

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE  
HELD ON MAY 27, 2014**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** 6:00 p.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Present: Chair Gunter, Vice Chairman Jain, Commissioners Der Sarkissian, and Walker; McConnell Absent
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Commissioner Jain led the flag salute
- 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.
- V. **REORDERING OF THE AGENDA:** Item VIII A was moved prior to VII
- VI. **CONSENT CALENDAR**
  - A. **Minutes:** November 26, 2013 – no action
  - B. **Minutes:** April 8, 2014 – Walker, Der Sarkissian, Approved 4-0
- VII. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**
  - A. **Second Floor Review 11-06/Setback Modification 11-02/Categorical Exemption; Caire; 2028 Lombardy Drive:** [CONTINUED FROM APRIL 22] Request for an amendment to an approved Second Floor Review and Setback Modification to allow changes to the locations and types of second floor windows and the addition of new windows to the house currently under construction. This project was previously approved by the Planning Commission on June 24, 2011. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Clarke)

Planner Clarke briefly discusses the changes made to the previously approved project.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asks about the changes that have already been approved administratively.

Chair Gunter states that the deltas not referenced are not being reviewed.

Chair Gunter opens the public hearing.

Applicant/Property Owner John Caire states that he spoke to his neighbors and obtained letters in support.

No one else requests to speak. Chair Gunter closes the public hearing.

Commissioner Walker states that she discussed the changes with Mr. Caire. The changes are reasonable and protect the privacy of the neighbors. She thanked Mr. Caire for reaching out to neighbors.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian states that he made several attempts to meet with the Tatevossians but they were not able to meet with him. He can make all the findings.

Commissioner Jain and Chairman Gunter concur with their fellow Commissioners.

Chair Gunter moves for approval, Commissioner Jain seconds. The motion carried 4-0.

- B. **Minor Conditional Use Permit 496/Categorical Exemption; Lee / Kim; 2383 Foothill Boulevard #B:** [CONTINUED FROM MAY 13] Request to allow a real estate office use within an existing tenant space. The project is located in the Community Planned Development (CPD) zone. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Parinas)

The Commission declines the staff presentation.

Chair Gunter opens the public hearing. No comments are offered. The public hearing is closed.

Commissioner Jain indicates that he has no problem with approving the project. Efforts made by the applicant show that there is only one business.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian states the elimination of the two other businesses addresses his concerns.

Commissioner Walker thanks the applicant for her efforts. She states the proposed business would ease the parking problem.

Chair Gunter also thanks the applicant. He states that he could make all the necessary findings.

Commissioner Walker moves, Commissioner Jain seconds to approve. The motion carries 4-0.

## VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. **Second Floor Review 14-08/Categorical Exemption; Samwon Design Inc./Ahn; 901 Valley Crest Street:** Request to allow a new 5,062 sq. ft. two-story residence to be constructed on a 25,000 sq. ft. non-hillside lot. The project complies with all floor area, setback and height requirements. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Gjolme)

Planner Gjolme presents the project in accordance with the staff report.

Chairman Gunter opens the public hearing.

Applicant Steve Shin highlights the design of the house. He states that the second floor is designed to mitigate impacts to the neighbors. The project will be a very good addition to the neighborhood.

Chair Gunter asks Mr. Shin to consider putting clerestory windows on the west side second floor elevation.

Jane Pennial, 857 Valley Crest Street, states that she is pleased with the design and placement of the windows. Her concern is about the white paint color of the second floor. She asks for the white color to be toned down to prevent the glare.

Planner Gjolme clarifies that the lighter color is tan and that the projector does not show the color correctly.

Sunny Asch, 915 Valley Crest Street, disagrees with the project. She states that it is not consistent with the rest of the neighborhood. She is concerned about the City tree near the proposed driveway. The house looks inexpensive/cheap. She states that Judy Chalison (850 Valley Crest Street) lives across the street, and objects to the project.

Daniel Romo, 904 Valley Crest, is concerned about the height of the proposed house and view blockage.

Applicant Steve Shin states that he consulted with the owners of 858 Valley Crest.

With no other speakers, Chair Gunter closes public hearing.

Commissioner Walker stated that it is a modest project and fits in with the neighborhood. The neighborhood is eclectic. She appreciates the neighbors coming out and expressing their opinions. She states that she can make all the findings.

Commissioner Jain states that he is familiar with the project and visited the site multiple times. He can see the concerns regarding the design of the house. But he notes that the project is small in scale and does not impact the privacy of the neighbors. He asks staff to add a condition for proper protection of the City trees. He can make all the findings.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian states that the house conforms to the code. His concern is that the second floor looks like an addition; it has no relation to the first floor. He made suggestions to improve the design.

Chairman Gunter states that he concurs with Commissioners Walker and Jain. He appreciates that the house is designed to code and does not maximize the floor area. He is okay with a simple design that is straight forward. He can make the findings.

The Commission adds conditions to protect the street tree and add a window to the west elevation. Chair Gunter moves to approve the project, Commissioner Jain seconds, and the motion carries on a 3-0-1 (Der Sarkissian abstained) vote.

- B. **Conditional Use Permit 498/Categorical Exemption; St. Bede the Venerable Catholic Church; 215 Foothill Boulevard:** Request to allow the construction of a new, 6'-0" high wrought iron perimeter fence, including three new driveway gates. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris)

Assistant Planner Harris presents the project in accordance with the staff report.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asks about what prompted the need for the gates.

Assistant Planner Harris references the letter written by the Monsignor.

Chair Gunter opens the public hearing.

Robert Curly, landscape architect, asks the Planning Commission to remove the condition of approval regarding the top rail. The fence does not have a spike, it is a flat square top. He would rather have the fence on the property line but would accept modifying the location to 20 feet from public right-of-way.

Commissioner Jain asks if the traffic during school hours has been observed.

Jim Unser states that the traffic concerns are legitimate. The gates and fences will not impact traffic flow. The gates will be kept open at all times during school hours.

Chair Gunter closes the public hearing.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian states that he supports the project.

Commissioner Walker states that gates do not impact traffic. The gates will be kept open when the kids are getting dropped off and picked up. She can support the project.

Commissioner Jain states that he has no problem in supporting the project. He agrees with suggestion of eliminating the top rail condition.

Chair Gunter also agrees with removing the top rail condition. He notes that the gates are 20 feet from the curb.

Commissioner Jain moves to approve, eliminating the top rail condition. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Der Sarkissian and carries on a 4-0 vote.

- C. **Hillside Development Permit 13-57/Second Floor Review 13-27/Setback Modification 13-15/Categorical Exemption; Coane/Milton; 5160 Solliden Lane:** Request to allow construction of a new two-story 3,985 sq. ft. residence and related site work on a hillside lot. A Setback Modification would allow the new home to encroach into the required front-yard and street side-yard setback. The existing pool and game court will be retained. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris)

Assistant Planner Harris presents the project in accordance with the staff report.

Chair Gunter opens the public hearing.

James Coane, architect, states the lot is unusual with two adjacent streets and part of the lot being higher. He worked with staff and used the Dutch colonial style. He presented a diagram comparing the existing footprint and the proposed footprint. He stated that he would be willing to do the window changes on the east side as suggested by staff.

Douglas Spitznagel, 5150 Solliden Lane, is concerned with privacy and loss of view. Much of his issue is addressed with the landscape plan. He asked if a tree could be planted to mitigate views to and from the rear deck. He also asked about pool protection fencing.

Assistant Planner Harris clarified that there is a condition of approval addressing the pool fencing.

With no other speakers, Chair Gunter closes the public hearing.

Commissioner Jain notes how difficult the site is to work with. The house is cleverly designed. Privacy screening from Jessen drive is needed. He is open to changing the windows to frosted glass. He can make the findings.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian states that this is a nice design. The setback mod is acceptable. He can support the project.

Commissioner Walker concurs with her fellow commissioners. She thanks the applicant and neighbor for working together. She does not feel that it is necessary to add the additional screening to the east and west. She does agree with the window changes.

Chair Gunter also concurs with his fellow commissioners. The setback modification is intended to move the placement of the house. He likes the porch. He states that no windows on the side can create abandoned side yards that no one can see.

Commissioner Jain points out that the windows are on the first floor, and if this was a single story house, the windows would be out of the Planning Commission's purview.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian moves for approval with an additional condition to add a tree at rear yard to screen the deck and also to remove Condition #13. Commissioner Jain seconds and the motion carries on a 4-0 vote.

- D. **Zone Change 13-02, Conditional Use Permit 382 Amendment and Tree Removal 13-05; La Cañada Presbyterian Church; 626 Foothill Boulevard:** Request to rezone a single-family residential lot to the Downtown Village Specific Plan's "Institutional" zone in conjunction with a request to construct a parking lot. The single-family residential lot was previously re-designated from Very Low Density Residential to Downtown Village Specific Plan on the City's General Plan Land Use Element Map. This Zone Change would

amend the zoning on the property to be consistent with adjacent Institutional zoning in the Downtown Village Specific Plan. The parking lot approval is a request to extend/expand an existing parking lot for the La Cañada Presbyterian Church, and therefore expand (amend) the existing Conditional Use Permit. Tree removals will be considered as part of the parking lot design. An Addendum to the 2013 General Plan Update Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) was prepared in support of the proposed zone change that evaluated potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed follow-on zone changes. No additional Initial Study, Environmental Impact Report or Negative Declaration is required. (Senior Planner Buss)

Senior Planner Buss presents the project in accordance with the staff report.

Commissioner Walker asks if the Conditional Use Permit, Tree Removal, and Zone Change could be separated.

Deputy City Attorney Guerra clarifies that the Commission may take three separate votes.

Chair Gunter asks if the project will go to the Design Commission because it is non-residential. He asks for clarification for Design Commission purview.

Senior Planner Buss states that the wall material, light standards, and landscaping would be reviewed by the Design Commission.

Chair Gunter opened the public hearing.

Gary Zentmyer, representative of the La Canada Presbyterian Church, states the design of the parking lot has been reviewed and conceptually approved by the Traffic Engineer. He introduces the landscape architect. He reads a portion of arborist report which recommends the removal and replacement of a number of trees onsite.

Chair Gunter asks about the wall along the southerly property line.

Mr. Zentmyer indicates that it would be okay to wait until Design Commission.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asks about which consultant was hired first: the engineer or the landscape architect.

Mr. Zentmyer responds: the civil engineer.

Elsa Gross, 4431 Woodleigh Lane, states that she worked closely with the church. She supports the project with a wall. She notes that she is concerned with lighting.

Michael Gross, 4431 Woodleigh Lane, states the church parking lot has been used for commercial purposes, i.e. movie crew parking. He would like a wall.

Patty Smith, 4427 Woodleigh Lane, states that she has no complaint with the activity of the church. She is concerned with lighting, the number of parking slots, and the traffic pattern on

Sundays. She states the lot should be used for church purposes only. She is concerned about removal of healthy trees, and would like the parking lot to be closed at night.

Robert Hillard, La Cañada Presbyterian Church, states that the parishioners do not park on both sides of Woodleigh. The church rents the Thursday Club parking lot. Parking control people are there every Sunday morning. People still jaywalk across Woodleigh Lane and Foothill Blvd. He states that the Church needs additional parking.

Pamela Brief, landscape architect, states that she has been working closely with the neighbors. She has been looking at lighting options. She notes that many trees are diseased and leaning.

Chair Gunter asks if new protected trees are going to be planted on site.

Ms. Brief responds that elm trees are already onsite.

With no other speakers, Chair Gunter closes the public hearing.

Commissioner Walker again asks if the Commission could separate the entitlements, she has no problem with the zone change. She notes that the lighting and wall could be worked out on the design phase. Her problem is with tree removal. Trees #8, 10, and 11 are targeted for preservation. She notes that the purpose of the tree ordinance is to save protected trees. The CUP is open-ended. She needs more information on the wall and the lighting.

Commissioner Jain concurs that entitlements should be addressed separately. He is comfortable with acting on the zone change. He needs additional information on the wall, lighting and landscaping. He wants to preserve some of the trees.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian can't convince himself to remove eleven trees for parking. This is a transition lot between residential and commercial. The applicant should have started the project with a landscape architect. He wants a wall separation between the properties.

Chair Gunter states that he can make the findings for the zone change. He is concerned with Conditional Use Permit. He feels strongly about the block wall being a separation between the parking lot and the residential property. There is need for more landscaping at the property line. He is not comfortable with approving a photometric plan that does not cover outside of the property lines. All four sides of the lot should have zero light. He reads tree removal finding #5. He states that trees along Woodleigh create a canopy for the street.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asks that the drip line of trees be shown on the landscape plan.

Chair Gunter asks the applicant for timing regarding a continuance.

Mr. Zentmyer asks the Planning Commission for direction.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian states that the design needs a fresh approach. He asks for a redesign of the parking lot.

Commissioner Walker states that saving trees #3, 8, 10, and 11 is important.

Chair Gunter concurs. He asks for increasing the buffer zone between church and the Gross property.

Chair Gunter moves to continue the Conditional Use Permit to July 8. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Walker and approved on a 4-0 vote.

Chair Gunter moves to continue the Tree Removal to July 8. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Jain and approved on a 4-0 vote.

Chair Gunter moves to recommend approval of the Zone Change to the City Council. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Der Sarkissian and approved on a 4-0 vote.

## **IX. OTHER BUSINESS:**

- A. **General Plan Consistency Determination** for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Capital Improvements Program

The Chair opens the hearing to public comment. No public comments are offered. The hearing is closed.

Chair Gunter moves to find the CIP consistent with the General Plan. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Jain. The motion carries on a 4-0 vote. The Capital Improvement Program is found to be consistent with the General Plan.

## **X. REPORT OF DIRECTOR'S REVIEWS:** No actions.

- A. **Hillside Development Permit 14-13 (Dir.); Shin; 453 Paulette Place:** Approved construction of a new pool and spa within the rear-yard of a hillside lot. The pool will be 29-feet from the southeast side-yard property line and immediately behind the main residence. The pool equipment will be located within the northwest corner of the rear-yard located 9-feet from the side property line which is the minimum required side-yard setback for this lot.
- B. **Hillside Development Permit 14-14 (Dir.); Swan; 4172 Cambridge Road:** Approved a pool equipment pad consisting of outward-facing retaining walls south of an approved pool cabana and deck. The structure would achieve an overall height of 6 feet through use of tiered retaining walls achieving a maximum individual height of 3 feet, as allowed by code. Two 20"-oak trees would be approximately 10 feet from the walls, exceeding the 6-foot distance minimum based on the size of the trees.

## **XI. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS**

Chair Gunter states that he would like to have standards on construction parking. He would like all parking to be onsite, and he would like the conditions of approval pasted on the construction plans.

**XII. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Senior Planner Buss notes that this was Patrick Clarke's last Planning Commission meeting. He is retiring on June 6.

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Gunter moves and Commissioner Walker seconds a motion to adjourn. The motion carries 4-0. [9:40 pm.]