

**A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY OF SIGNAL HILL
PLANNING COMMISSION
October 14, 2014
7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Benson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The Commission Secretary conducted roll call.

Present: Chair Tom Benson
 Vice-Chair Jane Fallon
 Commissioner Devon Austin
 Commissioner Shannon Murphy
 Commissioner Rose Richárd

Staff present:

- 1) Community Development Director Scott Charney
- 2) Assistant Planner Selena Alanis
- 3) Assistant City Attorney Jeff Malawy
- 4) Sr. Engineering Technician II Anthony Caraveo

In addition, there were 8 people in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Benson led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no public business.

PRESENTATION

In recognition of October as National Planning Month, Community Development Director Scott Charney described how the City is celebrating and highlighted a visit by Administrative Assistant Ginny Hellerud with the After-school Recreation Club who explained the benefits of planning to the children.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

1. New Single-Family Dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Avenue

Community Development Director Scott Charney read the form of notice, and Assistant Planner Selena Alanis gave the staff report.

Chair Benson asked for any questions from the Commission.

Chair Benson asked if the number of parking spaces can be used to restrict the number of bedrooms. Staff confirmed that both parking spaces and bedrooms are combined in the zoning standards.

Chair Benson opened the public workshop.

The following members of the public spoke regarding the project:

- 1) Don Giese, Signal Hill resident. He spoke in favor of the project and stated the current property is an eyesore and that the new project would raise the value of the homes in the neighborhood.
- 2) Pamela Hughes, Signal Hill resident. She stated the project would encourage nearby residents to invest in their property and would add value to the community.
- 3) Rachel Reynolds, Signal Hill resident. She stated her home is nearby. She does not have a complaint about the size of the house but said it would impact the views from her house. She stated one-half to two-thirds of her view would be impacted by the second story of the proposed house, which would reduce her property value.
- 4) Maria Harris, Signal Hill resident. She stated while she welcomed new investment in the neighborhood, she had reservations about the bulk and scale of the project. The design is a very large rectangular and is huge in comparison to neighboring homes, which are California bungalow and mission style homes. She was concerned with the number of bedrooms and other rooms that might easily be converted to additional bedrooms, meaning greater occupancy, especially since she thought this was a parking impacted area. She noted the area is currently zoned for Section 8 housing and had concerns about the potential for the dwelling to be used more intensely than a single-family residence. She noted the architectural style includes plain walls on two sides. She thought the large balcony should be included in the floor area ratio calculation and pointed out the design includes a washer/dryer on the second story balcony. She suggested a large porch to fit in with surrounding homes.
- 5) Don Giese reiterated that the neighbors he had talked with were excited about the project. The current home is old and dilapidated, and he stated the new project would be an improvement.

- 6) Carol Churchill, Signal Hill resident. She stated she agreed the design was for a large home and that while the new home would be an improvement to that property, she was concerned about the number of parking spaces and bedrooms. She stated their neighborhood has homes with multiple generations with a substantial number of cars used by the family members. She doubted the 3 spaces on the lot would be sufficient for the new project. She suggested a driveway paving that would include grass, creating an open space area and parklike atmosphere. She suggested a large front porch would keep the character of the neighborhood. She asked if this would be the primary residence of the owner since this is an area for Section 8 housing. She pointed out a nearby property where the yard space is inadequate and residents utilize the alley for their recreation and thought the same might occur at this property.
- 7) Seth Sor, project designer. Mr. Sor thanked the neighbors in support of the project. He stated he believed this home will add value to the neighborhood and the design will meet the needs of the family. He stated the home meets all setback criteria. A larger front porch is not included because of the 20' setback and that the covering over the balcony is intended to protect from weather. Regarding the concern for conversions, he stated the home is very visible and that areas would not be converted to living space. Most of the neighborhood has 2 parking spaces and the proposed home has both a garage and driveway. He also stated there is a 20' yard open space in the back.

Chair Benson noted the design would allow for easy conversion of some of the rooms into bedrooms and asked if this would be a primary residence. Mr. Sor confirmed this would be a primary residence. He stated the owner would not be converting rooms and that the family room is accessible from the garage so it would not offer privacy.

Commissioner Murphy asked about the placement of the washer and dryer on balcony and its proximity to a bedroom. Mr. Sor confirmed the 4th bedroom is the master bedroom and stated the washer/dryer were placed outside out of the living area due to noise. He explained the parents were not able to take the stairs to the second floor and that is the reason for two laundry areas.

There being no further public testimony, Chair Benson closed the public workshop.

Vice-Chair Fallon stated she understood the potential for conversions but hoped that would not happen. She expressed support for the home which would be an improvement to the neighborhood and might encourage others to invest in their properties as well.

Commissioner Austin asked if a larger front porch could be designed. Staff explained the front setback is 20' which is the front of the house. To create a larger front porch would require a reduction in the square footage of the house and a shift to the west. Commissioner Austin recommended a space inside the home be designed for the second floor washer and dryer, and was reluctant to avoid setting a precedent.

Commissioner Murphy was also concerned about potential conversions to bedrooms. She disapproved the height of the building, the outside washer and dryer, the lack of open space and lack of a front porch or other features that matched the character of the area, and the lack of a master bedroom or suite. She stated she was concerned there might be a high number of residents in the home at some point in the future.

Commissioner Richárd stated her agreement with many issues pointed out by Commissioner Murphy. She was concerned about the covered balcony, the placement of washer and dryer, and the architectural style.

Chair Benson stated he also agreed with many of the concerns. While the design would be an improvement to the current area, the design resembles a big box. The layout includes a lot of potential for conversions to bedrooms. He stated he was concerned about the size of the balcony and asked the applicant for some design changes to be more compatible with the neighborhood such as a front porch.

It was moved by Commissioner Austin and seconded by Vice-Chair Fallon to review the views concerns of Ms. Reynolds, and to close the workshop until an improved project was submitted.

Motion carried 5/0.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. 2311 Ocean View 2nd Request for a Construction Time Limits Extension

Community Development Director Scott Charney read the form of notice, and Assistant Planner Selena Alanis gave the staff report.

Chair Benson asked for any questions from the Commission.

Vice-Chair Fallon asked staff for confirmation that the applicant had only a couple of workers on their project and asked about hiring a contractor. Staff advised that the applicant could answer the question when they spoke.

Commissioner Austin asked the alternatives if an extension were not approved. Staff advised that penalties are imposed 30 days after the expiration of the construction time limits.

Chair Benson opened the public hearing.

The following members of the public spoke regarding the project:

- 1) John Hughes, property owner, stated there had been many delays due to unreliable contractors including the surveyor who had a 2 week delay. Mr. Hughes' copies of the plans had been lost. He also stated he had done much of the framing and they now have 5 people working on the project. He is subcontracting the tile work on the roof and lath on the house for a smooth

trowel finish, for which the contractor suggest a 28 day curing period.

Chair Benson asked if a 90 day extension would be sufficient. Mr. Hughes stated he would be more comfortable with 120 days but that they are working as fast as possible.

Commissioner Murphy asked if he could explain the timeline or schedule of work. Mr. Hughes stated they have pulled a permit as the owner/operator and are now ready for a sheeting inspection. Additional framing was needed for the arches. They were hiring a professional roofer.

Chair Benson asked for an overview of the process for the project. Mr. Hughes explained he will finish the framing in 30 days. The roof will then be tiled, followed by rough electrical, plumbing and HVAC for small gas fireplace in master bedroom which will be vented in an existing channel, followed by waterproofing the deck and installing doors and windows. Mr. Hughes stated the doors and windows have not yet been ordered.

Vice-Chair Fallon reminded Mr. Hughes about the potential penalties should the project be incomplete.

Commissioner Murphy asked if their schedule took into account the holidays and potential weather. Mr. Hughes affirmed his hope to complete by Thanksgiving.

- 2) Pamela Hughes commended her son John on his work. The solar panels are installed and awaiting inspection by Southern California Edison. She provided some information regarding delays for delivery and changes in building requirements. She reiterated their desire to complete the project and thanked the Commission and staff for their assistance.

Vice-Chair Fallon suggested renting a storage unit to assist with deliveries of windows and doors.

- 3) Dr. Hughes reported on the status of the framing. He affirmed they are working hard and want to complete the improvements. He stated a concern for rain that might hinder the curing of the plaster once it is applied. Dr. Hughes stated he would like to obtain an extension for 120 days but that he was trying very hard to complete the project sooner.

There being no further public testimony, Chair Benson closed the public hearing.

Vice-Chair Fallon stated she understood some of their issues, having worked as a designer for many years and working with contractors. She said the Commission wants to see the project complete.

Commissioner Austin stated she understood the previous contractor went out of business and asked the Hughes if they have a project manager. Staff recapped that the time frame decided upon by the Commission will apply, and also recommended they obtain assistance for project management.

Commissioner Murphy stated she heard the Hughes' excuses regarding contractor delays and doubted the extension would be sufficient, however, she would approve the extension. She also recommended obtaining project management assistance.

Commissioner Richárd stated the Hughes should do everything possible to get the project completed.

Chair Benson stated he had concerns about granting the extension since the project was approved 6 years ago, but said he would support a 90 day extension. He stressed the importance of project management and suggested hiring a contractor. Chair Benson stressed to the applicant that the project must be finished in the time frame of the extension or staff has the right to execute all the provisions of the Construction Time Limits Ordinance including penalties

It was moved by Commissioner Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Richárd to approve the 90 day extension.

The following Roll Call vote resulted:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS AUSTIN, MURPHY, AND RICHÁRD, VICE-CHAIR FALLON, CHAIR BENSON

NOES: NONE

ABSENT: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

3. American Planning Association Annual Conference

Assistant Planner Selena Alanis gave the staff report.

Chair Benson received and filed the report.

CONSENT CALENDAR

It was moved by Vice-Chair Fallon and seconded by Commissioner Murphy to receive and file the Consent Calendar Items.

The motion carried 5/0.

COMMISSION NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Murphy reported an oversized vehicle parked with detached trailer on Combellack. Staff advised the limit is 72 hours and will refer the vehicle to the Police Department.

Commissioner Austin reported a leak from water pump/meter on Temple across from Hill Street and staff advised they would refer the issue to Public Works. She also stated the parking lot at the 99 Cent Store was littered, and staff will follow up.

Chair Benson advised the Great Los Angeles Shake-Out would be happening on October 16. Staff confirmed they would be participating in the event at City facilities.

Chair Benson also mentioned Senator Lara's office was having a workshop on October 17 through the Long Beach Chamber regarding tax credits for small businesses and they would provide information about the event to the Deputy City Clerk to post on the City website.

Chair Benson directed staff to return with a draft zoning ordinance amendment regarding reasonable standards for balconies. Staff offered to create a watch list on the Development Status Report to alert the status of projects.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Austin to adjourn to the next regular meeting of the Planning Commission to be held on Wednesday, November 12, 2014.

The motion carried.

Chair Benson adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.


TOM BENSON
CHAIR

ATTEST:


SCOTT CHARNEY
COMMISSION SECRETARY