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TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION – OCTOBER 5, 2016

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At 9:00 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, October 19, 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, October 5, 2016, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Tsao.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners Gibson, Gobble, Rudolph, Polcari, Tsao and Chairperson Watson.

Absent: Commissioner D'anjou.

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Associate Kevin Joe, Plans Examiner Noh, Fire Prevention Manager Kazandjian, Associate Civil Engineer Symons and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to grant Commissioner D'anjou an excused absence for this meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on September 29, 2016.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

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Chairperson Watson 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

10A. CUP15-00035, DIV15-00011, WAV15-00018: RICKY DE LA ROSA (JOE AND OLIVIA MANALO)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow a three-unit residential condominium development, in conjunction with a Division of Lot for condominium purposes, and a Waiver of the front yard and side yard setback requirements on property located in the R-3 Zone at 2109 218th Street. This project is categorically exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction, 15315 – Minor Land Divisions, and 15305 – Minor Alterations.

Recommendation: Approval.

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

Commissioner Gobble announced that he was recusing himself from this hearing because there was considerable testimony on this project prior to his appointment to the Commission in August, which he was not able to review, and exited the dais.

Chairperson Watson announced that she was also recusing herself from this hearing because she lives in close proximity to the project and exited the dais.

Olivia Manalo requested that this matter be held until later in the meeting because her architect had not arrived, and it was the consensus of the Commission to do so.

Commissioner Gobble and Chairperson Watson returned to the dais at this time.

10B. PRE15-00004: BIZHAN KHALEELI (MOHAMAD CHAHINE)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a new two-story, single-family residence with a rooftop deck on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5505 Riviera Way. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Joe introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed and a revised resolution modifying Condition No. 7.

Commissioner Gobble announced that he was recusing himself from this hearing because he was not present at the previous hearing on this project where considerable testimony occurred and exited the dais.

Bizhan Khaleeli, project architect, reviewed revisions made to the project to address neighbors' concerns about privacy impact, referring to renderings to illustrate. He noted that a fireplace has been incorporated on the east side of the rooftop deck, which completely blocks the view into the property next door at 5437 Riviera Way. He pointed out that the staff report from September 2, 2015 (staff report – Attachment 6) acknowledges that a second floor balcony would likely have a greater impact on neighbors than the proposed rooftop deck.

Paul Barrere, 5434 Riviera Way, voiced objections to the project, contending that it would block a partial ocean view from a deck in his backyard, thereby reducing the value of his property.

Les Sheckman, 5437 Riviera Way, stated that the architect has tried to find a solution, but he remains concerned about privacy impact from the rooftop deck. He voiced his opinion that having a balcony off the second floor and incorporating a fire pit and a water feature at ground level would be a better compromise. He reported that according to his research, no more than one rooftop deck has been approved in the Hillside Overlay. He maintained that his balcony does not have the same impact as the proposed rooftop deck because is it only 70 square feet as compared to over 200 square feet accessible from the main living area.

Ray Sanders, 23627 Susana Avenue, voiced objections to the proposed rooftop deck due to privacy impact, explaining that he would prefer a second-floor balcony because it would be blocked by shrubbery. He stated that he was also concerned about noise and light coming from the deck and the potential that the project would block light from his property.

Mr. Khaleeli disputed Mr. Barrere's claim of view impact. He explained that the view from his home is already blocked by a large tree and the existing two-story home directly across the street and the area he described as a backyard deck is a park bench sitting on dirt. He voiced his opinion that it was unreasonable for someone to claim a view impact from an unimproved portion of their lot. He also disputed claims of privacy impact, pointing out that Exhibits 4A and 4B (staff report – Attachment 3) clearly show that there will be no view into adjacent properties from the rooftop deck. He noted that the project is in full compliance will all City of Torrance building regulations.

In response to Commissioner Rudolph's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan clarified that the project provides a rear yard setback of 29 feet 10 inches, which exceeds the 20-foot setback requirement, and the rooftop deck is set in another 8 feet from the edge of the building.

Commissioner Rudolph asked about the height of the floor of the rooftop deck, and Mr. Khaleeli reported that the floor height is 20 feet and the maximum height of the structure is 26.5 feet as measured from the top of the chimney, which is 2 feet above the roofline.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve PRE15-00004, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rudolph and passed by 5-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner Gobble (recused) and Commissioner D'anjou.

Planning Associate Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 15-030.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 15-030. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rudolph and passed by 5-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner Gobble (recused) and Commissioner D'anjou.

Agenda Item 10A was considered out of order at this time.

10A. CUP15-00035, DIV15-00011, WAV15-00018: RICKY DE LA ROSA (JOE AND OLIVIA MANALO)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow a three-unit residential condominium development, in conjunction with a Division of Lot for condominium purposes, and a Waiver of the front yard and side yard setback requirements on property located in the R-3 Zone at 2109 218th Street. This project is categorically exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction, 15315 – Minor Land Divisions, and 15305 – Minor Alterations.

Recommendation: Approval.

Chairperson Watson exited the dais, having previously announced that she was recusing herself from this hearing.

Commissioner Rudolph, as Vice Chair, chaired this portion of the meeting and it was noted that Commissioner Gobble was also absent from the dais having previously recused himself from this hearing.

Ricky de la Rosa, project architect, reviewed revisions made to the project to address concerns about massing, scale and privacy as discussed at the August 3, 2016 Commission meeting. He noted that the height of the project has been lowered to under 27 feet and one of the bedrooms has been eliminated from Unit B in order to comply with parking requirements.

Commissioner Rudolph asked if the applicant had done any outreach to neighbors, and Mr. de la Rosa reported that his client dropped off plans at neighbors' homes and sent information via email, but has had no physical interaction with them.

Brian McCarthy, 2113 W. 218th Street, reported that he found the revised plans in his mailbox on Monday and the revisions did not address his concerns about privacy and the blockage of sunlight. He stated that the plans still call for three units on an undersized lot and while the third story has been eliminated, this only resulted in a 3-foot height reduction in the rear units while the front unit was increased in height by 3 feet. He suggested that the garage for the middle unit is so difficult to get into, the people living there will probably park on the street.

Barbara Shrader voiced objections to the Waiver, and Planning Manager Lodan explained that the Waiver is only necessary so that the existing façade can be retained.

Mike Richardson, 1742 Watson Avenue, voiced objections to the project, maintaining that it was still too large for this narrow lot. He noted that he has had no contact from the applicant and the only information he has received has been from the City of Torrance.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan disclosed that he used to live next door to Mr. Richardson, but that would not affect his legal advice to the Commission.

Emily Barclay, 1734 Watson Avenue, indicated that she shares her neighbors' concerns about the project, noting that she also has received no information from the applicant.

Aisling McCarthy, 2113 W. 218th Street, expressed concerns there has been no reduction in the project's square footage since the last hearing and no effort to address any of her concerns. She related her belief that the applicants were trying to maximize their property value at the expense of neighbors.

Elizabeth Thompson, 1751 Martinez Avenue, reported that the applicant has not listened to neighbors' concerns, noting that her only contact was an email late last evening.

Janet Payne, 1318 Engracia Avenue, contended that the applicants were trying to get the most out of their investment with no regard for the impact on neighbors' investments and their quality of life and suggested that a two-unit project would be more in keeping with the neighborhood. She voiced her opinion that some of the three-unit projects that have been allowed in the area were a huge mistake and greatly detract from this historic neighborhood.

Commissioner Rudolph asked if Ms. Payne would object to three units if they were all single-story.

Ms. Payne responded that she did not believe there would be room for three units and the required garages if they were only one-story. She related her understanding that the R-3 zoning in this area was established because it is not solely residential and the lots were really not meant to have three units built on them.

John Muller, 1755 Martinez Avenue, recalled that the owner of the property had indicated that she was receptive to building two units instead of three at the last hearing and voiced objections to the overdevelopment of this property.

Evelyn Davalos, 1746 Manuel Avenue, voiced her opinion that the project was too big for the neighborhood, noting that there is nothing of this scale in the immediate area. She questioned why Chairperson Watson had recused herself from the hearing because she was present at an earlier hearing.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that Chairperson Watson lives within the project's notification area.

Commissioner Rudolph expressed concerns that the architect had done little to appease neighbors.

Mr. de la Rosa explained that he eliminated the third story in response to neighbors' concerns and redesigned the project according to what's permitted per the zoning code. He noted that he mentioned at the last hearing that the footprint of the project would get bigger with a two-story design.

Commissioner Polcari expressed dismay that no neighborhood outreach was done in connection with the project despite the widespread opposition. Noting that this was the third hearing on this project, he stated that he thought the applicant was wasting the Commission's time and he was ready to deny the project.

Mr. de la Rosa reported that his client was afraid to even approach some of the neighbors after the last hearing because of how tempers were flaring. He noted that the City has a very credible staff who provide guidance for architects and that he designed the project based on what the code permits - the same guidelines that apply to everyone who has an R-3 property.

Commissioner Gibson voiced her opinion that just because someone can do something, does not mean that they should. She disputed the idea that people in this area are so dangerous that the applicant would be afraid to meet with them. She stated that she was tired of hearing excuses and favored sending the project back to the drawing board.

Commissioner Tsao indicated that he believed a two-unit project was more appropriate for the neighborhood.

Mr. de la Rosa contended that the project as proposed was appropriate given the context of the site, noting that there is a two-story, multi-unit apartment building next door.

In response to Commissioner Rudolph's inquiry, Mr. de la Rosa reported that the proposed project is approximately the same height as the apartment building.

Commissioner Rudolph acknowledged that Mr. de la Rosa was in a difficult position in trying to appease both his client and neighbors, but voiced his opinion that he had not spent enough time on the latter. He noted that the purpose of granting a continuance was to allow him additional time to work with neighbors to try to find a happy medium, however it appears that he quickly went ahead with the redesign without their input. He related his belief that Mr. de la Rosa should not have accepted his client's excuse for not meeting with neighbors.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to deny CUP15-00035, DIV15-00011 and WAV15-00018. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by 4-0 vote, absent Chairperson Watson (recused), Commissioner Gobble (recused) and Commissioner D'anjou.

Planning Manager Lodan noted that resolutions reflecting the Commission's action will be brought back for approval at the next meeting.

Chairperson Watson and Commissioner Gobble returned to the dais.

11. **WAIVERS** – None.

12. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

12A. **GPA16-00002, ZON16-00003 (EAS16-00003): CITY OF TORRANCE**

Planning Commission consideration for adoption of a Negative Declaration and for approval of a General Plan Amendment from "Low-Density Residential" to "Public/Quasi-Public/Open Space" and a Zone Change from R-2 (Two-Family Residential) to P-U (Public Use) to allow the reconfiguration and expansion of the adjacent parking lot area of Torrance Fire Station No. 1, on property located in the R-2 Zone at 1716 Date Avenue.

Recommendation: Approval.

Sr. Planning Associate Joe introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of revised code requirements.

Beth Overstreet, Public Works Department, reported that the City would like to incorporate this property into the existing parking lot for Fire Station No. 1 and although it will only add about 5 parking spaces, parking lot circulation will be vastly improved. She noted that the City has done community outreach to inform neighbors about the project.

Commissioner Rudolph suggested that a street tree be planted along the property frontage, as would be required if a new residence was being built on the site and using the dirt patch in the southwest corner as an organic garden for the Fire Department.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan advised that these items could not be included as conditions of approval, but the Commission could suggest them.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Ms. Overstreet confirmed that the parking lot will be enclosed within a fence and reported that there's no timeline for the project because it's still in the conceptual stage.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and hearing no objection, Chairperson Watson so ordered.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve GPA16-00002, ZON16-00003 and EAS16-00003. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by a 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D'anjou.

Planning Manager Lodan offered to discuss the possibility of incorporating landscaping along the frontage with the Public Works Department.

12B. CUP16-00019: JUAN GONZALES (BRAVO COLLISION, INC)

Planning Commission approval for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of an automotive repair facility on property located in the M-2 Zone at 1801 Del Amo Boulevard. The project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

Recommendation: Approval.

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

Juan Gonzales, applicant, explained that he would like to expand his existing auto repair shop, which is located across the street from the subject property.

In response to Commissioner Rudolph's inquiry, Mr. Gonzales reported that his shop is authorized to repair a variety of vehicles, including Lexus, Honda, and Infinity.

In response to Chairperson Watson's inquiry, Mr. Gonzales confirmed that handicapped parking spaces will be added to the parking lot.

Commissioner Polcari asked about the timeline for the project, and Mr. Gonzales reported that the building is vacant and he's ready to move in immediately.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and hearing no objection, Chairperson Watson so ordered.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve CUP16-00019, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D'anjou.

Planning Associate Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-083.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-083. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D'anjou.

12C. PCR16-00002: MARISA FALCONE

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Planning Commission Review to allow first and second-story additions and a new detached garage to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located within the Torrance Tract Overlay in the R-1 Zone at 1416 Acacia Avenue. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Joe introduced the request.

Planning Manager Lodan noted that this was the first application to come forward in the Torrance Tract Overlay, which was put in place as a temporary measure while the City continues to study options for historic preservation.

Sean Hardin, representing the applicant Marisa Falcone, explained that she would like to expand her house to accommodate her growing children and replace the existing one-car garage with a two-car garage. He noted that neighbors have been informed about the project and they have no issues with it.

Mary Lang, 1304 Acacia Avenue, stated that she did not object to the project, but was concerned about the notification process because the notice mailed to her just arrived.

After reviewing records, Planning Manager Lodan reported that a notice of this hearing was mailed to 1304 Acacia on September 23, 2016 and he could not account for the delay in delivery.

Ms. Lang requested information about the Torrance Tract Overlay and it was recommended that she contact the Community Development Department for more detailed information.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and hearing no objection, Chairperson Watson so ordered.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to approve PCR16-00002, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D'anjou.

Planning Associate Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-084.

MOTION: Commissioner Rudolph moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-084. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D'anjou.

12D. PRE16-00009, WAV16-00008: ROBIN AHN

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow one-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence, in conjunction with a Waiver of the garage setback requirement, on property located within the R-1 Zone at 205 Calle de Madrid. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities, and 15305 – Minor Alterations.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Joe introduced the request.

Gary Lane, project designer, provided background information about the evolution of the project. He explained that this project began about 1½ years ago with a living room and kitchen addition, which was approved after neighbors reviewed the plans and signed off on the project, and it was subsequently revised to include a master bedroom suite and a new garage after his client learned that her mother was going to have to move in with her. He reported that the one-story project features a contemporary design to minimize the impact on neighbors and the existing peaked roof will be replaced with a flat roof, resulting in a height reduction of 4-5 feet. He noted that the neighbor at 212 Calle de Madrid has expressed concerns about view impact, however the view in question is an acquired view from a second-story addition and staff determined that the proposed one-story design would have the least impact since there are four properties that overlook the site. He stated that he met with this neighbor and agreed to take out shrubs that were creating a blind spot for traffic and they also discussed the possibility of taking out trees to address view impact.

Commissioner Polcari asked about the timeline, and Mr. Lane reported that the first part of the project has been completed and it will probably be 3-4 months before the rest of the project can begin.

In response to Chairperson Watson's inquiry, Mr. Lane clarified that the Waiver was necessary because a corner of the garage intrudes into the required setback due to the irregular shape of the lot.

Mike Moyer, 212 Calle de Madrid, explained that he requested removal of the hedge due to safety concerns because there are a lot of children on this block who play in the street. He reported that a survey crew drilled holes in the street in the late spring/early summer which have not been filled and this also creates a safety hazard for children.

Chairperson Watson doubted that the holes in the street were related to this project, and Planning Manager Lodan offered to check with the Public Works Department about this issue.

Mr. Moyer expressed concerns that the proposed project would impact his view to the northwest from the ground level and the second-floor master bedroom and balcony, explaining that the portion affecting his view is the triangular-shaped section that juts out in the front of the house. He noted that while there is only a slight view through the trees during the day, he can see the “queen’s necklace” at night.

Commissioner Gibson voiced her opinion that Mr. Moyer should be happy that the applicant has proposed a single-story project with a flat roof instead of making unreasonable demands.

Mr. Moyer clarified that his only concern about the project was the triangular section and if something could be done about it, his concern would go away.

Mr. Lane reported that the section Mr. Moyer is referring to was part of the original project that he signed off on.

In response to Commissioner Rudolph’s inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan confirmed that the entire project was under consideration.

Commissioner Rudolph indicated that he had no objections to the project and felt concerns about the triangular portion should have been raised a year ago. He noted that he believes Waivers should be difficult to obtain and gives a lot of weight to the fact that staff supports this Waiver.

Commissioner Gobble commended the property owner for agreeing to take out the shrubs because he lives in this area and has observed that they are a safety hazard and suggested that this be included as a condition of approval. He asked about trees along the front of the property.

Mr. Lane reported that there are two large elm trees near the bend in the road, and Commissioner Gobble indicated that he would not want to see them cut down.

In response to Commissioner Gobble’s inquiry, Mr. Lane confirmed that the project will include an outlet for electric vehicles.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve PRE16-00009 and WAV16-00008, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rudolph and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D’anjou.

Planning Associate Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 16-085 and 16-086.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 16-085 and 16-086. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rudolph and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D’anjou.

13. RESOLUTIONS

13A. CUP16-00005, DIV16-00004, WAV16-00009, ZON16-00002: ROBERT STRINGFIELD (WAYNE ANASTASI)

Planning Commission adoption of resolutions reflecting their decision to deny a Zone Change from ML (M1-PP) (Limited Manufacturing District with Light Manufacturing – Precise Plan Overlay) to R-3 (Limited Multiple Family Residential District), in conjunction with a Conditional Use Permit to allow a 25-unit multiple-family residential community, a Waiver to allow a reduction of the window separation requirement, and a Tentative Tract Map for subdivision purposes, on property located in the ML (M1-PP) Zone at 20411 Earl Street. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Sections 15332 – In-Fill Development and Final Environmental Impact Report State Clearinghouse No. 20081110146 – 2009 Torrance General Plan Update.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 16-066, 16-067 and 16-068. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by 6-0 roll call vote, absent Commissioner D’anjou.

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 Report for September 23, 2016 was distributed to the Commission.

16. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the City Council reviewed the draft ordinance regulating vegetation in the Hillside Overlay on October 4, 2016 and staff was directed to make minor revisions and bring it back for formal adoption.

17. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the October 19, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

18. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

Mary Lang requested clarification regarding time limitations on speakers.

19. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:00 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, October 19, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

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Approved as submitted November 2, 2016 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
