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TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION – APRIL 15, 2015

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At 7:55 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, May 6, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

April 15, 2015

**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, April 15, 2015, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner D'anjou.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners D'anjou, Herring, Skoll, Watson and Chairperson Polcari.

Absent: Commissioners Gibson and Tsao (excused)

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Assistant Lang,
Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Plans Examiner Noh,
Fire Prevention Specialist Aleman and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

Chairperson Polcari relayed Commissioner Gibson's request for an excused absence due to illness.

Commissioner Skoll, seconded by Commissioner D'anjou, so moved and voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Friday, April 10, 2015.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved for the approval of the March 18, 2015 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

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Chairperson Polcari 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.

11. **WAIVERS** - None

12. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

12A. **CUP15-00005: TOYS 2 GO TOURING, LLC (NICHOLAS NEWMAN/ 357 VAN NESS WAY, LLC)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of vehicle and outdoor recreation equipment rentals, with limited retail sales on property located in the M-2 Zone at 365 Van Ness Way, Suite 501. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Lang introduced the request.

Nicholas Newman, Toys 2 Go Touring, applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He explained that Toys 2 Go Touring is a start-up adventure touring business, which offers the rental of a wide variety of outdoor recreational equipment, along with specially outfitted trailers and jeeps to transport it. He noted that the company is the only one-stop outfitter in California.

Chairperson Polcari stated that he was very impressed by the package provided by the applicant and was surprised that no one has thought of this before.

Commissioner Skoll stated that he was also impressed and would take advantage of these rentals, but adventure is not his bailiwick.

Steve Fechner, Surf Management, owner of subject property, reported that he typically does not attend hearings involving his tenants, but he is enthusiastic about this business and believes it is a great concept. He noted that the company initially planned to rent a unit in another complex on Skypark, however he felt this unit was more suitable because there is plenty of room in the parking lot to maneuver. He urged approval of the project, which will bring adventure-oriented tourism to Torrance.

Asked why he chose to locate in Torrance, Mr. Newman explained that he formerly worked in Torrance and had a good experience with Planning Department and Economic Development staff and felt that Torrance was the perfect location because it has hotels to accommodate visitors before and after their adventures and it is close to LAX and beaches.

Commissioner Skoll requested clarification of Condition No. 8, which prohibits the storage of vehicles within the building unless Building and Fire Code provisions are implemented.

Fire Prevention Officer Aleman advised that since the building was designed as a warehouse and not as a garage, there would be have to be changes to the ventilation and all ignition sources such as water heaters would have to be raised a certain distance off the ground.

Mr. Newman reported that he does not intend to store any vehicles inside the building.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to approve CUP15-00005, as conditioned, including all findings set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 15-026.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 15-026. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

12B. PRE15-00005, WAV15-00004: LANE DESIGN BUILD (TONY & MEENA LANGNESE)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions to an existing two-story, single-family residence, in conjunction with a Waiver of the side yard setback requirement, on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 233 Via Los Miradores. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Sections 15301 – Existing Facilities and 15305 – Minor Alterations.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Lang introduced the request.

Commissioner Watson disclosed that she drove by the property, but did not speak with anyone.

Tony Langnese, 233 Via Los Miradores, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He explained that he and his wife have had two children since purchasing the property in 2006 and they would like to expand the home because their family needs more space. He briefly described the proposed addition, noting that he is building down into the grade instead of building up. He reported that there were a few issues when the silhouette first went up so his architect revised the plans prior to this hearing to take care of neighbors' concerns.

Chairperson Polcari noted that several people in this area have built down instead of up and he believes it's a good solution. He asked about the timeline for project.

Mr. Langnese reported that he is ready to start the project as soon as he rents another place to live while the home is under construction.

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

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to approve PRE15-00005 and WAV15-00004, as conditioned, including all findings set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 15-027 and 15-028.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 15-027 and 15-028. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

Commissioner D'anjou, echoed by Chairperson Polcari, thanked the applicants for working with their neighbors, which makes for a much smoother process.

12C. PRE15-00006: RUMEN EREMIYSKI (ERIC & BRENDA COE)

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- Zone at 5530 Laurette Street. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

Recommendation: Approval.

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

Commissioner Herring disclosed that he drove by the property, but did not speak with anyone.

Eric Coe, 5530 Laurette Street, applicant, stated that he and his wife would like to expand their home because they have four children and another one on the way. He noted that the second-floor addition will be sleeping quarters and all living areas will remain on the first floor.

Responding to privacy concerns (per letter from Dan Hall, 22101 Albert Street), Mr. Coe noted that there is a four-story condominium complex with balconies facing this neighbor's backyard; that the neighbor at 22105 Albert Street has built a large structure on the hillside that has a direct view into this backyard; and that he can look into this neighbor's backyard now by simply walking up the grade, therefore he does not believe the project will create any privacy impact beyond what already exists.

Brenda Coe, 5530 Laurette Street, applicant, pointed out that the addition will be set back 35 feet from the property line. She reported that both her residence and the neighbor's residence have steep hills behind them leading up to Wilderness Park from which one can easily see into their backyards.

Referring to concerns about artificial light and noise from second-floor bedrooms, Mr. Coe explained that the rooms facing the Halls' property are bedrooms for his children, who are all under the age of 2, and they deliberately kept the bedrooms small because they only want the children to sleep there. He suggested that there will be noise in the backyard regardless of where the bedrooms are. He noted that Mr. Thomas also expressed concerns about glare from solar panels, but related his understanding that panels would only produce glare if they were installed incorrectly. Responding to the concern that the home was a short-term investment, he stated that he and his wife bought this home with the intention of raising their family there; that his wife grew up in Torrance and has family in the immediate area; and that he has a secure job in the aerospace industry. He apologized for not sharing information

about the project with the neighbors at 22101 Albert, explaining that he discussed the project with neighbors on either side, but did not believe this neighbor would be impacted.

Mrs. Coe reported that she and her husband moved from Redondo Beach to Torrance so she could be closer to her parents and her brother and sister-in-law and they come over frequently to help with the children.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan disclosed that he worked in the courthouse with Mrs. Coe when she was a prosecutor for Redondo Beach and he was a prosecutor for Torrance, but this will not affect any advice he gives this evening.

Dan Hall, 22101 Albert Street, stated that the applicants have admitted that they are compromising his privacy and the fact his privacy is already somewhat compromised was not a valid argument. He explained that while his neighbors have a playhouse on the hillside that overlooks his property, it is used only occasionally as opposed to the bedrooms that will be used every night.

Ann Hall, 22101 Albert Street, reported that she has played horseshoes on the hillside and observed that neighbors do not have a view into her home because of the way it is angled. She stated that the project's second-floor windows would impact her privacy because currently no one can look into her yard and if the Coes sold the house to someone else, she would be uncomfortable because she has a daughter.

Mr. Hall voiced his opinion that it was only common sense that his property would lose value as a result of this project due to the loss of privacy. He indicated that he remained concerned about artificial light from the upstairs bedrooms since children need the lights on more than adults. He expressed concerns about noise coming from the bedrooms because with the windows open it can travel unimpeded, unlike noise from the backyard where there is a fence to deflect it and noted that most outdoor activities take place during the daytime. With regard to the solar panels, he stated that he believes it's a safety issue because someone could be blinded by the glare while coming down the hill. He related his understanding that there are mathematical calculations that can determine what times of year his property will be affected due to the position of the sun and asked to be provided with this information. He contended that the onus was on the applicants to show that neighbors' privacy has been protected and the Coes have not done this.

Commissioner Skoll stated that since the addition will be 35 feet from the property line and the windows of concern are bedroom windows, he did not believe there would be a privacy impact.

Mr. Hall submitted photographs to illustrate his concerns.

Mrs. Hall stated that rather than privacy, she was more concerned that light and noise from the addition will interfere with the enjoyment of her backyard, explaining that neighbors' lights cannot be seen in the backyard so it has a more rural-type atmosphere.

Chairperson Polcari related his preference that the applicants work with their neighbors to try to mitigate their concerns.

Rumen Eremiyski, project architect, submitted a view study he prepared in response to privacy concerns, explaining that the line-of-sight from the windows is over and beyond the neighbors' property, not into their backyard.

Chairperson Polcari asked about the row of junipers shown in the renderings.

Mr. Eremiyski reported that the junipers will be planted to protect the privacy of both the applicants and their neighbors since privacy is a two-way street.

Commissioner Skoll asked about the distance from the addition to the Halls' house, and Mr. Eremiyski estimated the distance to be 65-70 feet.

Commissioner Watson questioned whether there was a way to calculate what the glare would be from the solar panels.

Mr. Coe offered to have a study done on the potential glare and suggested that a shield could be installed if there is a problem.

Mr. Eremiyski explained that most solar panels come with low-glare screens and newer ones have darker finishes because the idea is to absorb light, not reflect it.

Commissioner Herring asked for staff's opinion on this issue.

Planning Manager Lodan reported that he had not heard any complaints about glare from solar panels and felt this could be addressed by choosing panels with a matte finish.

Commissioner D'anjou related her understanding that the Hillside Ordinance provision which states that a project shall not have an adverse impact on the view, light, air and privacy of neighboring properties refers to natural light, not artificial light.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan confirmed that the ordinance is meant to address the blockage of natural light. He clarified that the City Council's interpretation of this section is that a project shall not have a "substantial" adverse impact since every development will have some impact.

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

Commissioner D'anjou stated that she did not believe the project would have a substantial adverse impact on any of the neighbors, citing the generous setback and the layout of the project. She noted that issues involving noise and artificial light are not within the purview of the Hillside Ordinance.

Chairperson Polcari stated that he found the Assistant City Attorney's clarification helpful and will be voting to approve the project.

Commissioner Watson noted her agreement with Commissioner D'anjou's remarks.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to approve PRE15-00006, as conditioned, including all findings set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

Planning Assistant Lang read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 15-029.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 15-029. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Tsao).

13. **RESOLUTIONS** – None.

14. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

15. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

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

Planning Manager Lodan noted that the Community Development Director Weekly Summary Reports for March 27 and April 2, 2015 were distributed to the Commission.

16. **REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS** - None.

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

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the May 6, 2015 Planning Commission meeting.

18. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

18A. Commissioner D'anjou commented positively on the quote by William Blake on the meeting agenda.

19. **ADJOURNMENT**

7:55 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, May 6, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

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Approved as submitted May 20, 2015 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
