

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

**SPECIAL MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
November 22, 2016 - 4:00 p.m.
City Hall Council Chambers
1327 Foothill Boulevard**

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Gunter called the meeting to order at 4:13 p.m.
- II. ROLL:** Also present were Vice Chairman Hazen and Commissioners McConnell, Jain, 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. – There were none.
- V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA** – The agenda was not reordered.
- VI. CONSENT CALENDAR** – There were none.
- VII. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS** – There were none.
- VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS** – There were none.
- IX. OTHER BUSINESS**
 - A. Zoning Code Update – Policy discussions regarding R-1 (Single-Family Residential) Zone standards for light wells, garages, location and setbacks of pool equipment, and the removal of 30 percent of roofed area classifying a remodel as “new” construction.

City Place Planning Consultant, Patricia Bluman, made a presentation in accordance with the staff report. She explained that some lightwell designs result in an undesirable “moat”-like effect.

Key issues that were discussed included height, setbacks, placement in front/side yard setbacks, and limitation on maximum length. Staff will devise development standards for lightwells which will be presented to the Commission for their feedback at a future Commission workshop.

Chairman Gunter thanked Ms. Bluman for capturing concerns that the Planning Commission has had over the past.

The Commissioners discussed potential width, length, and depth of lightwells that are to be measured from interior wall to window. They talked about how front yards are defined in relation to lightwells as well as height requirements and complying with Fire Department access regulations.

Commissioner McConnell indicated that there is no current municipal code description identifying how deep a lightwell can be.

Chairman Gunter suggested that a setback modification be required if the front yard is not facing the street, for example, and that specific conditions to that effect be required. He also recommended that perhaps a Director's Review would be more of an appropriate review process in such instances.

Chairman Gunter expressed that the discussions on the topic are a good start.

Director Stanley indicated that a procedure to address lightwells should be devised. He described that an applicant had approached the City in the past about constructing a subterranean patio. In order to address issues like this, code requirements should be devised.

Commissioner McConnell said that identifying a procedure would be beneficial in instances when basements are requested.

Commissioner Oh expressed concern about exiting from basements, the potential aesthetic impact guardrails might have, as well as cumulative requests for exceptions to the code.

Director Stanley said that other cities have allowed for construction of two or more levels of basement floor area.

Commissioner McConnell recommended the possibility of limiting the basement area to 30% of the gross floor area.

Commissioner Jain asked what the main objective was in addressing the topic of lightwells in the code. He questioned how other cities are addressing this issue.

Director Stanley said that direction came from the City Council to review lightwells. He indicated that some past issues pertaining to this topic occurred on Berkshire Avenue.

The Commission went on to discuss size and operability of windows which will be addressed by the Building Department. They discussed impacts lightwell placement could have on neighboring properties if visible as well as ensuring that they are properly designed and built when bedrooms are placed in basement areas. That would fall under the purview of the Building Department to regulate.

The Commission said that their understanding was that the City Council's direction was to provide allowances for lightwells into setbacks with Planning Commission approval. However, placing bedrooms in basements with the intent of expanding the overall building footprint is not what the Planning Commission believed the Council's intent was.

Chairman Gunter spoke of applying a 30% rule for one side of a first floor and believed that it could be easily applied.

The Commission expressed that they were comfortable with the Director reviewing requests within the setback. They asked that a definition of "lightwell" be devised, which Ms. Bluman agreed to prepare for review. Finally, the overall topic of lightwells will be incorporated into the Zoning Code Update for further discussion and refining.

The next topic the Commission discussed was the current 30% roof removal rule which defines construction of a new house.

The Commission discussed instances when applicants construct a roof over an existing roof which does not require that the setback be brought into conformance with current code like a new house would.

Director Stanley clarified that changes in roof pitch are not always required to be reviewed internally and raised the question that when a roof is altered, should it be considered as a new roof and therefore, potentially be subject to current standards for new construction?

Chairman Gunter said that demolition, alteration and covering of an existing roof should all be reviewed.

Commissioner McConnell said that he felt that 50% should be used as the percentage of roof removal that would trigger a home construction to be categorized as, "new," and subject to current development standards.

Chairman Gunter agreed with Commissioner McConnell's comments and asked for staff's opinion.

Director Stanley said that the City Council wished to encourage a more streamlined process for new single family, one-story home construction. He questioned whether a 50% trigger for a home construction request being defined as new would truly result in any benefit for single-story homes as far removing the requirement to go through the Planning Commission process.

Commissioner Jain agreed that a 50% rule would be less burdensome to an applicant than 30%.

Commissioner Oh raised the issue of unforeseen property damage due to fire or termite destruction and whether such incidents should subject applicants to the same standards placed on new construction.

Chairman Gunter raised a concern about successive additions or alterations to roofs and how they should be addressed. Cumulative requests should be considered too. Completion timelines were also discussed.

The next topic discussed pertained to minimum dimensions for garages and equipment in the front yard. The Commissioners discussed instances when garages deviate from code. They also talked about pool and spa equipment that is placed in front yards that can be unsightly.

Director Stanley said that the Municipal Code allows items like pool and spa equipment to be placed in the front yard only if a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is obtained.

Deputy Director Koleda explained that pools have been approved to be placed in the front yard and that the Community Development Director has the discretion to request that pool equipment be placed outside of the front yard.

Chairman Gunter thanked staff and the consultant for their good work. He commented that the reports are well put together and easy to follow.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS – Future special meeting dates were discussed.

XI. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR- There were no comments.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – M/S/C – Gunter/Jain to adjourn at 5:51 p.m. Approved 5-0.