

**CITY OF SONOMA  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Special MEETING  
February 11, 2016**

**Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West, Sonoma, CA**

**MINUTES**

Chair Felder called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Chair Felder, Comms. Willers, Wellander, Heneveld, Cribb, Roberson, McDonald

Absent: Comm. Coleman

Others

Present: Planning Director Goodison, Administrative Assistant Morris

Chair Felder stated that no new items would be heard after 10:30 p.m. unless the Planning Commission so decides. Any decisions made by the Planning Commission can be appealed within 15 days to the City Council. He reminded everyone to turn off cell phones and pagers. Comm. Roberson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Comm. Heneveld made a motion to approve the minutes of January 14, 2016 with changes noted. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was unanimously approved, 7-0.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER:** None.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

---

**Item #1 – Consent Calendar – Request for a one-year extension to the Planning approvals allowing a mixed-use development (Mission Square) at 165 East Spain Street (Applicant: Marcus & Willers Architects).**

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

**Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.**

No public comment.

**Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.**

Comm. Heneveld made a motion to approve the one-year extension to the Planning approvals allowing a mixed-use development (Mission Square) at 165 East Spain Street. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was adopted 5-2. (Comms. Cribb and Willers abstained.)

---

**ITEM #2 – PUBLIC HEARING – Consideration of a Use Permit to allow a vacation rental use at 78 Chase Street.**

**Applicant/Property Owner: Patrick and Barbara Collins**

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report, noting that the applicant was suggesting an interpretation of the Development Code that was not supported by staff.

**Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.**

Patrick Collins, co-owner, said the rental will be occupied only when they are home and that one extra parking space is required. He is confident the criteria are met to obtain a Use Permit.

**Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.**

Comm. Roberson stated that he could consider Use Permit approval, as he felt that it could be viewed as beneficial in the present instance, but he was interested to hear the views of his fellow Commissioners with respect to the issue of interpreting the Development Code.

Comm. Willers opposed allowing the use since he sees no ambiguity in the code between operating a vacation rental and renting a room in a home.

Comm. Cribb opposed the proposal based on inconsistency with the Development Code.

Comm. Wellander stated that he was conflicted in that he sees some benefits in allowing the use in this instance, but felt the Code does not clearly allow for the proposed option.

Comm. Heneveld agreed with his fellow commissioners that the applicant's proposed interpretation could not be supported..

Comm. McDonald concurred with Comm. Heneveld' s comments.

Chair Felder agreed with his fellow commissioners that City Council direction is clear not to allow this type of use.

Comm. Willers made a motion to deny the application. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was approved 6-1. (Comm. Wellander abstained).

---

**ITEM #3 – PUBLIC HEARING – Consideration of an Exception to the fence height standards for perimeter fencing on a residential property at 440 Lovall Valley Road.**

**Applicant/Property Owner: Ted Wittig**

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. McDonald confirmed with staff that no building permit is required for the fence.

**Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.**

Ted Wittig, property owner, thanked Associate Planner Atkins for her diligent work.

Cathleen Murphy, adjoining property owner, agreed with the neighbors to accommodate their needs since the only access is on the deck. The design is essential for her continued privacy and she supported the project.

Gary Massa, neighbor, approved the plan as long as his privacy is maintained.

**Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.**

Comm. Roberson is reluctant to support a solid fence higher than six feet under any circumstances.

Comm. Wellander visited the site and questioned whether the privacy issue was a compelling enough reason for approving an exception to the fence height standards.

Comm. Willers agreed with Comms. Roberson and Wellander's comments and believed other options are available to screen for privacy besides a solid wall. In his view, the trellis allowance available under the normal standards would provide adequate screening.

Chair Felder opposed a solid fence at the proposed height.

Comm. Cribb made a motion to deny the exception to the fence height standards for perimeter fencing and requested the existing fence be modified to comply with the normal standards. Comm. Willers seconded. The motion was adopted 6-1 (Comm. Heneveld dissenting).

---

**ITEM #4 – DISCUSSION – Consideration of Development Code amendments updating provisions related to affordable housing and clarifying provisions related to the Mixed Use zone and Planned Developments.**

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

**Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.**

Larry Barnett, resident, is concerned with affordable housing relative to mixed use/PUD developments. He agreed with Planning Director Goodison that there are "good and bad" examples of Planned Developments. He respected the City's commitment for the allowance of affordable housing within specific zoning districts and opposed any changes that might reduce housing requirements.

Victor Conforti, resident/local architect, felt developers are provided many options in mixed use zones and agreed there should be more clarification in the definitions.

**Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.**

With respect to the issue of retaining the option of 100% residential development in the Mixed use zone, Planning Director Goodison noted that tax credit financing incentives are only available for affordable housing projects and are not an option for funding mixed use developments.

Comm. Willers expressed the view that the Housing Element designates affordable housing sites through the sites inventory and that the intent of the General Plan through the Mixed Use designation is to provide a combination of affordable housing and income-producing uses. He suggested making revisions to the policy direction instead of drafting new ordinances.

Planning Director Goodison stated that the proposed amendments are intended to clarify the Development Code in a manner that preserves options for developing affordable housing.

Comm. Cribb agreed with Comm. Willers that increased density lends itself to smaller units resulting in more affordability for residents. He suggested that auto trips are reduced if some commercial businesses are integrated into housing communities.

Comm. Roberson expressed the view that in some areas the Development Code does not support the intent of the General Plan and should therefore be amended. In his view, the option for 100% residential development in the Mixed Use should be an available option, but it should be subject to similar findings as the current waiver provisions for a commercial component.

The Commission discussed potential revision to the draft amendments and provided direction to staff to return with a revised set of changes.

---

#### **ITEM #5 – DISCUSSION – Parameters and conduct of study sessions.**

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

#### **Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.**

Larry Barnett, resident, agreed with having a study session in the early stages of a project so the public can comment on the merits. He felt it would be a good practice to re-open the public comment period after the commissioners have had their discussion, as this would provide for more interactive dialogue.

Comm. Roberson felt the study session forum works can work well, but that guidelines would be beneficial with respect to getting the needed project information rather than extraneous materials and by focusing the discussion on issues of land use and compatibility.

Comm. McDonald suggested that in a study session submittal, developers should be asked to describe the outcome of any neighbor outreach processes.

Victor Conforti, resident/local architect, appreciated having study session reviews, especially for large scale proposals. He felt discussing the broader concepts in relation to regulations is critical for the success of a project.

Comm. Willers agreed with the importance of study sessions and suggested applicants limit presentations to broader issues instead of outlining specific details. He felt that often times study sessions result in decision making that should not occur until after a formal application submittal has been submitted and reviewed. On the issue of fees, he suggested that the first study session should be free of charge, as is the case now, but that any subsequent study sessions on the same project should be charged.

Fred Allebach, Sonoma Valley resident, appreciated Chair Felder's efforts to educate the public about the meeting protocol. He agreed with Victor Conforti and Comm. Willers that study sessions should be more focused on compliance with the General Plan/Development Code.

**Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.**

The Planning Commission provided direction to staff on draft guidelines for study sessions that will be brought back to the Planning Commission for further review and discussion.

---

**Issues Update:** Planning Director Goodison reviewed ongoing and upcoming issues.

**Comments from the Commission:** Comm. Roberson will not be able to attend the special meeting on February 25, 2016.

Comm. Heneveld appreciated working with his fellow commissioners over the years in particular on fence height issues.

Chair Felder thanked Comm. Heneveld for his dedicated service as the out of City representative.

**Comments from the Audience:** None.

**Adjournment:** Comm. Heneveld made a motion to adjourn. Comm. Willers seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 10, 2016

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Sonoma Planning Commission on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2016.

Approved:

---

Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant