

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD ON MAY 14, 2013**

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL: Chairman Der Sarkissian, Vice Chairman Jain and Commissioner Gunter, Community Development Director Stanley, Senior Planner Buss, Assistant City Attorney Guerra and Planners Gjolme and Clarke.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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.

None.

V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA

Chair der Sarkissian asked to move item 8 to be before item 7.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR None

VII. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. **Conditional Use Permit 472/Second Floor Review 11-27/Director's Miscellaneous Review (Flat-Roof) 12-04/Tree Removal Permit 12-18; Johnson/Park; 835 Berkshire Avenue:** [Fourth Hearing] Request to allow the construction of 10,800-square foot new two-story house and accessory structures (garden pavilion: 1,272 sf and covered patio 575 sf). A Conditional Use Permit is required because the proposal exceeds 10,000 square feet. A Director's Miscellaneous Review is required because more than 25% of the roof is flat. A Tree Removal Permit is required because the 20" Oak tree located on the east side of the property was excessively pruned without a permit. Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Gjolme/Assistant Planner Parinas)

Planner Gjolme gave background information for the project and an overview of the new proposal.

Chair Der Sarkissian said that he had received 5 pieces of correspondence regarding the proposal.

Commissioner Gunter asked for clarification regarding the types of applications. He noted that Second Floor Reviews have 4 findings which have to be made since it was adopted in 2006. He asked if the City required more extensive landscaping plans for a project of this size.

Planner Gjolme stated that no landscaping plans were required until we are comfortable with drawings – no technical plans submitted at this time.

Chair Der Sarkissian asked for the source of 28' maximum height recommendation.

Planner Gjolme said it was not a formal recommendation. 28' is standard maximum height for hillside lots although the subject property is not a hillside lot. It's a talking point since the issues are similar.

Public Hearing:

Mr. David Di Julio of 330 North Grand - attorney representing client team asked for copies of correspondence mentioned. He said that all objective standards were met with the proposal. He asked for a decision tonight at the meeting.

Mr. Di Julio presented a slide show.

Timeline – 13 months.

Negative comments (3).

I Disproportionate

II Called Italian in Guidelines

III Italian

IV Good job with design to match

V Good neighbor

VI Views of house location.

VII Scale – showed story pole photo

VIII Two-story design.

IX Residential guidelines – compatibility.

X comp of guidelines and proposed house.

XI Fifth time to compromise over 15 months.

Detached garage or reduce to three cars to get vote tonight.

He acknowledged receipt of 3 pieces of correspondence.

Commissioner Gunter asked about Item B under Site Development in the Design Guidelines. He asked how the house responds to the shape and size of the property.

Project architect Mr. Jay Johnson handed out plan.

Mr. Ben Park (owner) spoke about how they proceeded with the project. Cultural standpoint was important to him. The house would be built for his family and its tastes. He has changed the design of the home over time and made concessions. He was not ignoring the Commission recommendations.

Mr. Johnson responded to questions about guidelines and possible changes. Compatibility deals with size, scale and height. He noted heights of homes on the south side of Berkshire. The proposed house is 8' below street level and the house is only 26' tall. Have to look at entire neighborhood and not just two neighboring homes. Six out of 12 homes in neighborhood have two stories. He spoke about presentation slide that showed the house as a box. If reoriented, it would impact turnaround and move the house location. The problem with this was it would make it visible to two neighbors. Grading and topography of lot with 14' change in elevation creates issues. The reality is that moving the house will cause more issues.

Mr. Johnson noted the character of home – one block away is a similar styled house. Boxy from distance and worked on modulation. Suggested more modulation to break up boxy effect. Add wing and still meet hammerhead requirement and create courtyard.

4-car garage across the street. Could take away one car space leaving 11' wide open area. Pull out porch and replace it with one-story flat element. Push back second floor and leave a stand-alone one-story entry. Create more articulated front with increased modulation. Balustrades stand out but the rest of the front is more basic. Change from concrete to iron railings and respect Italian theme and match other iron details. Staff recommendation of 28' is ideal but proposed house is lower. Challenge at one corner of lot due to change in elevation of lot. Grade can be built up. Neighbors see second floor. Closeness of Stewart house to the property line should not mean that the proposed house should be set back more. The Fire Department does not want new trees planted on Stewart side of house. 15 gl (Carolina cherries) trees proposed along that side which will be approved by the FD. They will grow to a height of 10' only and will not block out light.

He spoke about 5 staff recommendations. He showed color board and discussed colors. He didn't think it would be good to lower the house even further. He hoped to get a decision tonight. He addressed guidelines and what staff said. He thought that they were in alignment with the staff recommendations. The goal was to get an approval tonight and thought that the suggested changes go a long way.

Vice Chair Jain asked about a 3-car garage with breezeway – does it have to be connected?

Mr. Johnson said a breezeway would provide protection. The plan has it articulated as 3-car garage and he wanted to keep the breezeway.

Vice Chair Jain asked what study was done regarding on-site grade changes.

Mr. Johnson spoke about grade change for the pavilion and how it would not exceed 15' over existing grade. He said they would be glad to come back with a grading plan.

Vice Chair Jain thought that 3-car garage with breezeway would not help. He preferred no breezeway. He would not support the proposal. Doing more to the front is hurting the design of the house.

Chair Der Sarkissian asked about grades for the pavilion.

Mr. Johnson said he was particularly interested in how best to work with guidelines.

Mr. Patrick Stewart (neighbor) said he welcomed the Park family to the neighborhood. He spoke about comments made by Mr. Johnson on other houses without mentioning lot widths. Staff did not show houses on narrower lots. He asked Planner Gjolme the size of the proposed basement – 3,600 sf. The square footage of the house has grown. He gave personal history of the house he grew up in. That house contained 3,000 sf and was constructed in 1928 by a famous architect. He noted difference between needs and wants. He said that he had received no response to contact over weeds in the back of the property from the owner. Cultural sensitivity has to go both ways. Story poles can be seen from other views. The impacts of new proposal are significant. Orientation of house – need to redesign house. Landscaping – if trees removed it will expose his house to the subject property. House has been moved back but it still impacts the privacy of the pool.

Mr. Bryant Danner (neighbor of Mr. Park) spoke about the value of staff and reports and submitted informed comments. Dependent on staff review – not productive to repeat

what is in staff report. Not equipped to comment on late changes submitted tonight. Need time to review and get staff's comments. Cultural aspects – could be more compatible. Structural issues and also cultural aspects (view of mountains and water running). Respects it but does not understand it. Could start the house closer to the street. Incorporate by reference letter submitted and oppose the project and support staff recommendation of continuance. He wanted clarification of basement issues – over 3,000 added. What impacts on grading and the neighborhood from the newly proposed basement.

Chair der Sarkissian asked how Mr. Stewart's lot will be affected by the proposed house.

Mr. Danner replied by saying he has not had a chance to review and evaluate its impacts. Neighborhood impacts from 2-story massive structure. What happens if someone wants to develop his property with huge proposed setback.

Public hearing closed:

Commissioner Gunter said he spoke with the participants and read correspondence. He noted it was awkward to go through the project with its many changes and revisions. The Zoning Code is neutral on ownership. Project meets objective requirements of the Code. Houses of this size are permitted as are basements. It was hard to forget the French style initially proposed. Changing individual pieces is not helpful. Difference between 29' and 28' is not significant. Small portico entry is better as it's not a two-story entrance. Lighting at night would be a giant distraction to neighbors. Cultural aspects is not his purview. Second story width is only 60% of lot width. It was a tough site with five owners over the years. Oak trees are highly protected. Street setting and trees not agreeing. Hammerhead can be moved. Number of car bays is not important. Hedges along east side – may be trading block wall for green wall. He cannot confidently vote for the proposal without a grading plan. Will be necessary for final approval. Grading plans can change proposals. Two-story houses are permitted in one-story neighborhoods. He supported the concept but cannot vote due at this time due to the lack of information.

Vice Chair Jain said he studied the new plans but did not revisit the site again. He noted fine line improvements made. The delay is hurting the neighborhood. He asked if other design styles or vocabulary was considered. The level of the house is about 10' below street level. The proposed house will give appearance of being a one-story house. He was concerned the impact of the west side wall on neighbors. He noted that a one story house can be any length - max of 63' wide. It can be wider on the wider lots up to 120'. They can lower first floor through working on grading. Grades don't match on plans. Another wing will not win his support. 3-car garage would be helpful but can support four. He needed a grading plan but can support proposal.

Chair Der Sarkissian said he visited the site for fourth time. Invisibility of structure is because story poles only constructed of sticks. The front setback impacts the neighbors.

Chair Der Sarkissian used the word "mansion" positively. Changing orientation of house would impact Stewart house as this side would become the front of the house. Substantially, it's a stretched out house. The separation between houses is similar to lots in other cities. There would be some yard views from second floor. Landscaping can help. Needed to be shown on drawings. House will be nearly invisible from the street. The proposed architectural style may not be our choice but that is between the owner and the architect. Portico is a good idea. Roofed areas are counted as square footage.

He had no issues with the cabana. A 4-car garage is good for the house. Conversion of garages to habitable uses is not preferable in his opinion. Need landscaping plans to be reviewed by the Commission. Come back with corrected plans. There will be other Commission members at follow-up meeting.

Vice Chair Jain said they should conditionally approve.

Commissioner Gunter said the changes were significant and that he needed revised plans.

1. Garage to remain as shown.
2. Portico at entry good idea.
3. Single story element on east side would add balance – take square footage from other areas of house and not propose a larger house. This was suggested by Mr. Johnson but the Commission was neutral on this.
4. Need complete landscape plan and preserve what currently exists.
5. Façade details – okay now.
6. Muted colors presented tonight make sense.
7. Height – okay as is but grading plan will finalize the issue – 27' with one corner higher.
8. Grading plan required – show how basement works.

The Commission had a five minute break.

Public hearing reopened:

Mr. Johnson said they could return to first or second meeting in July. They did not want plan to be approved by the County prior to the Commission meeting.

Director Stanley said revised plans were needed by June 18. The project would have to deal with the Green Ordinance as it proposed over 5,000 sf of landscaped areas. Need gallon size of plants for screening. They can use the standard Fire Department Condition of Approval.

Planner Gjolme said Mr. Stewart wanted to know what the Fire Department will approve on the eastern side of house.

Chair Der Sarkissian suggested 7/9/13 Commission meeting for continuance date.

Mr. Stewart – current vertical vegetation along eastside provides privacy. If removed it will impact privacy for both.

M/S/C Gunter/Jain Vote 3-0 to continue to 7/9/2013.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. **Telecommunications Permit 13-01; AT&T/SCE; Edison Right-of-Way South of El Vago Street:** Request to allow a cellular antenna system to be mounted on an existing Edison high-voltage transmission tower located approximately 360 feet south of El Vago Street with associated ground equipment located on a pad approximately 125 feet south of the tower. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Senior Planner Buss)

Senior Planner Buss gave an overview of the proposal.

Commissioner Gunter asked about Condition of Approval # 14.

Senior Planner Buss said it was a letter signed by an officer of the company.

No public comment.

Commission Gunter said that he had read the report and walked the site. He saw no reason not to support as submitted and supported it.

Vice Chair Jain had the same comments.

Chair Der Sarkissian said he did not visit site. He noted that this proposal has no significant impacts.

M/S/C Jain/Gunter to approve as submitted Vote 3-0.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS:

- A. Discussion regarding artificial grass and how it fits into the definition of landscaping. [no distributable materials]

Director Stanley gave an overview a handout passed out today.

Vice Chair Jain spoke about house on Angeles Crest Highway and why it does not comply with regulations.

Director Stanley said it does not comply with full landscaping definition.

Vice Chair Jain said it helps projects in long term costs. He had an example of real grass being considered fake grass.

Chair Der Sarkissian said he was opposed to artificial grass – not natural. He was also in In favor of turf blocks for driveways.

Commissioner Gunter agreed with the Chair and felt it was incompatible with La Cañada Flintridge.

Director Stanley said he would prepare a policy.

X. REPORT OF DIRECTOR'S REVIEWS

- A. **DM 13-10 (Adm. Height); Harris; 1030 Green Lane:** Request for a Director's Miscellaneous Review for excess height for an existing, over-height detached 737 sq. ft. garage/office that would be remodeled. According to the project plans, the existing detached garage and office would be switched and the building would be raised without removing the roof. The lower roof also would be raised to align with the higher roof so that the floor of the garage and office would be at the same level. The floor area would remain unchanged. The roof of the existing garage/office would be converted to a single roofline and would achieve an overall height of 21'-0" which is above the 15'-0" height

limitation for accessory structures but could be allowed through this review. The existing garage is already over 15'-0" in height. The new roofline would match the roof pitch of the existing residence. Project was approved.

- B. **HDP 12-45 (Dir.); Swan; 2023 Rancho Canada Place:** Request for a Hillside Development Permit for a 43 sq. ft. single-story addition and new 23 sq. ft. front porch that would be setback 25'-0" from the edge of the private street on a hillside lot per the review criteria set forth in Section 11.35 - Hillside Development. The additions would be located on the south side of the existing residence and would have a 25'-0" front setback at its closest point. The new total floor area would be 1,710 sq. ft. (excluding the porch addition) which is well below the 5,824 sq. ft. allowable floor area for the subject lot. Additionally, the project is sited below the level of Rancho Canada Place. Project was approved.
- C. **Hillside Development Permit 13-12 (Dir.); Persson; 3854 Hampstead Road:** Request for a Hillside Development Permit to allow the removal and reconstruction of two uncovered decks on a hillside lot per the review criteria set forth in Section 11.35 – Hillside Development of the Municipal Code. The proposed decks would not contribute additional floor area on the property since the height from the lowest grade to the under deck area is less than 7'-6" tall. The smaller, 104 sq. ft. deck would be reconstructed and overlooks the pool and the existing guest house. A second 303 sq. ft. deck would be reconstructed and increased in size by 308 sq. ft. for a total new deck area of 611 sq. ft. This deck overlooks the adjacent property to the east. Both decks conform to the required rear and side-yard setbacks. Project was approved.
- D. **HDP 13-18 (Dir.); Palmer; 756 Greenridge Drive:** Request for a Hillside Development Permit to allow a 500 sq. ft. covered patio with a roof-top deck and a new trellis to an existing two-story residence on a hillside lot, per the review criteria set forth in Section 11.35 – Hillside Development of the Zoning Code. The proposed addition will be located at the rear of property and will extend 23'-6" from the existing building footprint. Proposed deck on top of new covered patio will connect to existing second-story balcony and will have a total height of 14'-0" from finish grade to top of railings. This project would bring the total building area to 6,731 sq. ft., which is under the maximum allowed area of 9,300 sq. ft. per Slope Factor Guideline for the lot. The new addition meets the required side and rear-yard setbacks, as well as, height and design regulations. A new chimney located on the northwest side of the addition will be 22'-0" in height, maintaining consistency with the existing chimneys. The proposed trellis located behind the residence would extend 15'-0" towards the backyard and would not result in additional building area. The proposed project maintains the existing characteristics and design elements of the residence. Project was approved.
- E. **DM 12-40 (SB)(Amendment); Dietrich; 4854 Hampton Road:** Amending approval of a 124 sq. ft. addition to the first floor of an existing two-story home per Section 11.45.010.B1 of the City's Zoning Code. The applicant proposes to enclose the previously approved 124 sq. ft. porch between the garage and the existing house. The 34'-6" proposed setback represents a 3'-10" encroachment into the 38'-4" front-yard setback requirement. The new area would not encroach any closer than allowed in the previous DM approval. In all, the floor area would increase to 3,568 sq. ft. which is under the 3,991 maximum allowed for the lot. The Conditions of Approval for the original approval still apply. Project was approved.
- F. **HDP 13-06 (Dir.)/DM 13-07 (SB); Tung; 5571 Stardust Road:** Request for a Hillside Development Permit and Director's Miscellaneous Review for a 267 sq. ft. single-

story addition that encroaches into the 9'-8" south side required setback on a hillside lot per the review criteria set forth in Section 11.35 - Hillside Development and Section 11.45 – Modifications and Special Reviews of the Municipal Code. The addition will be located on the south side of the existing residence and would have an 8'-2" side-yard setback at its closest point. At its closest point this would be a 1'-6" encroachment into the south side-yard setback requirement. Also as part of the project, two new bay windows with compliant setbacks are proposed along the rear façade in the existing bedrooms. The new total floor area would be 2,684 sq. ft. which is well below the 3,987 sq. ft. allowable Slope Factor Guideline adjusted floor area for the subject lot. Existing landscaping along the south side and sloping rear help screen the project from adjoining neighbors. The project would fit well with the existing neighborhood and would have no additional privacy or view impacts. Project was approved.

XI. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Gunter requested session with the City and the Fire Department on how plans are reviewed.

Director Stanley applicant goes to Fire Department for review separately. Fire Department is a separate entity and collects its own tax revenue.

Vice Chair Jain asked how we can we minimize projects coming to Commission multiple times.

Director Stanley said that the Commission had the power to approve/deny projects.

Chair Der Sarkissian said that it was a lot more accommodating in La Cañada Flintridge compared to Glendale.

Senior Planner Buss spoke about changes to continue for 60 days as have CEQA requirements.

Chair Der Sarkissian had complaint about getting envelopes from City with outside mail. He said that he preferred to receive them directly and not from the City. He considered items delivered by City to be official and to be on an agenda. Has received 40-50 emails from opponents of Sacred Heart School.

Assistant Attorney Guerra thought it best to come through the City.

XII. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Director Stanley spoke about the joint meriting with the Design Commission and City Council on 6/3/2013 at 6:00 (email to follow) on reader boards and drive throughs.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07