

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD MAY 23, 2006**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Gelhaar called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present were Commissioners Cahill, Davitt, Engler, Mehranian, Deputy City Cobey, Director of Community Development Stanley, Senior Planner Buss and Planner Gjolme.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Engler led the salute to the flag.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Chairman Gelhaar commented on Commissioner Engler's last meeting. He calculated that during 8 years of commitment, Commissioner Engler attended 176 meetings, reviewed 1,066 projects and, based on the average packet, he reviewed 43,000 pages of reading material. This amounted to 2,400 hours reviewing materials and attending meetings, while earning approximately \$3.57 an hour. He also noted that it was at Commissioner Engler's suggestion that the Pledge of Allegiance was permanently included in the agenda.

V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Gelhaar noted that Public Works staff was present to report on item VIII A, and determined to hear that item first.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING item VIII A

A. Capital Improvement Projects; City of La Cañada Flintridge: finding that projects proposed in the CIP are consistent with the General Plan:

Director Stanley reported that California Government Code requires the Planning Commission's annual review of the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), which identifies projects for the next and future fiscal years. The Commission's positive finding is required before the matter proceeds to budget consideration by the City Council. Planning staff reviewed the itemized list of proposed projects and determined that it conforms with the goals and objectives of the General Plan and the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan and recommended that the Planning Commission adopt the Draft Resolution included the packets.

Commissioner Davitt confirmed that last year's storm damage was not included in the CIP - FEMA and state funding would respond to those items.

Responding to a request from Commissioner Cahill, Director Stanley asked Public Works staff to e mail descriptions of the line items.

M/S/C Davitt/Mehranian finding that the City's CIP conforms with the City's General Plan. Unanimous.

VII. CONSENT CALENDAR:

- A. Minutes of May 9, 2006;** M/S/C Davitt/Engler to approve; unanimous. 4 Ayes; Mehranian abstaining.
- B. Determination of Substantial Conformance: HDP 05-26; Modification 05-35; Glassman; 525 Venado Vista Drive.** Approved unanimous.
- C. Final Map approval; PM 063621; 2026 Tondolea Lane, La Cañada LLC.** M/S/C Davitt/Mehranian to approve; 4 Ayes; Cahill abstaining.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. Modification 06-27; Schwalbach; 4716 Oakado Place

Planner Gjolme reported the applicants' request to retain substandard side yard setbacks after removing and redesigning the roof on their home. A 547-sf residential addition on the south side would also maintain the existing substandard setback. The grandfathered status for the existing substandard side yard setbacks would be eliminated once the roof is removed; otherwise, the project was a candidate for Administrative Review.

The 17,339-sf project site is on a cul-de-sac, in the R-1-15,000 zone. The lot is 100-ft-wide, which requires 10-ft side yard setbacks; existing side yard setbacks are 9'-4" to the south and 8'-10" on the north.

A Powerpoint presentation depicted the existing, awkward roofline compared with the proposed more traditional roofline with gables projecting at either end. The new roof would encroach 14 inches into the required 10-ft north side yard setback and 8 inches to the south.

Staff determined that the overall aesthetic gain and the minimal change to the floor plan led to positive findings, and that compliance with required setbacks would be overly restrictive and unnecessary in this case.

Project architect Ben Sturgill, was present to respond to questions.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing. Since comments were not offered, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Cahill concurred with Staff's findings, stating that the fact the roof is being removed simply means that a better roof would be added in this instance. Requiring the roof to be pushed back 8 inches to comply with the side setback is not practical.

Commissioner Mehranian agreed, adding that the design changes would improve the property.

Commissioners Davitt and Engler and Chairman Gelhaar agreed.

M/S/C Mehranian/Engler to approve Modification 06-27 as conditioned.
Unanimous.

C. Floor Area Review 06-02; Modification 06-08; Sirof; 481 Paulette Place:
Assistant Planner Lang described the applicants' request for a residential expansion, including a new second floor. The requested floor area of 3,768-sf would exceed the 3,416-sf standard for the lot, but is within the allowed floor area allowed with Commission review. The Modification addresses existing one-ft side yard encroachments that new first floor additions would maintain.

The 9,490-sf site is located on the north side of Paulette Place, just north of its intersection with Paradise Canyon Lane, in the R-1-10,000 zone.

A total of 455-sf would be added to the sides and rear of the first floor, eliminating the pool and rotating the garage 90 degrees to face the street. A code-compliant, 1,171-sf second floor would be set back more than 45 ft from the front property line. Overall structure height would reach 25 ft. and a 58-ft rear yard setback is presented.

A single-story home immediately adjacent and northwest is approximately 4 ft higher in elevation and set back 5 ft from the shared property line. The two-story home on the opposite side of the subject parcel is 1 ½ ft lower in elevation; however, the 2nd floor is not stepped back and it is much larger than the proposed project.

A color rendering was displayed on Powerpoint showing modest first floor additions and the second-floor's generous front setback, which would minimize the overall scale from the street.

Staff concluded that requiring code compliant setbacks would alter the design and create an impractical jog in the building line. Assistant Planner Lang noted that both adjacent homes exhibit 5-ft non-conforming side setbacks; the home

to the southeast is larger than the project and its second floor is not stepped back.

Staff recommended positive findings and project approval.

Project architect Walt Hagedohm, Jr., was in the audience to respond to any questions.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing.

Diane Rinehart, 484 Paulette Place, welcomed the applicant to the neighborhood and stated that the neighbors were excited about the impending renovations. The concern was that "the rule is no longer the rule, if there is an exception". She asked that the Commission adhere to the standards.

Christa Peitzman, 491 Paulette Place, who resides 2 doors up from the project site, related disappointment that the process puts neighbors in this role. She was concerned that overall massing gets to a point that it would allow properties to the rear to be developed with large homes.

Joan Williams, 480 Paulette Place, resides across the street and expressed concern with mansionization and building up to the property lines.

Don Williams advised that he reviewed the plans. He reported of having opposed a large development below the neighborhood several years ago. He asked that the Commission "stick with the code".

Margot Siess, 487 Paulette Place, resides west of the project. She did not object to the one-foot encroachments, but objected to allowing the 4% floor area over the standard. She stated that other homes in the area have maintained the allowed sq. footage, as should this one.

Applicant, Mark Sirof remarked that he had met most of his new neighbors and looked forward to moving in. The design is an attempt to accommodate his widowed mother-in-law as well as his 16-year-old son and twins. He explained that 36% of floor area is "automatic" and he only applied for the 4% over that, which is allowed. He advised that the 4% is at the rear on the first floor; if he had to eliminate sq footage, it would not be from the second floor. He noted that the home is set back in all directions and that a "nice front yard" would be provided.

Project architect Walt Hagedohm, recognized the need to design within code. In this instance, the challenge was to accommodate 5 bedrooms and stay within

the standard. The design is as compact as possible and the rooms are not overly large.; one bedroom is on the lower floor. Massing was kept to the rear where it would not be visible. He explained his efforts to make everything fit within the 36% and verified that if sq footage was removed, it would be from the first-floor family room and kitchen and the rear of the home.

Steve Shanker, 475 Paulette Place, resides immediately adjacent to the project. His concern was that the one-foot encroachment might set a precedent. He commented that the overall size appears compatible on Powerpoint, but he was concerned with the extra 4% and he supported maintaining the standards.

Chairman Gelhaar and Commissioner Cahill confirmed where Mr. Shanker lives and that this is the two-story home that is not setback.

Since further comments were not offered, Chairman Gelhaar closed the public meeting.

Commissioner Mehranian noted that the project is lower in elevation and the second floor setback. She expressed concern with massing and preferred that space be reshuffled and relocated to the first-floor.

Commissioner Davitt advised that the numerical data concerned him initially; however, those concerns were assuaged after his site visit. He noted that the requested floor area was allowed by Code and that the applicant was not asking for special consideration. He stated that the house was well designed and well suited for the neighborhood and that the extra floor area would not create a problem for the neighbors.

Commissioner Engler commented that the design was tasteful and he did not have an issue with the requested modification; however he could not make Findings 1 or 5 after reviewing the floor area comparison chart in his packet.

Commissioner Cahill also made a site visit. He stated that while he was sensitive to some of the concerns raised, "this is a case where the discretion to allow an increased size is appropriate". He felt the design was sensitive and cited the recessed second floor and the minimal 25 ft height. He noted that the applicant could cut back the family room to negate the need for floor area review and raise the roof height and still meet Code. There are no flat walls facing the neighbor to the north and much of the hardscape in front would be replaced with landscaping. The project is smaller than the home to the southeast and less massive in scale. Any reduction in floor area would not be evident to the neighbors, as it would be removed from the first floor at the rear.

Commissioner Cahill stated the project would be an attractive addition to the neighborhood.

Chairman Gelhaar agreed and advised of having spoken with neighbors and walked into their yards. He stated that the architect did a great job of integrating a two-story home in this neighborhood. He noted that the City is currently reviewing design guidelines for second stories – he suggested including this project as one that ‘fits’ into a neighborhood. Chairman Gelhaar stated that the excess sq. footage does not visually impact anyone and is not contrary to Code, but asked that the bay window on the northwest side that extends into the setback be removed.

M/S/C Cahill/Mehranian to approve Floor Area Review 06-02 and Modification 06-08 with an added condition to “flatten” the bay window on the northwest side of the residence. 4 Ayes; Engler dissenting.

D. Floor Area Review 06-07; Building Depth Review 06-06; Modification 06-20; Gartside; 2036 Lyans Drive:

Commissioner Cahill was recused from this hearing and left the chambers, as he resides within 500 ft of the subject site.

Planner Gjolme described the applicants’ request to add 1, 135-sf to the second floor of their home. There are a number of entitlements requested, each having more to do with the size and siting of the existing home, rather than the scope of the request. Total proposed floor/roofed area would reach 6,162-sf, below the maximum allowed for the lot; but because total floor area would exceed 4,500-sf on a lot with less than 80 ft of street frontage (the lot has 75 of street frontage), Floor Area Review is required. He noted that the existing home and garage exceed the 4,500-sf trigger. Exterior modifications to the home’s existing 72-ft depth warrant Building Depth Review and second-floor encroachments to the east and west require a Setback Modification.

The 22,074-sf site is located on the south side of Lyans Drive, between Rosebank Drive and Lone Pine Lane, in the R-1-15,000 zone.

The house has been previously expanded, including a pop-up second-story mansard at the rear. The project consists of a forward and easterly expansion of the second floor and construction of a new, more traditional roofline. Second floor area would extend along the first-floor building line and would not encroach further than the existing second floor master bedroom. Open volume space would be created at the northwest corner, creating a second-floor bridge, connecting the master bedroom and guestroom to the east. The

disjointed gable and rear mansard roof would be replaced with a new roof comprised of two primary ridges.

Despite an increase in height from 21 to 25 ft, the vertical appearance would be reduced due to a gable roof that slopes away from the property line, providing more articulation to the design. Planner Gjolme pointed out that the improved appearance is readily apparent, particularly along the west facade.

The excess building depth has existed for many years, as has the existing excess floor area; the requested additional floor area is compliant with the underlying standard for the lot. The expanded second floor maintains the existing building line and the well-conceived roof expansion/remodel improves the appearance, scale and profile of the house.

The sole concern Staff had was the two windows on the west side that expose the neighboring yard and patio to the west; draft condition 14 requires their conversion to transom windows. Planner Gjolme noted however, that neighbor supports the project as submitted.

Chairman Gelhaar pointed out that the windows referred to by staff are existing, rather than proposed added elements.

Applicant Dru Gartside reported that her neighbor has visited her home and looked out through the windows and is not concerned.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing. Since comments were not offered, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Davitt commented on the challenges presented when making improvements to this home. He stated that clearly, the design improves the visual and functional space without impacting the neighbors. He supported maintaining the windows on the west side since the neighbor does not object and noted that a 6-inch difference in street frontage is the only reason Floor Area Review is required.

Commissioner Engler agreed that the project is an architectural improvement.

Commissioner Mehranian agreed and supported the revisions.

Chairman Gelhaar stated the request represented a major improvement.

M/S/C Davitt/Engler to approve Floor Area Review 06-07, Building Depth Review 06-06 and Modification 06-20, and eliminating draft condition 14.
Unanimous.

Commissioner Cahill returned to the table.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS - item B

Residential Design Guidelines - Director Stanley stated that unfortunately, staff has not had available time to devote to this important issue. His focus has been on the La Cañada Properties project and he reminded the Commission that a special meeting would be held on June 20th. He could not provide an estimated timeframe for residential guidelines at this point.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Engler thanked his colleagues and staff for their efforts over the years and stated that he enjoyed "every minute" being on the Commission.

Commissioner Mehranian recalled her days as a new commissioner; she always admired how Commissioner Engler analyzed projects. He has the technical and engineering expertise that no other commissioner has.

Commissioner Cahill stated that he always appreciated Commissioner Engler's comments and his way of always making the meetings interesting, as he never knew how Commissioner Engler would vote.

Commissioner Davitt related of having enjoyed the sidebars between him and Commissioner Engler and while they did not always agree, he always respected Commissioner Engler's position on matters; the City should be proud of his service.

Chairman Gelhaar encouraged Commissioner Engler to apply for the Public Works Commission in two years, as he could make a positive contribution.

On other matters, Commissioner Cahill remarked that he was not aware that non-conforming floor area is lost when an encroaching roof is removed.

Planner Gjolme stated that the Administrative Modification process allows additions to existing encroaching structures. Unfortunately, some property owners have exceeded that approval and gutted the site, effectively building a new house.

Director Stanley advised that he established the policy of "30% demolition" a while ago. The purpose of an Administrative Modification is to allow minor additions. If a property owner removes the roof, they would be removing the

grandfathered status of any encroachments. He added that it was unfortunate that the Oakado case was caught in the process, but it did allow neighbors to comment.

XI. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Director Stanley expressed Staff's appreciation to Commissioner Engler for all his hard work; he innovated many system changes and made us think about our permit system. He is a good watchdog and we will definitely miss him.

Director Stanley then responded to questions raised by the Commissioners raised that the prior meeting.

Mayor Brown, who stopped by, commented on Commissioner Engler's term in office. He recalled of having served on the Planning Commission with Commissioner Engler and stated he was an energetic, powerful force on the Commission. He would be missed and asked that he remain involved.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Engler/Cahill to adjourn at 7:35 p.m. Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission