

**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 7, 2007, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

**2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gibson.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Present: Commissioners Browning, Busch, Gibson, Horwich, Weideman and Chairperson Faulk.

Absent: Commissioner Uchima (excused).

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Associate Hurd, Planning Assistant Graham, Fire Marshal Gebel, Plans Examiner Noh, Deputy City Attorney Sullivan, and Associate Civil Engineer Symons.

**4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA**

Planning Manager Lodan reported on the posting of the agenda.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Browning noted a scrivener's error in the February 7, 2007 Planning Commission minutes.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Browning moved for the approval of the February 7, 2007 minutes as corrected. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Busch and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

**6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENT**

Planning Manager Lodan relayed a request to continue Agenda Item 11B (CUP06-00027, DIV06-00025: Greg Armer) to April 4, 2007.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Busch moved to continue Agenda Item 11B to April 4, 2007. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

**7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC #1 – None.**

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

8. **TIME EXTENSIONS** - None.

9. **CONTINUED HEARINGS**

9A. **PRE06-00033: GHASSAN ELMEL (BIZHAN KHALEELI)**

Planning Commission continued consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a new two-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5312 Doris Way.

**Recommendation**

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of correspondence and an added condition reflecting the summary of revisions submitted by the architect.

Bizhan Khaleeli, project architect, reported that he met with neighbors and made a number of revisions to address their concerns, including eliminating square footage, using frosted glass for both east and west facing second-floor windows, and reducing the size of rear balconies. He voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Claire Shanahan, 5304 Doris Way, requested confirmation that both the upper and the lower balcony on the rear of the house would be reduced in size. She stated that she would prefer to have no upper balcony due to the impact on her privacy and that she would also like the side yard setback increased to allow more sunlight and air to her property.

John Houghtaling, 5324 Doris Way, expressed concerns that the project would affect the stability of the hillside.

Mercedes Houghtaling, 5324 Doris Way, stated that she does not object to the project, but would like to see a stable family move into the new home.

Mr. Khaleeli confirmed that both the upper and lower rear balconies would be reduced to 5 feet by 15.5 feet.

Referring to an added condition (supplemental material), Commissioner Horwich indicated that he favored requiring a decorative block wall along the east and west property line rather than allowing the use of landscaping to ensure privacy.

Commissioner Busch suggested specifying that either treated or frosted glass could be used on second-floor windows.

Responding to Mr. Houghtaling's concerns, Plans Examiner Noh advised that the applicant will be required to submit a soils report during the plan check process to ensure that the stability of the hillside will not be adversely affected by the project.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Busch moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Browning stated that while he observed no impact on views, he believed the project would block light and intrude on the privacy of 5304 Doris Way therefore he would not support it.

Commissioner Weideman expressed concerns that the second-story balcony would create a "fish-bowl" living experience for Ms. Shanahan and her family.

Commissioner Busch indicated that he was also concerned about the balcony's impact on privacy and suggested that the public hearing be reopened to see if the applicant would be willing to eliminate it.

Mr. Khaleeli agreed to eliminate the upper balcony on the rear of the home, possibly adding a roof element over the window for architectural interest.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Busch moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of PRE06-00033, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff with the following modifications:

**Modify**

That the applicant shall include all modifications identified in the applicant's summary of revisions as follows:

- All glazing on east and west facades on the second floor shall use treated or frosted glass;
- Glazing on the east and west facades at the first floor will be blocked by landscaping or a six-foot high decorative block or masonry wall;
- There shall be no window facing east in the second-floor game room;
- The lower balcony off the living room shall be a maximum of 5 feet in depth and 15.5 feet in width;
- The upper balcony off the master bedroom shall be eliminated;
- The width of the proposed residence shall be a maximum of 49 feet; and
- The square footage of the proposed residence shall not exceed 2,953 square feet.

These modifications are to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by a 5-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Browning dissenting (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 07-018.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gibson moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 07-018 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

**9B. PRE06-00036: MILES PRITZKAT (MICHAEL AND KIM ORIGEL)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a previously approved Precise Plan of Development (PRE02-00027) for a new two-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 260 Calle de Madrid.

**Recommendation**

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich introduced the request.

Miles Pritzkat, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval and noted that the proposed plans are the same as those approved in February 2003.

Robert Jensen, 256 Calle de Madrid, stated that he withdrew his objections to the project in 2003 after the second-floor balcony was relocated to address privacy issues, but the new silhouette is much closer to his home and does not comply with the required rear yard setback.

Laura Medina, 347 Calle de Andalucia, voiced objections to the proposed project, citing the impact on her privacy, and submitted photographs to illustrate. She stated that the silhouette completely dominates the view from the rear of her house and backyard and that the project will tower over her home due to the difference in elevation.

Mike Origel, 260 Calle de Madrid, explained that the proposed project is exactly the same as the previously approved project, an approval which has expired, and that he was puzzled as to why neighbors perceive it to be different.

Chairperson Faulk questioned whether Mr. Origel had discussed the project with his neighbors, and Mr. Origel responded that he thought there would be no opposition because neighbors' concerns were resolved when the project was approved three years ago.

Michelle Casper, 343 Calle de Andalucia, stated that Mr. Origel agreed at the February 2003 meeting to plant large trees at the southwest corner to preserve her privacy and she wanted to make sure that these trees will still be part of the landscaping.

Mr. Jensen, echoed by Ms. Medina, recalled that the silhouette for the 2003 project looked very different from the current silhouette.

Planning Manager Lodan suggested the possibility that the difference might be because the new silhouette includes eaves and overhangs, while the earlier one did not.

Mr. Pritzkat reported that the same silhouette plan was given to the contractor and a change in vegetation was the only thing that he could think of that could account for the difference in perception. He pointed out that windows were located to ensure that neighbors' privacy would be protected, explaining that the only rear-facing windows are French doors in the master bedroom and a high window in a closet.

Commissioner Browning noted that while a silhouette must reflect the exact height of a project and this measurement is certified, it is not always possible to place posts to reflect the exact footprint, and that might be why Mr. Jensen noticed the discrepancy in the side yard setback.

Commissioner Browning voiced objections to the project's Floor Area Ratio, which at .59, exceeds the .50 standard by square footage roughly the size of a three-car garage.

Commissioner Busch stated that he believed the project was too large and the FAR was too high, noting that he was not a member of the Commission in 2003 when the previous project was approved.

The public hearing was reopened, and Mr. Pritzkat requested a continuance so that he could address commissioners' concerns.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Horwich moved to continue PRE06-00036 indefinitely. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

10. **WAIVERS** – None.

11. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

11A. **DIV07-00002: KARL RIEMER (TORRANCE LAND PARTNERS, LLC)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Lot Line Adjustment between Lots 8 and 9 of a previously approved Tentative Tract Map (TTM54148) on property located in the M-2 Zone at 2301 190<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Recommendation**

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich introduced the request.

Karl Riemer, representing Torrance Land Partners, explained that it was discovered that a building on Lot 8 encroaches on Lot 9 and the proposed Lot Line Adjustment would correct this unintentional mistake.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Browning moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Busch moved for the approval of DIV07-00002, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 07-028.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 07-028. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

The Commission recessed from 8:10 p.m. to 8:22 p.m.

**11B. CUP06-00027, DIV06-00027: GREG ARMER**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a three-unit condominium project in conjunction with a Division of Lot for condominium purposes on property located in the R-3 Zone at 1217 Arlington Avenue.

Continued to April 4, 2007.

**11C. PRE06-00023, WAV06-00013: ROSA VELAZQUEZ (DAE LEE)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions in conjunction with a Waiver to allow a reduction of the interior side yard setback for an existing single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 20323 Tomlee Avenue.

**Recommendation**

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich introduced the request.

Rosa Velazquez, project architect, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Horwich moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Busch expressed support for the project, noting that the FAR of .45 falls well within guidelines, and commended Planning Assistant Graham for the well written staff report.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Busch moved for the approval of PRE06-00023 and WAV06-00013, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 07-031 and 07-034.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 07-031 and 07-034. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

**11D. PRE06-00038: PETER ROTHE (KEVIN IMOTO)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a new second story, a first-story addition and interior remodeling to an existing one-story, single-family residence located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5449 Edgemere Drive.

**Recommendation**

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich introduced the request.

Kevin Imoto, 5449 Edgemere Drive, applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He briefly described the proposed project, noting that he shared the plans with his neighbors and received no adverse comments.

Commissioner Horwich stated that he believed the application listed legitimate reasons why denial of the request to increase the interior floor area of the building to more than 50% would constitute an unreasonable hardship, however, he did not believe the fact that the rear portion of the lot is not buildable (Resolution 07-032, Finding J) was relevant with regard to this issue.

Planning Manager Lodan suggested that the steeply sloping lot was more pertinent to the increase in the height, which is also listed in Finding J, and noted that staff bases findings solely on topographical features and not a family's needs or financial issues.

Peter Rothe, project architect, confirmed that it was not financially feasible to expand the existing one-story home into the backyard.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Horwich moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gibson moved for the approval of PRE06-00038, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set. The motion was seconded by Chairperson Faulk and passed by a 4-2 roll call vote, with Commissioners Browning and Busch dissenting (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 07-032.

Commissioner Horwich stated that while he believed the project's FAR of .60 was pushing the limit, he voted to approve it because there are several nearby houses of equal or larger size.

Commissioner Gibson indicated that she voted to approve the project for the same reason.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Weideman moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 07-032. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by a 4-2 roll call vote, with Commissioners Browning and Busch dissenting (absent Commissioner Uchima).

**11E. PRE06-00041: NAJIB AND NAHLA AL-SAMARRAI**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions to an existing single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5108 Newton Street.

**Recommendation**

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich introduced the request.

Nahla Al-Samarrai, 5108 Newton Street, applicant, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. She stated that she did not believe the project would impact anyone's view and noted that there are other two-story homes in the immediate area.

Commissioner Busch asked about the purpose of the 1200 square-foot attic and how it would be accessed. Ms. Al-Samarrai explained that the attic would be used mainly for storage as she has many books and that it would be accessed by a pull-down stairway.

Commissioner Busch asked about staff's experience with attics of this size, Planning Manager Lodan reported that he had never seen a project with an attic of this size and nature.

Commissioner Browning expressed concerns about excessive weight in the attic.

Plans Examiner Noh advised that attics are not designed for heavy storage, however, if the Commission approves the attic space for storage, staff will make sure that it is engineered to handle the load.

Commissioner Gibson, echoed by Commissioner Weideman, questioned the need for skylights and a bay window in the attic. Ms. Al-Samarrai stated that she thought it was good to have light everywhere, noting that one of the skylights will provide light to the stairway.

Judy Lanfried, 5102 Newton Street, voiced objections to the proposed project, maintaining that its design was not in harmony with the neighborhood. She noted that the attic is larger than the existing home and with a 7-foot ceiling, skylights and a bay window, it is essentially a third story. She related her understanding that the applicants have only one child living at home and questioned the need for such a large residence. She reported that she previously signed a document allowing the applicants to build an accessory structure in the backyard, but would like to retract her signature because of its location on the hillside.

William Haas, 5114 Newton Street, stated that he did not want to discourage the addition because the property needs renovation, but he would like the height of the project reduced to allow more sunlight to his property. Referring to photographs to illustrate, he explained that he has an ongoing problem with mold and mildew on interior and exterior walls and the proposed project would only exacerbate the problem. He related his understanding that the height of the attic would be 8'10" and asked that this be reduced by 5 feet. He also asked that overgrown cypress trees on the subject property be trimmed to allow more light and air to his backyard.

Dan Rudin, 677 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Hermosa Beach, urged the Commission to take into consideration the project's impact on the view at 5102 Newton Street.

Responding to audience members' comments, Ms. Al-Samarrai clarified that she decided not to build the accessory structure Ms. Lanfried referred to and noted that Ms. Lanfried's home is taller than the proposed project. She explained that while two of her children are away at college on the East Coast, they plan to live at home after they complete their education. She reported that she has lived in the United States for 23 years and that she does geriatric research at UCLA and her husband is a professor. She contended that the project would not adversely impact her neighbors and requested approval as submitted.

Commissioner Weideman indicated that he favored a substantial reduction in the height of the attic to ensure that this space is not habitable.

Ms. Al-Samarrai clarified that attic is under 7 feet in height.

Commissioner Busch asked staff for a recommendation on the height of the attic, and Planning Manager Lodan recommended a height of 3 feet.

Ms. Al-Samarrai indicated that she was not amenable to reducing the height of the attic to 3 feet.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Browning moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairperson Faulk stated that he would not support the project due to concerns about the potential that the attic could be used as habitable space by a future owner and because he felt it was not in harmony with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Browning noted his concurrence with Chairperson Faulk's remarks.

Commissioner Weideman stated that he observed that the project would have a significant impact on views and light and that he did not believe the architecture was appropriate for this neighborhood.

Commissioner Horwich indicated that he would not support the project as proposed, but could support it if the height of the attic was reduced to 4 feet and the bay window and skylights were eliminated.

Commissioner Busch stated that he believed the proposed project violates the Hillside Ordinance therefore he could not support it.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Browning moved to deny PRE06-00041 without prejudice. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Planning Manager Lodan noted that a resolution reflecting the Commission's action would be brought back for approval.

12. **RESOLUTIONS** – None.

13. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

14. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS** – None.

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

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the Butler project on Paseo de la Playa was denied at the March 6, 2007 Council meeting due to the impact on views of surrounding properties.

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

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the Planning Commission meeting of March 21, 2007.

17. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC #2**

17A. Commissioners extended condolences to Chairperson Faulk and his family on the loss of his mother.

17B. Commissioner Weideman requested an excused absence from the March 21 Commission meeting because he will be out of town. Commissioner Horwich, seconded by Commissioner Browning, so moved; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

17C. Commissioner Horwich requested an excused absence from the March 21 Commission meeting because he will be attending a Planning seminar in San Diego. Commissioner Browning, seconded by Commissioner Weideman, so moved; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

**17D.** Commissioner Browning requested an excused absence from the March 21 Commission meeting because he will also be attending the seminar in San Diego. Commissioner Gibson, seconded by Commissioner Weideman, so moved; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

**17E.** Commissioner Browning commended staff for noticing the inordinately large attic space in the plans for the Newton Street project (Item 11E).

**17F.** Commissioner Gibson noted that she enjoyed attending the Save Historic Old Torrance gala on Sunday.

**17G.** Commissioner Horwich invited everyone to attend the kick-off dinner for the South Bay Special Olympics on Friday, March 9, in the Toyota meeting room at the Cultural Arts Center.

**17H.** Chairperson Faulk expressed appreciation for the flowers sent to his mother's memorial service.

**18. ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:18 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, March 21, 2007, at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted April 18, 2007 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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