

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 10, 2017 - 6:00 p.m.
City Hall Council Chambers
1327 Foothill Boulevard**

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Gunter called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.
- II. ROLL:** Also present were Vice Chairman Hazen and Commissioners Jain and Oh. Commissioner McConnell arrived at 6:08 p.m.
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** At this time, members of the audience may address the Commission regarding matters that are not on the agenda or matters that are on the Consent Calendar. There were none.
- V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA** The agenda was not reordered.
- VI. CONSENT CALENDAR**
- A. **Minutes:** [10/25/2016 PC Meeting](#) – M/S/C – Jain/Hazen to approve the minutes. Approved 4-0-1. Commissioner McConnell was not present to vote as he had not arrived to the meeting yet. When asked at the end of the meeting if he had any comments on the minutes, he indicated, “no.”
- VII. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**
- A. **Hillside Development Permit 16-14 / Second-floor Review 16-12 / Setback Modification 16-04; Lee/Yi; 4544 Daleridge Road:** request to allow 1st and 2nd-floor expansion of an existing single-story residence on a hillside lot, including a new 924 sq. ft. second floor. A Setback Modification would allow retention of side yard setbacks below the 6-foot requirement to the north and south. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for the project (Planner Gjolme).

Planner Gjolme gave a presentation in accordance with the staff report.

Commissioner McConnell joined the meeting during the staff presentation.

Mr. Gjolme showed the footprint of the proposed project and how it related to the existing house. The floor area is compliant. More than 30% of the home will be removed so it qualifies as a new project. There are existing legal non-conforming elements to the project. Mr. Gjolme spoke about the surrounding neighborhood. He explained the proposed elevations and explained the straightforward massing and minimalist architectural features that are proposed which are consistent with the character of the immediate area. The north elevation proposes one window at the second-floor level. The neighbor to the north is concerned with privacy. The applicant will look at installing either an opaque or frosted window. Staff will add a condition for this if deemed necessary.

Mr. Gjolme explained that the original design that was submitted concerned staff as the reach of the patio provided a view into the neighboring property to the south. As a result, staff proposed a storage area to be constructed in order to form a structural barrier. The redesigned patio that is proposed is reasonable and the intent is to take advantage of views to the east, away from neighbors.

The Setback Modification request would allow retention of setbacks close to the 6-foot requirement. Mr. Gjolme showed the proposed encroachments. The garage steps in with a setback of over 9 feet. Staff felt that the surplus setback yields an average setback in excess of 7 feet which exceeds the code requirement. To the South, there is an 8-inch offset which is minor and helps to modulate the façade and meets design guidelines.

The area was described as eclectic by Mr. Gjolme. He showed an aerial of the site and the significant slope to the rear. Also shown was a view looking up to the property. He explained that the density and height of the Oak trees does allow views of the project from homes to the east.

Mr. Gjolme explained that story poles are installed. They show the width, span, height, and overall volume and are not overbearing. He showed the Commission the original application design which displays the gables and the angle plane. Mr. Gjolme explained that he believed that the design was too stark and imposing. He showed the front elevation in its current form and explained that the high gables have been eliminated and windows added.

Staff recommended approval and positive findings.

Chairman Gunter asked if there was a new box tree in the front yard.

Mr. Gjolme explained that the landscaping requirements are satisfied. He suggested that if the Planning Commission wished, that they could request a box tree be installed.

Architect, Eric Kwon, spoke on behalf of the project.

Chairman Gunter asked the applicant if there were any conditions of approval that the applicant is not in favor of.

Mr. Kwon said that the applicant would be agreeable to installing a box tree. As to the bathroom window that was discussed, his client would prefer that frosted glass not be installed.

Chairman Gunter asked if installing a transom window along the south elevation would be ok.

Mr. Kwon said, "yes."

Chairman Gunter explained that a garage must be maintained as a garage. He asked the architect if he understood this.

The architect said, "yes."

Chairman Gunter asked the architect if he was still ok with adding a tree.

The architect said, "no."

Speaker, Robert Crippen, 4602 Daleridge, talked about issues which he believes have all been addressed and he therefore supports the project. He took a picture simulating the view from the proposed bathroom window. He expressed that he would like the bathroom window to be frosted because of views to his property.

Commissioner McConnell asked the speaker if he had any concerns about the proposed balcony.

The speaker said that the balcony on the back of the house is alongside his garage and he is ok with it.

Chairman Gunter asked the speaker if he was concerned about construction parking.

The speaker expressed concerns about possible problems resulting from the deliveries as a truck could completely block his driveway.

He explained that during St. Francis High School football games he has gotten boxed inside his driveway by persons that park in front of it. He is concerned the same thing could happen during construction and that he would like his fellow neighbors to be cognizant of this.

The public hearing was closed.

Vice Chairman Hazen agreed with staff's recommendations pertaining to the transom window and believed that frosted windows would be aesthetically pleasing. He suggested making it a condition of approval. He felt that an additional tree should be optional. He can make all the findings.

Commissioner Oh said that he has visited the site twice. He felt that there are varying architectural styles in the neighborhood and feels the project is reasonable and was happy the applicant worked with staff on the project. He said that Mr. Gjolme's explanation of modulation effect made sense to him in supporting the first floor encroachment to the south. He understood that the applicant does not want the box tree and therefore recommends that it not be a requirement. As to requiring a frosted window for the bathroom, he felt that it could make one feel trapped. Despite the neighbor's concern, he said that he agrees with the recommendations and can make the findings. He said that he would prefer to have the tree as a requirement of the Hillside Development Permit.

Commissioner Jain said that he tried to visit the site. He felt that the design had improved and felt that staff working with applicant regarding the re-design was helpful. He agreed to requiring a transom window on the south elevation. He did not believe that a frosted window in the bathroom should be a required condition. He did not believe that requiring that a tree be installed made sense.

Chairman Gunter said that he could make all findings. Regarding the tree, he did not feel that it should be recommended and stated that Condition No. 15 which recommended installation of a front yard tree, should be omitted and that Condition No. 16 requiring transom windows should be required. He did not believe that a frosted window should be required in a bathroom as it is not a view window. He believed that Condition No. 19 should be removed and that an additional condition either replacing or being added to Condition No. 19 be put in place that any fences within the front yard setback comply with code and obtain approval and a permit.

He expressed that he liked seeing the "before and after" design that Chris presented and thanked the applicant for the time he spent on it.

M/S/C – McConnell/Jain to approve the project with the conditions Chairman Gunter noted. Approved 5-0.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. [Second-Floor Review 15-02 \(Amend\); Krikorian; 5708 Alder Ridge Drive](#): request to amend a condition of approval for a previously approved Second Floor Review. The applicant is requesting to revise Condition No. 11 pertaining to the landscape hedge height in the rear yard. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris).

The Commission indicated that no staff report would be required. They thanked Assistant Planner, Harris for her preparation.

The public hearing was opened.

Applicant, Vahik Krikorian, spoke and said that a 10-foot high landscape requirement should not be required. He felt that the requirement was not discussed with him appropriately. He said that if landscaping of this height is installed that his view of the mountains will be gone.

Director Stanley indicated that he visited both the neighbor and project site and at that time the adjacent neighbor agreed with a maximum 8-foot high limit. He indicated that he believed it would be reasonable, as he viewed the line-of-sight from the neighbor's house and the roof of the applicant, that the applicant would have views of the mountains, as a result.

Mr. Krikorian said that 8-feet tall landscaping would still hinder his view of the mountains. He said that he would like to continue moving forward with his project and feels that he has made enough sacrifices on the design. He said that, though he will abide by an 8 foot requirement, he felt that 6-feet will do the job.

Speaker, Pete Palermo, lives to the rear of the subject property, at 5687 Bramblewood. He said that he appreciated staff looking at the site from his yard. He said that he felt that 6-feet tall landscaping would not be high enough and that he is concerned about privacy. He felt that 8-feet high landscaping would be fine.

Applicant, Ms. Kriikorian said that she would like to request a maximum requirement of 6-feet rather than 8-feet for the landscaping height. The public hearing was closed.

Vice Chairman Hazen asked if existing vegetation would remain.

Director Stanley said that it varies in height. Exhibit A and B of the staff report show a variation between 7-foot tall and 8-foot tall landscaping. He expressed that he believed that at least 7-foot tall landscaping would be acceptable. Eight feet should guarantee privacy for the neighbors. Mr. Stanley said that he stood in the neighbor's lot below in every portion of the back yard and was able to determine that eight feet would provide privacy.

The Commissioners asked for clarification of the landscaping height at various locations on the site.

Commissioner McConnell asked Deputy Attorney, Guerra, if the Commission agreed to require the lower height of 8 feet rather than 10 feet as advertised for the project, could the Commission decide on it now?

Deputy City Attorney Guerra confirmed that the item would not have to re-advertised.

Director Stanley recommended amending Condition No. 11 to include a landscape screening height of 8 feet.

M/S/C - Gunter/McConnell to approve the project with the amended Condition No. 11. Approved 4-1. Jain voted no.

- B. **Setback Modification 16-09; Mervel/Kamar; 3932 Starland Drive:** request to construct a new, solid driveway gate that would achieve an overall height of 6'-3". The Setback Modification is required because the composition of the gate above 42" within the front-yard setback would not satisfy the Fence Review standards. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris).

Assistant Planner Harris gave a staff report. She confirmed the lot size and the zoning. The applicant is proposing a new, solid driveway gate. The parcel exists on the east side of Starland Drive. Ms. Harris showed the Commission a site plan, photos and aerial photograph. She explained that the functional front and rear yards are really, both, side yards.

Ms. Harris said that she spoke with Public Works Department staff about the proposed gate and they indicated that there would be no issues with their department if the gate was moved back so there would be no line-of-sight issues.

A rendering of the gate was shown and depicted the solid composition. Ms. Harris explained that the applicant wished for the gate to be solid and

proposed a design that contains sustainable materials including rice husks and mineral oil.

Ms. Harris said that staff made positive findings and recommended approval of the gate.

Commissioner McConnell asked for clarification on the pilaster.

Ms. Harris said that both the mailbox and pilaster were made of breakaway materials approved by the Public Works Department. The pilaster would be located behind the mailbox and would form the enclosure.

Commissioner Jain asked why the applicant is asking for the gate to be so high.

Ms. Harris said that the applicant wishes for more privacy and the gate will help to provide that.

Chairman Gunter pointed out that only the gate is 6 feet high and asked how privacy would be gained on each side of the gate.

Ms. Harris explained that landscaping is proposed to be installed next to the gate as a screening measure.

Commissioner Gunter asked if there were any other locations in the neighborhood that screen their residence like the proposed applicant plans to.

Ms. Harris agreed that there are no other nearby neighbors that have placed solid fences in their front yards.

Director Stanley explained that the secluded nature of the neighborhood made it easy for staff to support the proposed project. The applicant is attempting to prevent views into his backyard area from the street.

Commissioner Hazen asked for clarification about how photos of the subject property were taken.

Ms. Harris indicated from Google on the top of a car.

Ms. Harris stated that she believed that the siting of the house is unique.

The public hearing was opened.

Applicant, Bassily Kamar explained that he was concerned with privacy on both sides of the house, but primarily the left side.

Commissioner Gunter asked the applicant why the fence at the side of the house could not be placed in line with the garage.

The applicant explained that he would like the entire location enclosed.

Commissioner Jain asked the applicant if there were ultimate plans to grow hedges for screening. He stated that landscape screening could work and that the desire to have a gate and fence is difficult to support and that he could not make the findings.

Chairman Gunter asked if the Commission could please stick to the fencing request and not discuss landscaping.

Speaker Rodney Gregson, 3939 Starland Drive, said that he agreed with Commissioner Jain. He explained that the proposed gate would block his view of Pasadena. He explained that the tenant spends a lot of his time in the yard and that extending the height will not offer any additional privacy. His main concern was that his view will be blocked if the gate is built.

Commissioner Oh said that he visited the site. He said that there is a gorgeous view from the street and that he did not see any houses nearby that included a solid fence. Most fencing in the neighborhood consists of wrought iron. He believed that the proposed gate was not consistent with the nature of the neighborhood and that he did not see the logic of the gate request.

Commissioner Jain said that he visited the site. He expressed that privacy could be gained if the applicant places fencing in line with the home out of the setback.

Vice Chairman Hazen said that he visited the site and cannot make the findings. He stated that La Cañada is all about views. He did not believe that placing a solid gate would fit the surrounding neighborhood.

Commissioner McConnell said that the proposed gate would cut off the view of surrounding neighbors and that he does not support the request.

Chairman Gunter said that he agrees with the Commission. He cannot make the findings. He disagrees with the findings as proposed.

M/S/C – Gunter/Hazen to deny the project and direct staff to bring back a resolution for denial. Approved 5-0.

A short recess was taken from 7:31 pm to 7:38 pm.

- C. **Tentative Parcel Map 73402; Lim; 743 Craig Avenue (APN: 5816-023-043)**: request to allow the subdivision of one lot into two parcels at the north-east corner of Commonwealth and Craig Avenues in the R-1-10,000 zone. Each new lot will have an area of at least 10,000 square feet, and at least eighty feet of frontage on the public street. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris).

No staff report was required.

Chairman Gunter opened and closed the public hearing.

M/S/C – Jain/Hazen to approve the project. Approved 5-0.

IX. REPORT OF DIRECTOR'S REVIEWS Was reviewed.

- A. **Hillside Development Permit 16-34 (Dir.); Jones; 5213 Redwillow Lane**: allowed a 287 sq. ft. patio-cover addition to an existing residence on a hillside lot.
- B. **Director's Miscellaneous Review 16-41 (Setback); Cookman; 947 Green Lane**: allowed pool equipment to encroach into the required street side and rear yard setbacks.
- C. **Hillside Development Permit 16-42 (Dir.); Chragchian; 4068 Chevy Chase Drive**: allowed expansion and upgrade of an existing patio/deck area, including retaining walls approximately 2-3 feet in height, on a hillside lot.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Discussion - alteration/enclosure of legal non-conforming roofed floor area.-

Director gave a presentation about altering and enclosing legal non-conforming roofed floor area.

Chairman Gunter said that there could be an instance when neighbors might not be affected. If they are, he believed that a request should go before the Planning Commission for review.

Commissioner McConnell asked if roof structures that are enclosed are permitted.

Director Stanley said, "no." He said that he is only reporting on instances where legal-nonconforming structures are existing.

Vice Chairman Hazen asked if in the cases of a solid or flat roof patio, would this be adding to it or removing it?

Director Stanley said that the grandfathering process would be taken away. Also some existing homes attic space could be converted to usable area that applicants could request to enclose. If all that is being done in these instances is framing out insulation, and lighting and electrical, staff would have no issues with that. Staff would have issues with the owner desiring a new house and trying to install structural ties. In that case, it would be illegal.

Commissioner McConnell asked if it is typically counted as floor area when in an attic.

Director Stanley said that it is counted and is legal-nonconforming.

Commissioner McConnell asked about a dormer window being installed.

Ms. Harris said that we have allowed them.

Director Stanley said that each request would have to be looked at individually.

The Commissioners agreed that the requests should be looked at on an individual basis by staff.

XI. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS – There were none.

XII. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Director Stanley said that R-1 Zoning items would be brought forward for discussion in the future. He also reminded the Commission about the Planning Commissioners Academy to take place March 1 – 3, 2017.

He wished the Commissioners a Happy New Year.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT M/S/C - Oh/Hazen to adjourn at 7:54 p.m. Approved 5-0.