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TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION – OCTOBER 15, 2014

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At 9:20 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

October 15, 2014

**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 15, 2014 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, Gibson, Herring, Skoll, Watson and Chairperson Polcari.

Absent: Commissioner Tsao.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to grant Commissioner Tsao an excused absence from this meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou 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 Friday, October 10, 2014.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to approve the October 1, 2014 Planning Commission minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Herring and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS

Planning Manager Lodan relayed the applicant's request to continue Item 10B, PRE14-00003: John Yankosky (Sen Fu Huang) to November 19, 2014.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to continue Item 10B to November 19, 2014. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Herring and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

Chairperson Polcari announced that the hearing would not be re-advertised because it was continued to a date certain.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1

7A. Commissioner Skoll stated that he believes there needs to be more handicap parking near BJ's restaurant at Del Amo Fashion Center and Planning staff has discussed this with mall management without success, therefore he would like contact information so he can personally discuss this issue with them.

Planning Manager Lodan offered to provide the requested information.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan emphasized that Commissioner Skoll should make clear that he's acting as a private citizen, not in an official capacity as a member of the Planning Commission.

*

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

10A. CUP14-00015 (EAS14-00003) PUBLIC STORAGE, INC.

Planning Commission consideration for adoption of a Negative Declaration and approval of a Conditional Use Permit to demolish the front section of an existing storage building and construction of a new four-story self-storage building on property located in the ML(M1-PP) Zone at 4460 Del Amo Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

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

Andrew Davies, N Consulting Engineers, representing the applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. Using renderings to illustrate, he briefly described the proposed project, which includes the demolition of approximately 40,000 square feet of building area and the construction of a new four-story 167,472 square-foot building. He noted that staff has requested that the height of the building be reduced by 4 feet and the applicant has agreed to do so. He reported that traffic was a major concern for the school to the east of the site (South Bay Junior Academy), however, data gathered from existing Public Storage facilities indicates that the peak hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., so the majority of the traffic will occur after students have been dropped off for school. He explained that traffic will enter on one side of the building and exit on the other side for safety purposes.

Commissioner Skoll asked about community outreach, and Mr. Davies reported that a meeting was held at the South Bay Junior Academy gym on Monday, October 13, with notices sent out to all parents via email.

Commissioner Gibson noted that there are two other schools in the area – West High and Bert Lynn Middle School, and Mr. Davies stated that he did not believe the project would have any impact on these schools, which are further away, since it is a very low intensity use.

Commissioner Gibson requested that staff provide an example of a similar-sized building in Torrance for purposes of comparison and expressed concerns about the concentration of self-storage facilities in the West Torrance area.

Commissioner Skoll noted that at approximately 220,000 square feet, the project will be about 50,000 square feet larger than Magellan Storage on 190th Street, which is quite large.

Planning Manager Lodan clarified that the 220,000 total square footage includes portions of existing one-story buildings that will be retained.

Chairperson Polcari invited public comment.

Richard Levy, 4489 Spencer Street, stated that his main concern about the project is the height, which will be considerably taller than any other building in the area even with the 4-foot height reduction recommended by staff. He noted that multi-family residential developments are limited to a height of 35 feet and this building will be almost 10 feet taller. He also expressed concerns about glare from the building, which is mostly metal and glass, and about increased traffic.

Robert Schilling, 4834 Carmelynn Street, noted his disagreement with the Initial Study, which concluded that the project would not have a significant impact on the environment. He contended that aesthetics, light, noise and air quality would all be impacted to varying degrees by the proposed project along with the cumulative effects of other projects approved over the years, and there was no way to mitigate this impact short of denying the project. He reported that he and his wife purchased their home 37 years ago specifically for the view of Palos Verdes and this view will be destroyed if the proposed project goes forward greatly reducing the value of their property. He suggested that this project would be rejected out of hand if it had been proposed in the Hillside Overlay and questioned why the views of “flatlanders” are not afforded the same protection. Noting that the General Plan Designation for the site is Low-Medium Residential, he stated that he could find nothing in the definition for that land use designation that would allow a 4-story, 50-foot tall commercial building.

Commissioner Skoll reported that he had read Mr. Schilling’s letter detailing his concerns about the project (agenda material – attachment 2) and believed he had raised some valid issues. He offered his assurance that the Commission does consider the impact a structure will have on an adjacent residence even if it is not in the Hillside Overlay. He stated that he had come to the same conclusion about the Initial Study and would therefore vote to reject it in its entirety. He noted that he shared Mr. Schilling’s concern about the project’s lack of consistency with the site’s Low-Medium Residential General Plan Designation.

Robert Castro, 4802 Carmelynn Street, voiced objections to the project, relating his belief that it would have a significant adverse impact and reduce the value of nearby homes while adding nothing of value to the city in terms of employment or generating revenue. Additionally, he reported that self-storage facilities have been associated with illegal drug operations. He noted his agreement with Mr. Schilling’s remarks and urged the Commission to take them to heart.

Phillip Petrie, Pruitt Drive, echoed concerns about the proposed project, noting that he received no notice of the community meeting.

Sunny King, 4489 Spencer Street, reported that he recently moved here with his wife who is pregnant because they want to raise their child in Torrance and expressed concerns that the proposed project would change the character of the neighborhood.

Patrick Kim, 4204 Michelle Drive, voiced objections to the project due to the additional noise and traffic it would generate and contended that the proposed four-story building was too tall and too massive. He questioned the need for another self-storage facility since there are so many in the area.

Irma Chiota, 4206 Konya Drive, stated that her main concern was traffic because it's become very difficult to exit from Konya since the Del Amo extension was completed and this project will only add more traffic.

Linda Gottshall-Sayed, Donora Street, voiced objections to the proposed four-story building due to the impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood and suggested that lighting on the building's towers will make it look more like Las Vegas than West Torrance.

Leila Schutz, 4221 Michelle Drive, expressed concerns that the large four-story structure will block cooling ocean breezes from her home, diminish the quality of life in the neighborhood and reduce the value of her property. She stated that she has nothing against self-storage facilities and has made use of them herself, but this building is egregious and does not fit in this community.

Akhil Addanki, 4489 Spencer Street, West High student and member of Torrance Youth Council, stated that he does not want a huge self-storage building next door to him and he also believes the project is detrimental to the city's youth due to the impact on the environment.

Melanie Dreike, 4602 Carmelynn Street, commented on the lack of community outreach, noting that the email for the meeting on Monday was sent out on Friday.

Ray Perron, owner of the building at 4504 Del Amo Boulevard, stated that his building is currently the largest on the block and he can't imagine a building double its size at this location. He noted that there can be a problem with homeless people living in self-storage facilities and many contractors store tools/supplies in them, which generates a lot of traffic.

Jennifer Powell, representing South Bay Junior Academy, 4400 Del Amo Boulevard, reported that the school had several concerns about the project, particularly during construction, however, Public Storage has been very responsive and accommodating to the extent they no longer believe the impact is significant enough for the school to oppose it. She clarified that the meeting on Monday was mainly for parents of school children, but it was open to the community.

Commissioner Gibson noted that a school in Huntington Beach has been closed for two weeks due to an asbestos hazard and questioned whether Ms. Powell was prepared in the event asbestos is discovered in the buildings to be demolished at Public Storage.

Sr. Fire Prevention Officer Kazandjian advised that while he did not know the details about the Huntington Beach situation, asbestos removal rarely goes awry if appropriate procedures are followed.

Jim Fitzpatrick, Public Storage, stated that clearly the company has not done a good job of community outreach and requested a continuance so they can work with neighbors to try to resolve their concerns.

Commissioner Watson asked if the proposed facility provides any specialized storage, for example wine lockers.

Mr. Fitzpatrick reported that there is no specialized storage, but the new units will be climate controlled and much nicer than existing units.

In response to Commissioner Watson's inquiry, Mr. Fitzpatrick indicated that he was open to an earlier closing time and adding more landscaping to the project.

Commissioner Skoll noted that the agenda item includes an email about the project from Councilwoman Ashcraft to Community Development Director Gibson and City Manager Jackson and questioned whether either of them responded.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan explained that they did not respond because Councilwoman Ashcraft could be disqualified from participating in the hearing if the Planning Commission's decision is appealed.

Chairperson Polcari stated that he did not believe a four-story industrial building that is at least twice the size of everything around it was appropriate for this neighborhood, therefore, he will be voting to deny the project.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the Commission would be more receptive if the building height was reduced to 35 feet.

Commissioner Gibson stated that she was opposed to the project and opposed to a continuance and was stunned that there was a need for this much storage space. She noted her agreement with Ms. Schutz's characterization of the building as "egregious."

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

Commissioner Skoll voiced objections to the Initial Study, citing the five issues detailed in Mr. Schilling's letter (aesthetics, light, noise, air quality and zoning).

Commissioner D'anjou reported that she obtained a zoning map in preparation for this hearing to get a better idea of where other self-storage facilities are located and found that other storage facilities are located within areas that are zoned for manufacturing with some transitional R-3 multi-family housing. She stated that the City has done a good job of merging commercial and residential uses by ensuring that one use does not impose on the other, however in this case the project would impose on the residential neighborhood. She related her belief that a structure of this size was not appropriate for this location due to its proximity to R-1 single-family residences.

Commissioner Herring noted his agreement with his colleagues' remarks.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to reject the Negative Declaration. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to deny CUP14-00015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

The Commission recessed from 8:20 p.m. to 8:27 p.m.

10B. PRE14-00003: JOHN YANKOSKY (SEN FU HUANG)

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 on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5356 Doris Way. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

Continued to November 19, 2014.

11. WAIVERS – None.

12. FORMAL HEARINGS

12A. DIV14-00006: CHANDLER RANCH PROPERTIES, LLC/ BRI, LLC/ CHANDLER PERRIS, LLC

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Division of Lot for Tentative Parcel Map 72793 to consolidate multiple parcels into one, on properties located within the Hillside Overlay in the R-1-PP/R-3 Zone at 2550 Pacific Coast Highway. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities and 15304 Minor Alterations to Land.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Yumul introduced the request.

Andrew Fogg, Cox, Castle & Nicholson LLP, legal counsel for the applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He explained that the existing mobile home park is currently made up of multiple underlying parcels, which will be consolidated into one lot, and an open space easement will be recorded for Lot 124, known as Dead Horse Canyon, to ensure that it will never be developed in accordance with an agreement with the City of Torrance in conjunction with the Chandler Ranch/Rolling Hills Country Club project. He noted that all the lots involved are owned by various entities of the Chandler family.

In response to Commissioner Skoll's inquiry, Mr. Fogg confirmed that residents of the mobile home park will not be impacted by this action in any way. He clarified that the applicant offered to deed Dead Horse Canyon to the City of Torrance, but the city preferred to have it remain private open space and it will be maintained by Chandler via access through the mobile home park.

Richard Benedict Hettig, 2550 Pacific Coast Highway, stated that he had no objection to the proposed consolidation and believes it only makes sense.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to approve DIV14-00006, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

Planning Assistant Yumul read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-057.

MOTION: Commissioner Herring moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-057. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

12B. PCR14-00002: JAN TROBAUGH (MARIYA DUNYAK)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Planning Commission Review to allow two units to exceed an 0.50 FAR on property located within the Small Lot, Low-Medium Overlay District in the R-2 Zone at 1747 Andreo Avenue. This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA per Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Yumul introduced the request.

Jan Trobaugh, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He briefly described the proposed project, noting that the property owner has a permanent home in Chicago and this house will be used when the family wants to escape the cold during the winter.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Mr. Trobaugh reported that the property owner has no intention of turning the property into a rental; that she has been closely involved in the design of the project; and that he met with her every 2-3 months during the design process, the last time being shortly before he submitted the plans.

Commissioner Skoll noted that the staff report recommends including a condition requiring that architectural features be incorporated into the design to match the front house, but he could find no such condition.

Planning Manager Lodan recommended that Condition No. 4 be expanded to cover this issue.

Mr. Trobaugh reported that he had discussed enhancing the design with staff and had agreed to do so.

Commissioner Watson disclosed that she walked around the neighborhood over the weekend and observed that it's very dense with narrow streets. She questioned whether there would be room to store trash bins with the new two-car garage, which has open parking spaces on either side.

Mr. Trobaugh confirmed that there would be adequate room to store trash bins. He related his belief that the proposed parking arrangement was preferable to having all the parking enclosed because unlike garages, open parking spaces cannot be used for storage.

Commissioner Watson expressed concerns that the project's FAR (floor area ratio) exceeds 0.50.

Mr. Trobaugh explained that it only exceeds 0.50 because the stairway is counted twice due to the high ceiling, but he can modify the design to stay within 0.50 if the Commission would prefer.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan advised that Commission approval was not required should the owner decide to turn the property into a rental in the future.

John Ballotti, 1739 Andreo Avenue, noted that the staff report mentions that the applicant has outstanding building permits from 2010 that have not been finalized and expressed concerns that construction on this project could drag on for years given this history.

Plans Examiner Noh advised that there is no time limit on building permits as long as construction continues.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Planning Manager Lodan clarified that the applicant has one building permit outstanding, which is for a fence, and the work has been completed, but there was no final inspection so the permit remains open. He noted that permits for this project will not be issued until the permit process for the fence has been completed per Code requirements.

Mr. Trobaugh stated that he just learned about the outstanding permit and he will inform the property owner. He noted that the owner is from Ukraine and may not understand the permit process.

Randy Langsdale, 1804 Gramercy Avenue, voiced his opinion that the project should be limited to an FAR of 0.50 in conformance with Small Lot, Low-Medium Overlay standards. He related his belief that the property will go up for sale as soon as the project is completed.

Vicky Kidner, 1735 Andreo Avenue, requested clarification regarding the encroachment permit mentioned in the staff report.

Associate Civil Engineer Symons advised that the fence encroaches into the public right-of-way so the applicant must either obtain an encroachment permit or remove the fence.

Ms. Kidner stated that she would prefer that the fence be removed. She expressed concerns that construction of the fence took place outside permitted hours of construction and urged that restrictions be strictly enforced.

Elizabeth Fobes, 1731 Andreo Avenue, stated that she and other neighbors would like the fence removed as they believe it should not have been built in the public right-of-way in the first place.

MOTION: Commissioner D'anjou moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Tsao).

Commissioner Skoll encouraged Mr. Trobaugh to see that the fence issue is taken care of as soon as possible.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to approve PCR14-00002, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, with the following modifications:

Modify

No. 4 That revised elevations providing enhanced architectural features, as well as color and material samples shall be submitted for review by the Community Development Director.

Add

- That the FAR (floor area ratio) shall be limited to 0.50 to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by a 5-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Watson dissenting (absent Commissioner Tsao).

Planning Assistant Yumul read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 14-058.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to adopt Planning Commission No. 14-058 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by a 5-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Watson dissenting (absent Commissioner Tsao).

13. **RESOLUTIONS** – None.

14. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

15. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

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

Planning Manager Lodan noted that Community Development Director Weekly Summary Reports for September 12, September 26, and October 2, 2014 were distributed to the Commission.

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

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the City Council approved the Chandler Ranch project at the October 14 City Council and there was also a presentation about potential historic preservation programs and staff was directed to conduct public outreach and develop options for consideration by the City Council Community Planning and Design Committee.

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

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the November 5, 2014 Planning Commission meeting.

18. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

18A. Referring to Item 10A, Commissioner Skoll expressed concerns about the project's lack of consistency with the zoning.

Commissioner D'anjou related her understanding that the site is zoned for manufacturing and self-storage facilities are allowed under this zoning.

Planning Manager Lodan explained that while the zoning for the site is manufacturing, the General Plan Designation is residential, which has caused some confusion. He noted that this area was one of the focus areas that were reviewed during the General Plan update process, but a consensus could not be reached as to how to clarify the hodgepodge of zoning so the zoning remains manufacturing because of pre-existing land uses and the General Plan designation remains residential because it is hoped that as properties are redeveloped, they will transition to residential use.

19. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

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Approved as submitted November 5, 2014 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
