

**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, December 20, 2006, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Weideman.

3. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Commissioner Gibson (excused).

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Assistant Hurd, Plans Examiner Noh, Deputy City Attorney Whitham and Fire Marshal Kazandjian.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported on the posting of the agenda.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the approval of the October 18, 2006 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioner Weideman abstaining (absent Commissioner Gibson).

MOTION: Commissioner Busch moved for the approval of the November 1, 2006 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioners Uchima and Weideman abstaining (absent Commissioner Gibson).

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of the November 15, 2006 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Gibson).

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENT

Planning Manager Lodan relayed the applicant's request to continue Agenda Item 10C (PRC06-00006, WAV06-00017: James Bolinas).

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to continue Agenda Item 10C indefinitely. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

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

7. **TIME EXTENSIONS** – None.

8. **CONTINUED HEARINGS** – None.

9. **WAIVERS**

9A. **WAV06-00021: ROY AND JENNIFER SASAKI**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Waiver to allow less than the required side yard setbacks in conjunction with a second-story addition to an existing two-story single-family residence on property located in the R-1 Zone at 22623 Benner Avenue.

Recommendation

Denial without prejudice.

Planning Assistant Hurd introduced the request.

Jennifer Sasaki, 22623 Benner Avenue, requested approval of the Waiver.

Jim Kropf, 22629 Benner Avenue, voiced support for the Waiver, noting that he is the neighbor most affected by it.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Planning Manager Lodan confirmed that the proposed five-foot setback on the south side of the subject property would match the existing setback on the north side. He explained that the five-foot setback met requirements at the time the home was built, but the Code was amended in approximately 1989 to require a setback equal to 10% of the lot width on each side of the residence, which in this case is six feet.

Commissioner Weideman asked about the side yard setback on the house to the north, which appears to have been remodeled.

Planning Manager Lodan reported that a building permit was issued in 1992 for a remodel but the side yard setbacks were not listed and estimated them to be approximately five feet.

Commissioner Busch asked about staff's assessment that the hardship criteria for granting a Waiver was not satisfied in this case because the lot is not irregularly shaped, it is not deficient in size, and there does not appear to be any topographical issues.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that staff is narrowly focused on those issues when determining hardship, however, the Commission has a little more discretion.

Commissioner Uchima voiced support for the Waiver, citing the testimony of Mr. Kropf and the fact that the proposed five-foot setback would make the home more symmetrical.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved for the approval of WAV06-00021, including the seven conditions recommended by staff (per agenda material). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by a 4-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Busch dissenting and Commissioner Browning abstaining (absent Commissioner Gibson).

Commissioner Horwich stated that he voted to approve the Waiver because he felt it would do no harm to surrounding properties, but he disagreed with statement in the application that the house would be devalued if the second floor was not aligned with the first floor.

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

10. FORMAL HEARINGS

10A. DIV06-00022: SUNCAL TORRANCE PROPERTIES LLC

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a lot line adjustment between APNs 7366-019-051, 7366-019-052, 7366-019-055, 7366-019-120 and 7366-019-121 on property located in the Hawthorn Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan Zone, Del Amo Business Sub-district 1, and bordered by Fashion Way to Carson Street, Del Amo Circle East and Madrona Avenue.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Hurd introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of a modified condition of approval.

Susan Hori, representing the applicant, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Ms. Hori provided clarification regarding the parking configuration and noted that six handicapped spaces will be provided near the entry of the restaurant, which is one more than required. She explained that there will be new curb cuts on Madrona and Carson to provide more direct access to the parcel and that Transportation Planning staff will be working with the applicant on driveway throating and parking space alignment to ensure there's adequate room for stacking.

Commissioner Weideman, echoed by Chairperson Faulk, expressed concerns that the new entry and parking arrangement, in effect, isolates this parcel from the rest of the shopping center.

Ms. Hori reported that no physical barriers will be installed and there will continue to be opportunities for cross access to the adjacent parking lot. She explained that the purpose of the modifications is to ensure that no matter what happens on surrounding property, Black Angus will be guaranteed adequate access and parking for their customers as per terms of their lease.

Commissioner Uchima asked about the parcel to the north, and Ms. Hori advised that it is currently being used as a staging area for construction activities and to house management staff until their offices have been completed.

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

Chairperson Faulk stated that he would support the Division of Lot with an added condition requiring that cross access be maintained as this is important for the good of the entire shopping center and consistent with the Commission's action in the past.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of DIV06-00022, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, adding a condition that cross access shall be maintained. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Busch and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Gibson).

Planning Assistant Hurd read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 06-134.

MOTION: Commissioner Busch moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 06-134, as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

10B. PRE06-00026: STEVE WUNDERLICH (PHIL HARRIS)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay Zone at 4604 Vanderhill Road.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Hurd introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting.

Steve Wunderlich, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He briefly described the proposed project, noting that care was taken to maintain view corridors to the rear and east side of the property.

Commissioner Browning expressed concerns about the project's FAR, which exceeds .50.

Mr. Wunderlich reported that no objections were raised by staff regarding the FAR and related his understanding that an FAR of up to .60 is allowed.

Jackie Decker, 23102 Carlow Road, urged the Commission to enforce the .50 FAR limitation.

Gerry Rische, 22920 Carlow Road, also urged the Commission to limit the project's FAR to .50.

Bonnie Mae Barnard, 2028 Gramercy Avenue, noted that she does not live in the Hillside Overlay area but lives within the Small Lot Medium Overlay, which also limits the FAR to .50. She cautioned that approving projects with FARs in excess of .50 undermines one of the goals of the overlay, which is to prevent overbuilding.

Jonathan Bartran noted his concurrence with the previous statements.

Mr. Wunderlich stated that the proposed project is under the maximum height and exceeds required setbacks, therefore, this is not a case of overbuilding. He commented on efforts to ensure that the massing and scale of the building conform to the neighborhood.

Commissioner Browning pointed out that the project includes three decks with approximately 314 square feet of space, which is not included in FAR calculations.

Mr. Wunderlich stated that the deck area off the master bedroom could have been enclosed, but was left open to maintain view corridors. Commissioner Browning noted that enclosing this area would have increased the FAR.

Commissioner Busch asked about contact with adjacent neighbors, and Mr. Wunderlich reported that the property owner spoke with neighbors and they had no objections to the project.

Commissioner Busch pointed out that the staff report mentions possible view impacts at 4603 Vanderhill Road and noted that it is the duty of the Commission to ensure that a project complies with the Hillside Ordinance whether or not neighbors complain.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, Plans Examiner Noh provided clarification regarding regulations governing the enclosure of decks/balconies and commented on the difficulty of regulating this type of space.

Mr. Wunderlich indicated that the property owner would be willing to sign an agreement promising not to enclose the decks.

Commissioner Uchima asked about the FAR of new two-story homes in the immediate vicinity. Planning Manager Lodan indicated that he did not have that information available but there are homes in the area with an FAR up to .60.

In response to Commissioner Uchima's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan advised that the difference between a home with a .50 FAR and one with a .55 FAR would be imperceptible to most people, depending on how the space is arranged.

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

Commissioner Weideman stated that based on his personal observations with regard to the massing of the project, he could not support it and favored denial without prejudice.

MOTION: Commissioner Busch moved to deny PRE06-00026 without prejudice. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman, and discussion continued.

Commissioner Uchima commented on the importance of looking at a project's elevations when visiting a site rather than relying on the silhouette, which can sometimes be deceiving. He pointed out that the proposed structure is not just a large box as it includes a lot of articulation and openings through decks to minimize the bulk. He related his observation that there are homes in the area that appear much more massive and doubted that reducing the FAR to .50 would be perceptible or result in any real benefit. Voicing support for the project, he stated that he believed that the design was well thought out and the project would benefit the neighborhood.

Commissioner Horwich suggested that the applicant might prefer an opportunity to redesign the project rather than a denial without prejudice.

The public hearing was reopened so the applicant could comment.

Mr. Wunderlich expressed his willingness to modify the design to meet the FAR limitation of .50.

Phil Harris, owner of the subject property, stated that he was surprised and disappointed by the motion to deny the project because it was never brought to his attention that the FAR could be an issue. He reported that he made every effort to come up with an attractive design rather than the box-like structures down the block, which are larger and on the same size lot.

Commissioner Busch stated that he was also concerned about the project's impact on the view at 4603 Vanderhill Road as mentioned in the staff report.

Commissioner Uchima reported that, according to his observation, there was no view blockage at 4603 Vanderhill except possibly from the second-story addition, which was built after the Hillside Overlay Ordinance was enacted. He reiterated his support for the project as proposed.

Chairperson Faulk called for a vote, and the motion to deny the project without prejudice passed by a 4-2 roll call vote, with Commissioner Uchima and Chairperson Faulk dissenting (absent Commissioner Gibson).

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

10C. PCR06-00006, WAV06-00017: JAMES AND CHRISTINA BOLINAS

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Planning Commission Review to allow the construction of a second unit above a detached garage resulting in a Floor Area Ratio over 0.5 in conjunction with a Waiver to allow less than the required side and rear yard setbacks on property located in the Small Lot Low-Medium Overlay District in the R-2 Zone at 1808 Gramercy Avenue.

Continued indefinitely.

11. RESOLUTIONS – None.

12. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS – None.

13. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS – None.

14. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS – None.

15. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES – Not available.

16. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

16A. Bonnie Mae Barnard, Save Historic Old Torrance, announced SHOT's 3rd Annual Extravaganza to be held at The Depot on Sunday, March 4, 2007.

16B. Commissioners extended holiday greetings.

16C. Commissioner Uchima requested an excused absence for the January 17, 2007 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Horwich, seconded by Commissioner Weideman, so moved; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

16D. Commissioner Weideman, echoed by Commissioner Horwich, expressed an interest in attending upcoming planning conferences.

16E. Commissioner Browning expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Planning Commission for the past year and thanked everyone who has assisted him.

16F. Commissioner Busch stated that he also has enjoyed his time on the Commission and greatly appreciates the always helpful staff.

16G. Commissioner Browning noted that Sr. Planning Associate Santana and Planning Assistant Hurd did an outstanding job at the last meeting in Planning Manager Lodan's absence.

16H. Chairperson Faulk reported that Paul McCabe, the Chair of the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, has requested an opportunity to make a brief presentation to the Commission regarding the City's new Green Building Program.

It was the consensus of the Commission to schedule Mr. McCabe's presentation for the January 17 meeting.

16I. Chairperson Faulk echoed holiday greetings.

17. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:33 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, January 17, 2007, at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted February 7, 2007 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
