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REGULAR PLANNING MINUTES

MAY 2, 2005

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MINUTES

REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

MAY 2, 2005

1. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 7:32 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

3. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Southwell, Conway, Bayer, Chairman Pro Tem Rein
Commissioners Absent: Vanden Bos, O'Day, Chairman Killen
Staff Present: Planning Director Wahba, Assistant Planner Wong, Code Administrator Beall

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL,

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF APRIL 18, 2005.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN so ordered.

5. **AUDIENCE ITEMS**

None.

6. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

A. QUARTERLY CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL,

TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN so ordered.

7. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 19-05; APPLICANT: MR. & MRS. PATRICK THEODORA; LOCATION: 4 PLEASANT HILL DRIVE; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY FOR DEMOLITION OF A SINGLE STORY HOME TO CONSTRUCT A NEW TWO-STORY HOME. MINOR DEVIATIONS ARE REQUIRED TO DECREASE THE FRONT YARD AREA BY LESS THAN 10% AND TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LOT COVERAGE NOT MORE THAN 10%. A GRADING APPLICATION IS REQUIRED FOR A DRIVEWAY AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE REAR YARD.

Assistant Planner Wong gave a brief Staff Report (as per written material) and reported that Staff is unable to support the project because the new home would be the largest

house in the neighborhood, the Mediterranean architectural style is not found throughout the neighborhood, and the proposed lot coverage would be at 33%, which is not reflective of the character of the neighborhood. Also, the design does not incorporate any façade treatment to break up the box-like appearance of the home. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission continue PA-19-05 to allow the applicant and applicant's architect sufficient time to address the lot coverage, Neighborhood Compatibility Determination and grading items identified in the Staff Report or deny this application.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY asked for a clarification in the Staff Report on page 3, under Neighborhood Compatibility. Finding #4 stated that the second story is not set back from first story to minimize the massive appearance, but page 4, under Conclusion, states that Staff and the applicant were able to address the Municipal Code requirements.

Planning Director Wahba clarified that one deals with the setback fitting within the envelope, and the second addresses Neighborhood Compatibility, which is more of a design issue with respect to massing. The building conforms with the height to setback ratio but not Neighborhood Compatibility.

Russ Barto, architect representing the applicant, passed some photographs to the Commission. Mr. Barto clarified that the square footage of living area includes a very large basement, which does not contribute to the bulk and mass of the house. He further clarified that the architectural style is not Mediterranean but more of a rustic Italian design. A deck has been added to the upper level so that it's not straight up and down, the entry has been recessed and other elements added. The pictures illustrate the various architectural styles in this and other neighborhoods, many of which are quite large and in excess of the proposal. There is also neighborhood support on the project.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY questioned how the rendering showed a craftsman style, to which Mr. Barto pointed out that it is not a craftsman style but an Italian rural style, intended to be somewhat rustic. Craftsman does not describe what is proposed. The photographs are just to demonstrate the diversity of styles that exist and have been approved.

CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN asked Staff for statutory or existing code reference to the basement area with respect to calculating the square footage of the house. Planning Director Wahba affirmed that the basement is typically counted, but credit is given to the degree that it's not visible, the same as was done for 10 Hidden Valley with a media room down below. However, the massing and style of the building is what Staff is having trouble with. The basement would be considered part of the square footage of the house if it meets the egress requirements and is finished off per building code. Mr. Barto then confirmed that he is planning to finish it off and have egress.

Mr. Barto stated that the issue of basements is becoming more widespread, and different cities have different regulations for counting against the budget of square footage allowable.

CHAIRMAN PRO TEM AND COMMISSIONERS BAYER and SOUTHWELL pointed out that it would still be 6,000 square feet and the second largest house in the neighborhood on one of the smallest lots.

Peter Frederikson (8 Pleasant Hill), a neighbor two homes from this house shared that he went through this process 15 years ago and understands the City's stance and that they want to see ranch-style homes. However, smaller homes are now being purchased on large lots and want to build larger homes, which Mr. Frederikson doesn't have a problem with. Homes are being built now that are not meeting the Neighborhood Compatibility criteria, and gave examples of #10 Hidden Valley Road and 4609 Palos Verdes Drive North. Mr. Frederikson reiterated his approval of the large home and looks forward to it.

Pat Theodore, Sr. (3511 Starline Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes), father of the applicant, pointed out that his son and his family have lived at #1 Pleasant Hill, which was not in good shape, and he went in and made it look very nice. This property is very big and very deep. It's on a cul-de-sac street, so it's not going to have a lot of traffic. On the right side of the street, there are one or two houses that are pretty good size. The existing house is an eyesore, and this project will enhance the view, not bring anything negative. Also, the flags have been up, and nobody has come to object to the project.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY pointed out that the Commission has seen projects with elevations that the Commission very much liked but ran into Neighborhood Compatibility issues that render the project incompatible, and the Commission works its best efforts to come to findings that can allow a project to move forward. However, this project is 180° from that perception. Even if it did comply with the Neighborhood Compatibility issues, it's mansionization of Rolling Hills Estates. The Commission has committed to protect the rural character. This will be the largest home in the neighborhood, although 6,000 square feet isn't extremely overbuilt. Failure to preserve and respect the natural topography is more of a concern, having 5-foot high retaining walls and modifying all the natural topography. This project is very massive and overwhelming for the neighborhood. There is evidence that large homes are supported in this neighborhood. It's the design that is overwhelming.

COMMISSIONER BAYER seconded the mansionization and agreed with COMMISSIONER CONWAY's issues and Staff's analysis and could not support the project in its current form. Rolling Hills Estates is not about mansions. It's about maintaining a rural atmosphere and keeping each neighborhood compatible. Mr. Theodore has lived in Rolling Hills Estates, purchased property in Rolling Hills Estates and has gone through a renovation process, so he knows what the rules are, and coming now and wanting to bend the rules doesn't seem right. This looks like a house that belongs in another city. Also, 5,900 square feet without the basement is still a very large house on an average size of 20,000 square foot lot. There is a massive look to it without appropriate breakup of it and has a further expanse in the back not showing on the rendering.

COMMISSIONER SOUTHWELL stated that he would have difficulty supporting the project. Pleasant Hill Drive is an eclectic mix. However, it's not compatible with the Rolling Hills Estates on a whole. There is a massiveness to the house, and the styling is more reminiscent of Palos Verdes Estates, and the carving out of the backyard to flatten it out is also an issue.

CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN also concurred and was reluctant to support the project stating that Staff has done a good job of looking at all the Neighborhood Compatibility findings and have shown that it does not appear to be compatible with the neighborhood the way it's proposed.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY asked Mr. Barto if he had a preference to continue the item and work with Staff or to deny it for possible appeal to Council, to which Mr. Barto answered that he preferred to work with Staff.

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, and COMMISSIONER CONWAY seconded,

TO CONTINUE THIS ITEM TO A DATE UNCERTAIN TO ALLOW THE APPLICANT AND APPLICANT'S ARCHITECT SUFFICIENT TIME TO ADDRESS THE LOT COVERAGE, NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION AND GRADING ITEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT.

AYES: Southwell, Conway, Bayer, Chairman Pro Tem Rein

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Vanden Bos, O'Day, Chairman Killen

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 22-04; APPLICANT: MR. & MRS. HAROLD YIN; LOCATION: 33 HARBOR SIGHT DRIVE; A NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY FOR FIRST STORY ADDITIONS LOCATED AT THE FRONT, SIDES AND REAR OF AN EXISTING SINGLE STORY HOME. A MINOR DEVIATION IS REQUIRED FOR A DECREASE IN THE FRONT YARD AREA OF LESS THAN 10%. VARIANCES ARE REQUIRED TO PROJECT BEYOND THE FORWARDMOST BUILDING LINE AND ENCROACH INTO THE FRONT YARD SETBACK. A GRADING APPLICATION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REAR YARD IMPROVEMENTS.

Assistant Planner Wong gave a brief Staff Report (as per written material) and reported that Staff and the applicant were able to address Municipal Code requirements with respect to lot coverage, height limit and proposed setbacks, all of which comply with the

code; however, the proposed circle entry tower and excessive use of dormer windows are not compatible with the neighborhood and recommended that the Planning Commission open the Public Hearing, take public testimony, discuss the issues, close the public hear and either continue this item to a date uncertain to allow the applicant and Staff to work on further redesigning the Neighborhood Compatibility concerns, direct Staff to bring back a resolution approving PA-22-04 or direct Staff to bring back a resolution denying PA-22-04.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY asked about the revised March 28, 2005 plans still showing a second story addition and whether that is the rear covered patio now, which Planning Director Wahba confirmed.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY further asked Staff if they could make the appropriate findings if the Commission liked the design, to which Planning Director Wahba answered not as it's designed now. However, if the tower is lowered somewhat and perhaps one or two of the dormer windows were removed, Staff could bring back the resolution with the revised drawing to approve it at the next meeting.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY further asked about Variance finding #1 being met because the building is restricted from a second story addition and how that is evidenced or of record, to which Planning Director Wahba responded that when it was continued from the last meeting, there was public testimony presented that there was a view blockage, and there was general consensus with the Planning Commission that it did block the neighbor's view. The suggestion was not to go up and to consider doing a single-story addition.

COMMISSIONER BAYER moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER CONWAY,

TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

AYES: Southwell, Conway, Bayer, Chairman Pro Tem Rein

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Vanden Bos, O'Day, Chairman Killen

Olympia Greer, architect for the applicant came forward and stated that the cross hatching at the rear is double diagonal, which just indicates paving on the patio. As a follow up, a split-level was considered to apply some of the elements needed, but it was too costly, would have disturbed the topography and would have been an impractical layout. Expansion was done at the ground level, the square footage was reduced, and the layout was reworked. All of the requirements were satisfied, and the need to expand the garage was necessitated by the utility room being squeezed into the back of kitchen. The dormers were part of an effort to create articulation on the design and to bring light into the bedrooms. They were evenly balanced with three in the front and three in the back. Also, an octagonal tower—not circular—was added. Octagonal towers have been introduced in horse ranch estates in the past and can maintain the character of the ranch style. The eaves are wrapping around this entry tower from both sides, so only one will appear unbroken.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY addressed Staff's concerns with the circular tower entry and dormers. It didn't seem like a huge modification that would be necessary to get Staff's support. Ms. Greer responded that the windows could go down from 3 feet to 2 feet. If the dormers are objectionable in the front, one could be taken out and the other two spaced further away. However, the one per bedroom in the back are centered and should be kept.

COMMISSIONER BAYER asked for the total square footage with the additions, to which Ms. Greer responded 3,440 total square feet.

COMMISSIONER BAYER then asked Staff what size the entry tower should be and whether it is octagonal rather than circular. Planning Director Wahba pointed out that the shape is not the issue but the height. The tower should come down at least 2 feet, or perhaps there's a way to redesign that to still get a 2-foot transom window. Lowering it a foot doesn't really make that dramatic of an impact. Two dormer windows on the front are fine, and three on the back would probably work. There are two on the side of the garage that shouldn't be there, or maybe reduce that to one and maybe make it larger. The design is close, and the applicant has addressed most of Staff's concerns. If it can be agreed upon, changes can be attached to the resolution at the next meeting,

and the applicant could have an approval on the 16th of May. Ms. Greer added that the pitch of the tower could be worked with, and the dormers on the side of the garage could be one larger one in between each window as a compromise.

COMMISSIONER BAYER and CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN complimented Ms. Greer on the way she has worked with Staff and almost completely redone the plans, stating that it was commendable with excellent compromises and that Ms. Greer has serviced her client well.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER BAYER,

TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING

AYES: Southwell, Conway, Bayer, Chairman Pro Tem Rein
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Vanden Bos, O'Day, Chairman Killen

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, and COMMISSIONER BAYER seconded,

TO DIRECT STAFF TO BRING BACK A RESOLUTION APPROVING PA-22-04
MODIFYING THE PLANS AS DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING RELATIVE TO
THE OCTAGONAL TOWER AND THE DORMERS.

AYES: Southwell, Conway, Bayer, Chairman Pro Tem Rein
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Vanden Bos, O'Day, Chairman Killen

9. COMMISSION ITEMS

None.

10. DIRECTOR'S ITEMS

Planning Director Wahba stated that if anyone is interested in going to Palm Springs to the Contract Cities Conference on May 19th to the 22nd, Hope Nolan needs to be contacted ASAP.

11. MATTERS OF INFORMATION

- A. PARK AND ACTIVITIES COMMISSION MINUTES (APRIL 19, 2005).
- B. CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS (APRIL 12, 2005).
- C. CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS (APRIL 26, 2005).

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, and COMMISSIONER BAYER seconded,

TO RECEIVE AND FILE ITEMS 11A THROUGH 11C.

There being no objection, CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN so ordered.

12. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 p.m. CHAIRMAN PRO TEM REIN adjourned the Planning Commission meeting to May 16, 2005, at 7:30 p.m.

Julie Cremeans
Minutes Secretary

Douglas R. Prichard
City Clerk