

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD ON JUNE 14, 2011**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Cahill called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Present were Chairman Cahill, Vice Chair Curtis, Commissioners Der Sarkissian, Jain, Gunter, Director of Community Development Stanley, Assistant City Atty. Guerra, Planners Gjolme and Clarke and Assistant Planner Parinas.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- VI. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were no comments.
- V. **REORDERING OF THE AGENDA:** Item VII.A was moved to the end of the agenda. Item VIII. B was moved to the front of the agenda.
- VI. **CONSENT CALENDAR:** There were no items.
- VII. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. Hillside Development Permit 11-02/Second Floor Review 11-06; Caire; 2028 Lombardy Drive: A request to allow the addition of a total of 1,614 sf (add 307 sf on first floor and a new 1,307 sf second floor) to an existing 2,335 sf single-story residence (1,899 sf house and 436 sf garage) for a new total house size of 3,949 sf. Since the addition of a second floor would require demolition of the existing roof, a Modification is also requested to retain the existing non-conforming 6'-1" west, 5'-0" east and 6'-5" north side yard setbacks. This project was previously considered by the Planning Commission on April 26, 2011. Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Clarke)

Chairman Cahill disclosed that he lived within 500 feet of the site and recused himself accordingly.

Planner Clarke gave a staff report and recounted the changes made to the project since the last meeting. View/privacy and massing issues have been addressed to the satisfaction of staff and project approval was recommended.

Commissioner Curtis complimented staff on a good report. He confirmed that the item was re-noticed and that the opposition/favor chart presented was based on last project design, not the revision currently before the Commission.

Planner Clarke noted that 2 letters had been received since the redesign; one in support and one in opposition.

Commissioner Curtis inquired about the change in height to the project.

Planner Clarke responded that overall building height was reduced from 23 feet to 21'-6".

Commissioner Curtis confirmed the location from where a photo of the neighboring pool was taken. He asked if existing ficus trees along the east property line could be extended through a condition of approval.

Planner Clarke confirmed that this was possible.

Commissioner Curtis questioned the intent of condition 14, which prohibited the demolition of existing non-conforming walls. He was concerned that there could be extenuating circumstances - structural, termites, etc. - that require partial demolition of existing walls.

Director Stanley responded that the condition as worded does not allow for it. The condition would need to be amended to allow for removal of part of the existing non-conforming structure if needed. The Planning Commission could either revise or remove the condition.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian noted that the south elevation shows an approximate 7-foot wall along the east property line. The wall and arch as shown on the plan appear over-height and are not allowed within the side setback.

Planner Clarke confirmed that the wall was incorrectly shown and that revision would be necessary.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian questioned a rectangle on the north elevation at the lower right-hand corner of garage.

Director Stanley explained that this was an existing retaining wall built into the garage wall.

Applicant John Caire thanked the Commission and staff for their efforts. The comments at the last meeting were very helpful and led to a better design this time around. He stated that the problematic tree house in back yard has been removed. Scaffolding was erected to demonstrate the view from the balcony proposed on the south elevation.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian was curious about the use of the room labeled "Living Room" on the main floor separated from the rest of the house by a small 2'-8" door.

Mr. Claire explained that the room was meant to be used by his children as a "Play Room" and was not a traditional "Living Room."

Ray Tatevossian - 2024 Lombardy - stated that he and his wife were by far the most impacted neighbors. He did not have an issue with a 2-story project in general, but was concerned with the project as designed given the upslope position of the subject lot and the prominence a 2-story home would have. He could clearly see the story poles from his pool and felt privacy impacts had not been adequately mitigated. His wife, Elsa, would give a Power Point presentation which outlined their concerns with project. He thanked John for the revisions thus far and acquiesced that the project was close, but that further work was needed.

DeeAnne Anderson - 1954 Lombardy - stated she lives in a 2-story house and was in support of the project. She acknowledged the unavoidability of some view issues between adjacent 2-story homes, but felt the project was well done and should continue.

Hovik Aghaian - 4281 Hampstead Road - acknowledged the major changes to the project but felt the overall design still lacked "taste". He questioned the interior configuration and noted how the bathrooms were spread about. He thought a more efficient interior layout would improve the exterior and further mitigate offsite impacts.

Commissioner Curtis reminded the speaker and audience that the focus of the Commission's purview was the exterior of the building and associated offsite impacts.

Anne Honch - 4629 Palm Drive - supported the project and noted Mr. Caire's attention to projects - taste, design, details and sensitivity to neighbors. She commented that the neighboring lot next to hers had been sold and accepted the eventuality that a two-story home would be built in the future. She realized that she could not prohibit a 2-story home if designed and sited tastefully and sensitively.

Mike McConnell - 2031 Tondolea Lane - stated that he was a 10 year resident of the City. He reflected on the changing development pattern in the area over the last 10 years and was grateful for the "asset" contribution to the neighborhood that attractive 2-story homes have yielded. He felt that the City's rules and

processes work. He was grateful to have the Caires as neighbors. The project was reasonable and he supported it as proposed.

Jim Willette - 2025 Lombardy Drive - stated he lived directly across the street and didn't have an issue with the project. He noted that a two-story house was built on the property to the rear of his property several years ago. He was concerned with potential privacy impacts on his swimming pool and consulted with the project architect Craig Stoddard. As a result, the relevant 2-floor windows were obscured and landscaping was installed along the common property line. He liked both neighbors and didn't want to see privacy impacts, and felt a solution via landscaping was possible.

Mr. Caire reiterated that privacy along the east property line is equally important to his family. He reiterated that a condition has been imposed to maintain landscaping along the east property line for the privacy benefit of both neighbors. In time, the ficus trees will grow to approximately 20 feet in height.

Director Stanley noted that the landscaping condition of approval requires a covenant to run with the land.

Commissioner Curtis inquired if the landscaping could be extended along the east property line to the front of the house per the applicant's stated intent.

Mr. Caire asked to clarify the scope of the Setback Modification in case structural issues are encountered during construction, and some demolition is required.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian confirmed that the 7-foot wall at southeast corner of the house shown on plan is not proposed. He further noted that this area was not drawn correctly on the plans.

Mr. Caire explained that he did not intend to alter the existing fence along the property line.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asked Planner Clarke to show the southerly view from the Tatevossian's patio. He noted the 2-story house immediately to the south and the exposure of a 2nd-floor balcony, which he believed was far more intrusive than the project's balcony as proposed.

Commissioner Gunter stated he had visited the site and met with applicant and stood on the scaffolding to view properties to the east and west. This is a mixed neighborhood with one and two-story homes. He felt the project had been significantly improved since the last meeting and was appreciative of Mr. Caire's efforts based on the Commission's direction. The revised home is

gracefully massed with minimized window usage. The south window is fine as proposed, while the balcony's limited depth would likely prevent significant usage. He did not believe that shifting the balcony was necessary. The project was nicely done and approvable at this stage in his opinion.

Commissioner Jain also visited the site and felt the applicant had done a wonderful job addressing the Commission's issues. He was not concerned with the 2nd-floor bedroom window on the south elevation. He agreed with Commissioner Curtis and felt that Condition 14 should be revised to give leeway to the applicant for possible wall removal in the event damage is found.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian stated that most of the issues had been resolved to his satisfaction. As an architect, he did not like the use of opaque windows and believed the windows were appropriate as proposed. The interior of the house is not within the Commission's purview. He suggested a condition of approval to install cypress trees between the fence and wall along the east property line to buffer potential views from the balcony. He explained that an existing 3-foot strip could accommodate said trees. He reiterated that the adjacent house to the south of the Tatevossian property has a balcony with direct views of their pool, and this balcony is far more problematic in his opinion.

Commissioner Curtis clarified the location of where the trees suggested by Commissioner Der Sarkissian could be potentially installed.

Commissioner Curtis also visited the site and went to the Tatevossian property since he was concerned and wanted to ensure that impacts had been adequately mitigated. The proposed structure height of 21'-6" is substantially below the 32-foot allowance for the site. He expressed his concern with balconies in general but felt the trees would adequately screen the balcony. He was amenable to Commissioner Der Sarkissian's suggestion to add more trees along the east property line, subject to Director Stanley's review and approval. He wanted to make sure that the landscaping would be installed prior to granting the C of O. Mr. Curtis reiterated the need for the screening along the east property line to be extended forward to the northeast corner of the residence. He felt the landscaping covenant should also address the maximum height of the ficus trees for the benefit of both property owners. He preferred to eliminate or modify Condition 14 to allow for partial demolition of non-conforming walls if necessary.

Commissioner Jain and Gunter favored elimination of Condition 14.

M/S/C Der Sarkissian/Gunter to approve the project subject to ficus height and all landscaping subject to review and approval by the Director of Community

Development, including extension of landscaping along the east property line to the front of the house and the elimination of Condition 14. Approved 4-0.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Conditional Use Permit 467; Anthony's Fine Food and Wine/Tolkin; 714 Foothill Boulevard: A request to allow the on-sale and off-sale of beer and wine within a café and gourmet market. The project is located in the Mixed Use 1 zone within the Downtown Village Specific Plan area. Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Parinas)

Commissioner Jain recused himself due to a business interest within 500 feet of the project site.

Per the Commission's request, Assistant Planner Parinas gave an abbreviated review of the project in accord with the staff report.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian confirmed that the remodel does not trigger compliance with ADA requirements.

Commissioner Curtis noted the hours of operation listed in the application and included as part of Condition 11. He inquired if Planning had any issues with additional hours and the business staying open later in the evenings.

Assistant Planner Parinas responded that there were no issues with expanding the hours of operation.

Commissioner Curtis referenced Condition 14, which prohibited the serving of alcohol to outdoor patrons, and inquired about the purpose of the restriction.

Ms. Parinas responded that the outdoor dining would occur within the Foothill Blvd. public right-of-way - on City property. Consumption of alcohol is typically not allowed on City property.

Commissioner Curtis asked if it could possibly be allowed with indemnification by the City.

Assistant Planner Parinas deferred the issue to the City Attorney.

Chairman Cahill opened the public hearing.

Applicant Anthony LaCasella stated that he was planning a small wine and gourmet shop - a casual café which would be a nice addition to the Blvd.

Chairman Cahill inquired about the possibility of opening earlier in the day. Mr. LaCasella responded that the intent was to cater mainly to the dinner crowd, though operating hours may be adjusted in the future. He was the lone cook, and the small company's focus was lunch and dinner.

Pat Anderson representing the Chamber of Commerce spoke on behalf of Mr. LaCasella and stated that she had run the proposal by several people and had had great feedback. She felt the café would be a great addition for the City and was hopeful for a solution to the outdoor dining issue.

Commissioner Curtis asked the City Attorney about the alcohol issue.

Assistant City Attorney Guerra introduced a modification to Condition 14 - "if approval from Public Works is granted, alcohol may be served to outdoor diners subject to ABC approval and an indemnification agreement." The Commission was satisfied with the basic language change to the Condition.

Commissioner Curtis confirmed that the hours of operation referenced in Condition 11 could be modified. He welcomed the new business to LCF and fully supported the request with the aforementioned modifications to Conditions 11 and 14.

Commissioner Gunter also supported the project and agreed with changes to the conditions as discussed. He noted that other proximate businesses had their outdoor facilities contained on site, but was confident that the proposal would not be problematic.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian visited the site and had no issues with outdoor dining within the public right-of-way. He favored changing closing time from 8pm to 9 pm.

Chairman Cahill applauded the project and was also hopeful that Public Works would approve the outdoor dining component. He also agreed with the conditions of approval and changes thereto.

M/S/C Cahill/Gunter to approve the request subject to revisions to Conditions 11 and 14 as discussed. Approved 4-0.

Director of Community Development Stanley confirmed that Public Works would define and delineate the outdoor dining area and possible approval would be tailored thereto.

B. Setback Modification 10-15 (Amendment); Edwards/Bushman; 2045 Lyans Drive: A request to amend an approved Modification to allow a garage addition to encroach 2 feet into the required 36-foot front setback and 1 foot into the required east side yard setback. The project was previously reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission on July 27, 2010. Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Gjolme)

Planner Gjolme outlined the nature of the amendment request noting removal of the neighboring residence that originally contributed to the encroachment. The addition is single story while the 2-foot encroachment is minimal and not readily apparent from the street. Approval subject to the original conditions was recommended.

M/S/C Curtis/Der Sarkissian to approve the amendment request as submitted. Unanimous 5-0.

C. Second Floor Review 11-08; Akopian/Shahbazian; 5111 Castle Road: A request to allow construction of a new 5,594 sq. ft. two-story house on a 19,330 sf site. Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Clarke)

Planner Clarke gave a project overview in accord with the staff report. The new 2-story residence complies with all code standards and is suited to the large, well-screened site. The design is tasteful and would not upset the character of the area. Project approval was recommended.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian asked if color/material samples were available for review.

Planner Clarke displayed colored renderings but noted that actual samples had not been submitted.

Commissioner Curtis requested further explanation about the configuration of the circular driveway. He was uncertain how the proposed driveway would be coordinated with the adjacent driveway to the north.

Planner Clarke responded that one pine tree would be removed but the bulk of landscaping along the street would be retained. The applicant could speak to the specific driveway design if needed.

Commissioner Gunter confirmed the area where the pine tree would be removed and converted to paved driveway area. He asked if the applicant provided a front yard hardscape calculation.

Planner Clarke responded that a precise calculation had not been submitted by the applicant.

Commissioner Gunter asked if grading plans had been prepared.

Planner Clarke stated that grading plans were not submitted as part of the application.

Applicant Gary Akopian expressed gratitude to staff and commented on the 50/50 front yard landscape ratio, confirming that hardscape would be added to connect the driveway 'loop', but a majority of front yard area would continue to be devoted to landscaping. He noted the split-level design with broken and articulated massing for the benefit of street and neighboring views.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian referenced the renderings and noted that the 2 schemes are very different in color. He clarified which color was proposed. He also confirmed that overlapping the new driveway pavement onto the other driveway was possible since it extended onto subject lot.

Mr. Akopian preferred to stop the new paving at the end of the existing curvature so different paving materials did not blend and did not compete.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian confirmed that an accessory building to the rear would be removed in conjunction with the project.

Commissioner Gunter commented on the interior elevations and questioned their coordination and if they would work with exterior elevations as indicated on the plans.

Mr. Akopian responded that elevations could be adjusted slightly if needed, but the overall building envelope would not be affected.

Commissioner Gunter stated that the elevation along the south property line and interior elevation differ by 6 feet. The elevation drawings show level grade between the house and property line, but this did not appear to be the actual case. He questioned whether a retaining wall would be needed along the south property line to accommodate the grade change.

Mr. Akopian responded that a retaining wall was not proposed or necessary.

Commissioner Gunter commented that he had visited the site and neighborhood. He was very concerned with the project and thought the scaling of the structure was problematic since the two-story portion and a large covered balcony were stacked to the front. He was not confident that the grade issues had been adequately resolved and felt discrepancies in the plans needed to be corrected. He noted a raised patio within the required south side setback and could not make findings 1 or 4.

Chairman Cahill clarified that Mr. Gunter's main issue was with the forward stacking of the building's mass.

Commissioner Gunter was more comfortable with increased structure height occurring more in the middle of the structure.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian visited the site and interpreted the project as a one-story house with a lower-level garage. He had concerns with the driveway as proposed and preferred to see it completed to the north. He felt the guest parking area should be converted to grass-crete. He did not have issues with the design of the house as proposed, but acknowledged that the grades do not correspond; this issue, however, can be resolved outside of the Planning purview. Material colors are critical in this case. The renderings as shown are too 'busy' and the colors are overly vibrant. He concluded that the house is pushing the limit but is nonetheless accommodated by the large site.

Commissioner Jain agreed that the drawings aren't coordinated and noted inconsistencies with grades to the south. He agreed that the driveway should be continued and completed and that grass-crete should be used for the guest parking. He noted that view of the house from the front diminishes massing since it is viewed obliquely. He agreed that the proposed colors were too strong and needed to be muted.

Director Stanley reminded the Commission that the scope of the review was limited to the 2-story home and that the driveway was compliant as proposed and not subject to review.

Commissioner Curtis stated that he too visited the site. He agreed with the general observations of his fellow Commissioners and believed that revised colors and materials can mitigate the massing. He inquired if an effective transition between the driveways could be created and felt there were options that would not compromise the appearance of the adjacent driveway. Mr. Curtis suggested that final landscaping plan, with grass-crete guest parking area, be prepared for the review and approval by the Director in the event of an approval action.

Chairman Cahill agreed with the consensus of the Commission. He questioned whether this design was right for the area, but acknowledged that subdued colors and materials could change his opinion. As proposed, the design appeared too busy. He stated that there did not appear to be consensus from the Commission for approval at this point and offered the applicant the opportunity to redesign. Alternatively, a vote could be taken, but approval was unlikely.

Mr. Akopian preferred a continuance to address the issues discussed. He stated that needed revisions could be completely within a month.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian stressed the need for a color board.

Commissioner Gunter reiterated the grade inconsistencies and requested building and site sections as part of the revised plans.

M/S/C Cahill/Jain to continue the project to the July 26, 2011 Planning Commission meeting. Unanimous.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS: There was no other business.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Der Sarkissian inquired about the large number of Director Review approvals submitted with the packet.

Director Stanley explained that staff approvals are required to be reported at the subsequent Planning Commission meeting. Further discussion with the City Attorney as to the exact method of reporting was pending.

Commissioner Curtis preferred to receive the approvals by email and review them before the meeting.

Director Stanley responded that he would look into the request.

Commissioner Gunter noted inconsistency with story-pole arrays and requested staff to talk to applicants prior to their installation.

Director Stanley responded that story-pole requirements are contained within project application forms and should be followed.

Commissioner Gunter commented that the Plans submitted for the Lyans Drive project were exceptional and complete. He wanted more grading/site information for non-hillside projects with slopes or alterations to grade proposed

as part of the project. He noted that the staff report for Anthony's seemed to imply that there was a choice between the CPD and DVSP parking requirements.

Director Stanley clarified that the different parking counts were used as a comparative example only.

Commissioner Der Sarkissian mentioned that he was approaching his one-year anniversary on the Planning Commission and would be reporting to the City Council.

XI. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Director Stanley remarked that the Planning Commission chair and vice-chair would be changed at the next meeting. Two appeals of Planning Commission approvals were submitted - new 2-story residence on Lyans Drive and a new garage with adjacent RV parking on Los Amigos Street - but were not yet scheduled for Council review.

XII. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.