



Design Review Commission Meeting

Location: Novato City Hall, 901 Sherman Avenue*

September 18, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.

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novato.org

MINUTES

Mayor
Eric Lucan

Mayor Pro Tem
Denise Athas

Councilmembers
Pam Drew
Pat Eklund

Acting City Manager
Adam McGill

Present: Michael Barber, Chair
Joseph Farrell, Vice Chair
Patrick MacLeamy
Beth Radovanovich
Michael Edridge

Absent: None

Staff: Steve Marshall, Planning Manager
Hans Grunt, Senior Planner
Brett Walker, Senior Planner

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA:

M/s: MacLeamy/Farrell; (5-0-0-0) to approve the Final Agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 4, 2019 (MB, JF, PM, ME)

M/s: Farrell/Barber (4-0-0-1) to approve the Minutes.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

CONTINUED ITEMS: NONE

NEW ITEMS:

**2. BAHIA RIVER VIEW (BW)
P2017-023; DESIGN REVIEW
CEQA – TO BE DETERMINED
APN 143-151-06; BAHIA DRIVE**

Conduct a design review hearing and provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding site design aspects for a proposed 5-lot residential subdivision of a 6.87-acre site located on Bahia Drive; Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 143-151-06.

Brett Walker, Senior Planner presented the staff report, including the project history, design changes, request of the Commission and subsequent entitlement process.

Commissioner MacLeamy asked what the Design Review Commission is tasked with regarding the project. Walker responded. MacLeamy restated, with staff input, the remaining entitlement process for the listening public should the applicant move forward following the Commission's recommendation.

Commissioner Barber confirmed, with staff, the purview of the Commission for the proposed subdivision, namely design of the proposed lots and building envelopes based on provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, including the Hillside and Ridgeline Protection standards. Planning Manager Marshall responded.

Commissioner Radovanovich questioned staff on where the analysis is to support the design of the proposed subdivision; Planning Manager Marshall noted the analysis is provided in the report and asked Commissioner Radovanovich if she has a specific question or aspect of the analysis she would like staff to address.

Applicant's representative Don Blayney, Landscape Architect, referring to the plans, described the history of their design and the changes made, including reducing the plan from seven to five lots; noted their agreement with Staff's analysis afforded in its report to the Commission and believes the plan complies with code provisions; expressed appreciation for Senior Planner Walker's professional assistance to date.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

NUMBER OF SPEAKERS: 11

Margaret Buss stated concerns with obstruction of views to river from Bahia Dr. from homes built on first two lots.

Eileen Stafford fears the resulting turning movements to and from the proposed lots and resulting homes will present a traffic safety issue and possible accidents.

Michael Hall believes the proposed lots and resulting building pads are situated on the ridgeline; disagrees with staff's interpretation of the ridgeline and compliant development provisions; believes resulting development would violate ridgeline protection provisions.

Shane Barnes stated concerns with impacts on views for monetary gain by the applicant; questioned who pays for infrastructure demands from the project.

Mary Brown concerned with staff interpretation of the ridgeline as prescribed in the General Plan and Zoning Code; believed the plan violates view protections contained in the General Plan; questioned applicability of CEQA, Article 4 in that the proposal bifurcates review of subsequent homes and their environmental impacts and thus believes the Commission cannot recommend on the grounds of inadequate application of CEQA.

Alan Lazure questioned staff's interpretation of the ridgeline including subsequent application of ridgeline provisions to each resulting lot; believes each resulting lots would then violate the ridgeline; recommends

denial of proposal; suggest story poles are need to assess proposal; need for a more accurate streetscape profile from Bahia Dr.; building pads should stay clear of 25% slopes.

Joseph Valls feels applicant is just proposing five lots to see what “sticks” and sell lots for profit and leave; doesn’t think Commission should recommend approval.

Sally Scotto disappointed with developers representation of slope and site; views will be lost by the public and left only for the resulting homeowners; concern with limited access, Bahia Dr., for fire emergency response; concern with site distance limits (blind curve) coming over the rise on Bahia Dr.; site development will obstruct a wildlife corridor.

Tim O’Connor stated he is president of Bahia HOA; noted resulting homes be built on top of each other and would damage character of Bahia Dr. and result in a visual impact and negative financial impacts on the residents of Bahia; expressed displeasure with applicant’s lack of communication with Bahia HOA.

Kimberly Price feels plan is an attempt to get around laws and does not respect the concerns of Bahia residents; displeased with lack of applicant’s efforts to engage existing homeowners; like to see story poles; resulting size of homes; lack of provisions to address: obstruction of a wildlife corridor, disruption resulting during construction, visual impacts of retaining walls, view impacts, increased risk of fire from barbeques; opposed to proposal.

Melanie Nasson-Kurgpold is concerned with loss of views from Bahia Dr., disruption of wildlife corridor, added vehicle traffic and turning movements, increased fire risk and earthquake damage; suggest moratorium on all new development until safety issues are resolved.

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Edridge questioned the charge and scope of the Commission given that the homes are not proposed at this time. He expressed concern about the conflict between staff and residents over consistency with development standards.

Commissioner MacLeamy noted frustration with DRC’s role in this instance, which is largely limited to lot and building envelope design and not the design of homes; agrees with speakers that views coming over Bahia Dr. are spectacular, but extends across the privately owned land in question that is conveniently “benched” for home development – questioned if the Bahia HOA ever approached the applicant to purchase the site to preserve as open space; doesn’t understand how the addition of five homes would have any measurable impact on traffic, but appreciates any merit to maintaining site distance; disappointed by claims that the applicant has not reached out to consult with the neighborhood. He restated concerns expressed by residents, including traffic safety, fire safety, views, wildlife, ridgeline and ridge protection, and noted he could not support recommending development on ridges. He was prepared to recommend against the proposal pending more information/design graphics to better depict homes and any resulting impacts to views/ridgeline, a demonstration that site distance is not an issue, a response to claims of impacts to wildlife corridor.

Commissioner Farrell agreed with staff’s interpretation of the applicable ridgeline; stated that the ridgeline is key, and that it seems subjective; noted Design Review Commission is not in charge of CEQA; he noted the criteria applicable to the creation of new lots, but didn’t see how architecture could be made to meet hillside requirements; thinks design of homes will be challenging noting a particular Lot 1 where he felt it would be difficult to design a home that would not be silhouetted against the sky; would like to see better graphic depiction of homes i.e. perpendicular view of them from Bahia Dr.; need for photo simulations and request for story poles to show possible outline of homes; building envelopes need to stay off 25% slopes.

Commissioner Radovanovich was empathetic to resident concerns and questioned staff’s interpretation of the ridgeline; understood both side of the argument, but homes will be silhouetted; needs more clarification about the ridgeline issue and what it is; can’t support proposal at this point.

Commissioner Barber shared the some concerns expressed by the other commissioners. He believes there is a ridgeline along Bahia Dr. as the resulting homes will silhouette against the sky so maybe only one home is afforded not five; homes would block an iconic view believes a sidewalk extension across project frontage is needed; don't think the designs are even close to addressing issues; doesn't think the proposed lots are buildable and views the ridgeline matter opposite from staff; can't support the project.

Commissioner Farrell questioned the commission whether having section drawings with tree coverage or story poles would be a suitable exercise to show what is going on.

Commissioner Barber stated trees dies and cannot rely on them for screening. Homes will be 16- to 18-foot tall. He questioned if the lots are viable and the answer is no.

Applicant's representative Don Blayney was asked by Chair Barber if they would like to continue the item to try and address comments and concerns and return at a subsequent date; Mr. Blayney responded with a request that the Commission take action.

Moved: MacLeamy; Second: Radovanovich

That the Design Review Commission recommend denial of the subdivision and resultant lot creation be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

Commission Action: Vote to recommend 5: Ayes: 0; Noes:0; Abstain:0; Absent: 0

Commissioner Edridge stated that he is in favor of story poles and would like pictures.

**3. SPRINGBROOK GREEN HOMES (HG)
P2019-074; DESIGN REVIEW AND TENTATIVE MAP (PENDING)
CEQA (APPLICABILITY TO BE DETERMINED)
APNS 141-220-074 & 075**

Conduct a public workshop to review and provide comments on conceptual plans for site design, building massing/scale, building design, and landscaping for the development of nine, attached residential homes in two building clusters; one building with three 3-story units and one 2-story unit, and one building with five 3-story units. Plans include 21 off-street parking spaces; one garage space per home and 12 uncovered spaces.

Hans Grunt, Senior Planner presented the staff report, and described the purpose of the design workshop, and subsequent entitlement steps.

Applicant Vincent Sproete presented (via boards and projector) his site, landscape and architectural concept plans and the genesis of the design, including measures to preserve heritage oak trees on the site.

Commissioner Edridge asked for information regarding quiet design specifications for air conditioning units and clarification on design of retaining walls.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

NUMBER OF SPEAKERS: 2

Brenda Stadrik neighbor to the proposal indicated she is pleased with the design revisions, including elimination of upper floor balconies to protect privacy, and protection and addition of trees along the westerly property line; believes the proposal will be a nice addition to the neighborhood and will eliminate human encampments and trespassing on the site that has been occurring.

Joe Deveney expressed concerns over increasing on-street parking occurring in the neighborhood and would like more information about parking management for the proposal.

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Farrell noted he met with the applicant in advance of this workshop and is pleased to see revisions to the design, including the incorporation of entry porches for each unit; likes the organized, “stepped” arrangement between units given the site’s slope; would like to see further architectural embellishments to the exterior wall of the end units e.g. windows. He suggested considering changes to pop-out articulation, perhaps bay windows.

Commissioner Edridge questioned if it is feasible to “flip” the end unit floor plan to orient active spaces, including the addition of windows, on the exterior elevation; applicant noted it’s infeasible given garage space/orientation demand.

Commissioner MacLeamy concurred with observations about adding interest to the end unit exterior design; noted addition of windows at units 8 and 9 would both enhance exterior and improve quality of the interior living space with more natural light – consider lot line adjustment to accommodate windows near property line; suggested incorporating an architectural finish to the pavement treatment for the driveway i.e. frame the drive isle with concrete borders of alternate color and/or finish to add quality and reduce the perceived width of the drive isle; would like to see more detail on how the entries to and steps between units is resolved; feels project, with these limited design details resolved, will be a nice addition to the neighborhood – Commissioners collectively agreed.

Commissioner Barber supports height exception (30’) as it results in an attractive design – Commissioners collectively agreed; suggested terracing or stepping the patio wall at the rear of lot 4 to break up mass and afford in-wall landscaping; suggested wrapping porch at unit closest to Vallejo

Commissioner Radovanovich noted she agrees with the observations and design suggestions of her colleagues.

GENERAL BUSINESS: NONE

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.