

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
October 25, 2016 - 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 p.m.
- II. ROLL:** Also present were Commissioners Jain, McConnell, Hazen, and Oh.
- 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** – Item VII.C was taken first followed by Items VII. B and VII. A.
- VI. CONSENT CALENDAR**
- A. **Minutes:** [9-13-2016 PC Meeting-](#) M/S/C - McConnell/Jain to approve the minutes. Approved 4-0-1. Hazen abstained as he was absent.
- VII. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**
- A. [Second-Floor Review 15-02/Variance 16-01/Setback Modification 15-01; Krikorian; 5708 Alder Ridge Drive:](#) request to allow the construction of a new second floor. A Setback Modification is required to preserve the existing 10'-0" setback which constitutes a 15'-0" encroachment into the 25'-0" required front setback for flag lots. A Variance is required because the total floor area would exceed the allowable floor area limitation based on net lot size. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris).

Assistant Planner Harris presented the project in accordance with the staff report. She explained the lot size, net lot size, and the flag strip. A diagram showing the flag strip was shown to the Commission. Ms. Harris showed the lot behind the flag strip, that is located along the top of it and the landscaping that exists there.

Ms. Harris presented a rendering to the Commission which showed the reduced tower element. She showed that the rear façade has more articulation and that it breaks up the previously submitted design that consisted of a blank and unattractive blank wall. Trellises are now proposed along the rear façade along with window boxes.

Photographs were also shown which were taken from the roof and show the existing view into the property below which is currently occupied by the Palermo family. Ms. Harris indicated that there would be no view into the back yard if landscape screening is installed and the view of the mountains will be retained. Sight lines have been submitted indicating the view of the neighbor's property should landscaping be installed. Additional site photos were viewed by the Commission which depicted the line of sight with landscaping installed.

Ms. Harris stated that staff recommends approval of the project.

Commissioner McConnell asked staff if the applicant had explored reducing the house size with staff so that the Variance would no longer need to be pursued.

Ms. Harris indicated, "yes," and explained that the applicant expressed that they did not wish to pursue this.

The Public Hearing was opened for public comment.

Applicant, Vahik Krikorian, said that in an effort to address neighbor concerns, he redesigned the rear façade of the property and added vegetation and landscaping in an attempt to screen any potential areas that could be looked upon by adjacent neighbors as obtrusive. He said that he agreed with the comments from staff and the Commissioners regarding the rear of the façade and believed that the new design is more aesthetically pleasing. He explained that the part of his driveway is being used by his neighbors. He indicated that 99 square feet would not impact his neighbors and that it equals the size of one bedroom. He thanked the Commission for considering the new project design.

Speaker, Pete Palermo, 5687 Bramblewood Rd., said that he worked to support the original project design but that as the design progressed he felt that the original design was unsightly. As to the new design proposal, Mr. Palermo indicated that he believed the trellises are a positive element and they will break up the façade as he would view it from his back yard. He went on to explain that he thought a ten-foot high landscaping hedge would better-screen the addition than a six-foot high hedge would. He also indicated that he'd like to be involved in the type of landscape screening to be selected. He

said that it would be a good idea if Director Stanley visited the property. Mr. Palermo said that even though he'd prefer clerestory windows, he understands the impact they could have on the property owner's view. He stated that he believed that the required trellises and window boxes would be sufficient and should be maintained as a condition of approval.

The Applicant spoke and said that he did not believe that the proposed 99 square-foot room would impact any surrounding neighbors and that the proposed landscape hedge would help to screen his view of his neighbor's yard. He said that he spent a good amount of time preparing line of sight calculations.

Commissioner McConnell asked if there were any questions for the applicant.

Vice Chairman Hazen said that he had questions about the height of the hedge as some are called out on the submitted plan as six feet and some are nine feet.

Commissioner Oh said that the view that would be experienced by the affected neighbor could be looked upon as not-so-obtrusive, once the project is built. He suggested that when the project is completed, that if the neighbor felt negatively impacted by the lower landscaping installed, that the applicant be willing to install higher landscaping for additional screening of the property.

The Applicant indicated that he can already see his neighbor's backyard from his property and that requiring additional landscaping in excess of six feet for screening purposes would be excessive.

Commissioner McConnell suggested that a covenant be required mandating that the modulation from the rear façade be maintained in perpetuity.

Commissioner McConnell asked staff if the window boxes equate to landscaping.

Director Stanley indicated, "No."

Commissioner McConnell asked if it would be considered as square footage.

Ms. Harris indicated, "No."

Director Stanley offered that Condition Number 11 which requires a ten-foot landscaping hedge could be changed by requiring a lower height for the landscaping hedge.

Chairman Gunter asked staff if the plans that have been submitted are sufficient.

Director Stanley, indicated, "Yes."

Vice Chairman Hazen said that he visited the site and felt that attention to detail was demonstrated and that he feels the design is thoughtful and that the ten- foot hedge is good. He said that he could approve the Variance and the rest of the conditions.

Commissioner Jain said that both the articulation, window boxes and trellises are good. He suggested that a condition be included to require these elements remain visible. He said that he supports the Variance and that the property owner is at a disadvantage due to the topography.

Commissioner Oh said that he found the markings on the pavement that the applicant provided for use in the field were helpful and felt that the applicant has made a good effort to submit an aesthetically pleasing design. He indicated that screening for the neighbor is important and that he can make all findings.

Commissioner McConnell said that he believes the two major issues are impacting of neighbor views and the Variance. He said that he is not completely sure that the trellis treatment is a remedy that is typical. He indicated that he is reluctant to support the project and that he cannot make the findings for the Variance or the Second Floor Review.

Chairman Gunter said that he visited the site and agreed with Commissioner McConnell that the remedy of placing window boxes and trellises are not typical. He said that he believes there are items beyond the applicant's control which provides a special circumstance and therefore, he was comfortable making both Variance and Second Floor Review findings.

Commissioner McConnell asked if a Certificate of Occupancy should be given before the project is completed.

Chairman Gunter said that the trellis should be installed prior to obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy. As to the screening, he said that he was concerned about this, though, he believes that homes are not invisible and are part of living in a hillside community. He explained that the Director will generally review the landscaping with the applicant, but that while community involvement is important, one person should not choose another neighbor's landscaping. He stated he was concerned with having a condition in reference to the trellis that might not be enforceable.

M/S/C – Jain/Hazen to approve the project. Approved 4-1. McConnell voted no.

- B. **Hillside Development Permit 13-46/Setback Modification 13-04 (amendment); Barseghian; 1936 Hilldale Drive:** request to amend an approved project to allow a raised concrete deck with encroachments into the side setbacks to facilitate required Fire Department access around the rear of the residence. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Assistant Planner Harris).

No staff report was given.

Chairman Gunter opened up the public hearing.

No members of the public spoke.

M/S/C – Gunter/Hazen to continue the item to a date certain of November 8, 2016. Approved 5-0.

- C. **Hillside Development Permit 15-37 / Second-floor Review 15-39; Chen/Johnson; 4200 Mesa Vista Drive:** request to construct a new 2-story residence and attached 3-car garage comprising 6,173 sq. ft. on a 25,112 sq. ft. hillside lot with an average slope of approximately 28%. Swimming pool, deck and other site improvements are proposed. Staff is recommending approval of a Categorical Exemption for this project. (Planner Gjolme).

No staff report was given.

Deputy City Attorney Guerra explained that he received a letter from the neighbor's attorney and would like more time to review the letter.

Commissioner Oh asked if the applicant agreed to this.

Mr. Guerra said, "yes."

The public hearing was opened.

The project applicant, Jay Johnson, spoke and asked the Commission if he could get input from them on what changes they'd like to see made to the design.

Mr. Guerra said that his preference was to review the applicant's attorney's letter before addressing items on the design.

Chairman Gunter agreed with Mr. Guerra's recommendation.

M/S/C – Gunter/Jain to continue the item to a date uncertain. Approved 5-0.

**VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS** – There were none.

**IX. REPORT OF DIRECTOR'S REVIEWS** – They were reported.

A **Hillside Development Permit 16-33 (Dir.); Boettger; 5346 Stardust Road:** allowed a new spa and gazebo on a hillside lot.

B. **Director's Misc. Review 16-38 (Pool Equip.); Welk; 415 Gleneagles Place:** allowed new pool equipment to encroach 5'-7" into the required west side yard setback.

**X. OTHER BUSINESS** – There was none.

**XI. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS**

Chairman Gunter thanked Mr. McConnell for serving as the Planning Commission Chairman for the past year.

Commissioner Oh commented that when comments are submitted by the public, that it would be helpful if they were submitted by a deadline date.

Mr. Guerra said that there can be a tendency for the public to not be aware of such as policy so he recommends that all comments are provided to the Planning Commission at any time before the meeting. The Planning Commissioners could then decide how they want to handle the comments and require more time to review them.

**XII. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Director Stanley discussed the special study session dates for review of the Zoning Code Update with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jain indicated that November 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> do not work for him. He indicated that November 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> at 4 p.m. are good for him.

Commissioner McConnell said that he is not available on December 5, 2016.

Director Stanley explained that an item that recently went before the City Council for a circular driveway variance request that had been denied by the Commission had been overturned by the City Council. The decision was 4-1 with Walker voting no.

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT** – M/S/C - Hazen/Gunter to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 p.m. Approved 5-0.