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TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION – MARCH 16, 2016

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At 8:35 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, April 6, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Watson.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners Gibson, Herring, Polcari, Rudolph, Tsao, Watson and Chairperson D'anjou.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Sr. Planning Associate Santana, Planning Assistant Fernandez, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Plans Examiner Noh and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Friday, March 11, 2016.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve the February 17, 2016 Planning Commission minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tsao and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

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Chairperson D'anjou reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

8. TIME EXTENSIONS – None.

9. SIGN HEARINGS- None.

10. CONTINUED HEARINGS – None.

10A. PRE15-00020, WAV15-00012: MR. AND MRS. WIBAWA CHOU

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to permit as-built semi-subterranean and upper-level living areas and to allow upper level additions to an existing single-family residence, in conjunction with a Waiver of the southerly side-yard setback requirement, on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 22611 Draille Drive. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities and 15305 – Minor Alterations.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Fernandez introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of a revised Silhouette Certification form.

Jacky Sbarounis, project designer, reported that the project was revised and re-silhouetted to address the concerns of neighbors at 22615 Draille Drive. She voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Don Breier, 22615 Draille Drive, confirmed that he had no objections to the revised plans and thanked Planning Associate Gomez for her assistance in working out an agreement with the applicants.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tsao and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve PRE15-00020 and WAV15-00012, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tsao and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Fernandez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 15-093 and 15-094.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 15-093 and 15-094. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tsao and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

11. WAIVERS

11A. WAV16-00001: LANE DESIGN BUILD (JIM AND KYLA ADAMS)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Waiver of the side yard setback requirement related to first and second-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located in the R-1 Zone at 5527 Halison Street. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15305 – Minor Alterations.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Fernandez introduced the request.

Jim Adams, 5527 Halison Street, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He explained that the Waiver is necessary because he would like to build a second-story addition directly above the existing house and a portion of the westerly side yard setback does not meet current minimum requirements. He reported that he shared the plans with neighbors and they're in agreement with the project.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve WAV16-00001, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rudolph and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Fernandez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-027.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-027. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

12. FORMAL HEARINGS

12A. PRE15-00009: TOMARO DESIGN GROUP (ROBERTO DIGENOVA)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a new two-story, single-family residence on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 202 Via Anita. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Fernandez introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

Louie Tomaro, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He reported that this project has undergone five iterations and he believes the current design has successfully mitigated any impact on neighbors. He explained that the project maintains a single-story appearance by locating the garage and 1100 square feet of living space below grade and it features a modern design that is consistent with newer homes in the neighborhood.

Using slides to illustrate, Kimberly Chen, representing her parents, owners of 206 Via Anita, stated that the proposed project would obstruct the view and block light from her parents' kitchen and study thereby decreasing the value of their property. She noted that they used to have an ocean view from their yard, which has been blocked by trees on the applicants' property. She reported that she plans to move back into her parents' home and eventually remodel it and the proposed addition would adversely impact the new addition.

Commissioner Herring asked if the applicants had discussed the project with her parents, and Ms. Chen responded that Planning staff visited her parents' house and the architect also visited them once after they expressed concerns about the project, but the property owners never made contact.

Jeanine Speros read a letter from Judy Brunetti, co-president of Riviera Homeowners Association, in opposition to the project due to the impact on neighbors at 206 Via Anita. Ms. Speros expressed concerns that property owners are constructing oversized silhouettes and pretending to negotiate by reducing them inch-by-inch until they reach the size they desire, which causes unnecessary stress for neighbors, and urged Planning staff to discourage this practice.

Jean Norton, 307 Via San Sebastian, voiced objections to the project, citing the impact on ocean and city views and the loss of privacy. She reported that she has heard nothing from the property owners and her only contact has been with the Planning Department.

Mike Farrell, 508 Paseo de los Reyes, stated that he has reviewed the revised plans and his only concern is the privacy issue because the rooftop deck faces his bedroom window. He reported that he was never contacted by the property owners or the architect at any time.

John Stefan, realtor with Berkshire Hathaway, reported that he represented Mr. and Mrs. Chen when they purchased 206 Via Anita 25 years ago and much of their ocean view has been lost due to vegetation. He expressed concerns that the proposed project would block even more of their view and reduce the value of their home by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Del McCulloch, 120 Via Anita, stated that she was strongly opposed to the project due to the impact on her neighbors at 206 Via Anita.

Responding to audience members' comments, Mr. Tomaro stated that he was hired to design this project because he has designed several successful projects in the Hillside Overlay area and offered his assurance that he does not construct oversize silhouettes, but tries to find reasonable solutions balancing the interests of his client and neighbors. He reported that he met with Mrs. Chen twice to view the impact from her property, most recently before the silhouette was changed to reflect the latest revisions. He explained that the proposed ridge height is lower than the existing structure, which is not evident from the silhouette, and the project will actually create more views for neighbors. He further explained that the proposed roof deck will not impact privacy because it's tucked inside the roofline.

A brief discussion ensued, and Commissioners indicated that they liked the project, but thought it might be a little too large for this neighborhood and expressed concerns about the impact on the view at 206 Via Anita.

Mr. Tomaro responded that he would have liked for Commissioners to have visited 206 Via Anita because he believes the view impact has been mitigated.

Commissioner Rudolph asked if Mr. Tomaro would be amenable to a continuance so he and the property owners could meet with neighbors and try to arrive at a compromise, and Mr. Tomaro indicated his willingness to do so.

Commissioner Watson emphasized the need for the property owners to do neighborhood outreach.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Chairperson D'anjou encouraged the property owners to be more proactive with neighbors. Referring to Ms. Chen's comments, she explained that it would not be appropriate to deny this addition based on a potential impact to someone else's addition at some point in the future. She also clarified that it was not within the Commission's purview to regulate vegetation.

MOTION: Councilmember Rudolph moved to continue the hearing on this matter indefinitely. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana noted that the hearing will be re-advertised once a new date has been set.

12B. PRE15-00023: JOHN SPISAK

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 242 Paseo de las Delicias.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Fernandez introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

John Spisak, 242 Paseo de las Delicias, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He briefly described the proposed project, noting that it does not exceed the height of the existing residence and most of his neighbors are very happy with the design.

Charles Belak-Berger, project architect, reported that he learned shortly before this hearing that the neighbor to the east at 245 Via Linda Vista has concerns about the project and he subsequently met with this neighbor and believes these concerns can be mitigated by making minor adjustments.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that as long as the footprint of the building does not increase and the profile remains the same, minor revisions could be handled through the plan check process.

Nicholas Donahue, 245 Via Linda Vista, reported that he was concerned about a potential privacy impact and while the applicant was very receptive and they reached what he believes to be a good compromise, he would like it documented.

Asked to be specific about his privacy concern, Mr. Donahue explained that he was concerned about the balcony off the master bedroom that faces his backyard.

Commissioner Rudolph noted that even if the balcony was removed, the same view would exist from master bedroom windows.

Mr. Donahue reported that he was not exactly sure what the privacy impact would be because the applicant stood on a ladder where the balcony would be and claimed that he could only see shrubbery and a trellis.

Deborah Naumovski, on behalf of her brother Steve, owner of 241 Paseo de las Delicias, expressed support for the proposed project.

Mr. Spisak reported that perched on the ladder, he could only see trees and shrubbery except for one small segment, which would only be visible if he peers over the far left side of the balcony.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Commissioner Rudolph voiced support for the project as proposed, noting that there is ample room to plant more shrubbery on either of these properties to address any privacy impact.

He explained that he was not in favor of eliminating the balcony because the same view would exist from windows and the balcony is an important feature for the master bedroom.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to approve PRE15-00023, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Assistant Fernandez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-029.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-029. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

13. **RESOLUTIONS** – None.

14. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

15. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

15A. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR WEEKLY SUMMARY REPORTS**

Sr. Planning Associate Santana noted that the Community Development Director Weekly Summary Reports for February 26 and March 3, 2016 were distributed to the Commission.

16. **REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS**

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that the City Council adopted an ordinance establishing a Planning Commission Review process for the alteration or demolition of historic structures in the original Torrance Tract area, which will be in effect for one year while the City drafts a historic preservation plan.

17. **LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES**

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reviewed the agenda for the April 6, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

18. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

Commissioner Tsao, Commissioner Watson and Commissioner Polcari spoke.

19. **ADJOURNMENT**

8:35 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, April 6, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

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Approved as submitted April 20, 2016 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
