN CONWAY attempt to learn who the citizen is.

COMMISSIONER BAYER stated that she attended the Contract Cities Conference. Planning Director Wahba gave an outstanding presentation, and Rolling Hills Estates made a great showing.

10. DIRECTOR'S ITEMS

None.

11. MATTERS OF INFORMATION

A. PARK AND ACTIVITIES MINUTES (MAY 20, 2008).

B. CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS (MAY 13, 2008).

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, and COMMISSIONER SCOTT seconded,

TO RECEIVE AND FILE ITEMS 11A and B.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN CONWAY so ordered.

12. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:35 p.m. CHAIRMAN CONWAY adjourned the Planning Commission meeting to June 16, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.

Julie Cremeans
Minutes Secretary

Douglas R. Prichard
City Clerk