

**CITY OF SONOMA
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
March 10, 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, Roberson, Coleman

Absent:

Others

Present: Planning Director Goodison, Senior Planner Gjestland, 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. Coleman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: Bob Mosher, resident (142 Clay St.) announced a neighborhood group ([www. Gateway.com](http://www.Gateway.com)) interested in participating in the development process for the affordable housing project proposed at the corner lot at Broadway and Clay Street. He is concerned that the proposed density will exacerbate/intensify the traffic congestion in the area. He questioned if the City services are available to meet the future demand.

Dave Ranson, Sonoma Valley resident, is concerned with residents leaving town due to a lack of affordable housing. He urged the Planning Commission to request more public hearings on housing issues.

Chair Felder said there will be a joint session with the City Council regarding affordable housing.

Anna Gomez, Sonoma Valley resident, said the sewer system cannot accommodate new developments. She requested that the sanitation system be fixed/repaired before new developments are approved and recommended a moratorium on building permits involving sewer connections.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None

CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER: None

CORRESPONDENCE: Late mail was received for Items 3, 4, and 7.

Item #1 – PUBLIC HEARING – Consideration of an Exception to the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standards to construct a residence and related accessory structures/uses on a vacant 2-acre property at 579 Lovall Valley Road.

This item was withdrawn by the applicant.

ITEM #2 – PUBLIC HEARING – Consideration of a Music Venue License change of ownership for Sonoma Speakeasy/American Music Hall at 452 First Street East, Suite G.

Applicant/Property Owner: Jodi Stevens/Lea Rubin

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.

Jodi Stevens, resident/applicant, will preserve the Jazz experience and continue the legacy created by Robert Ryan.

Robert Ryan, former business owner/resident, will continue as the music manager on site. He appreciated staff and the community support of his business. He noted that many neighboring restaurants attend the live music provided and that the venue has not had any adverse noise impact on residents to the east.

Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Roberson is satisfied that all conditions are met to facilitate the transfer of business ownership.

Comm. Willers concurred with Comm. Roberson and supported the application.

Comm. Roberson made a motion to approve the change of music venue license/ownership for Sonoma Speakeasy and American Music Hall at 452 First Street East, Suite G. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

ITEM #3 – PUBLIC HEARING – Consideration of 1) a Use Permit to convert part of an existing detached garage and workshop into guestrooms/residential use; and 2) an Exception from the front yard setback standard for a new pool house at 314 and 324 Second Street East.

Applicant/Property Owner: Glenn Ikemeto

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Comm. Willers inquired about the minimum density requirement for the R-M zone and permitting requirements for an additional residence with the two parcels merged. He also confirmed with staff that the proposed guest house would not meet the rear yard setback requirements without the parcels merged.

Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.

Glenn Ikemoto, property owner, said the site changes will provide a gathering place/compound for his extended family. He felt the garage conversion preserved the character of the property. Responding to letters of opposition regarding the tree, he said it was addressed in the arborist's report.

Ron Albert, landlord of neighboring duplex to the north, had no objection to the use permit and setback exception requests but opposed the proposed guesthouse-garage location adjacent to the rear yard of his duplex. He was optimistic that a compromise could be made with the applicant to relocate the guest house. He contended that unless the lots are merged a variance from the rear yard setback requirements would be needed.

Ed Routhier, neighbor, supported the plan.

Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Wellander supported conversion of the detached accessory structure given its position/location but had difficulty supporting the setback exception requested for the new pool house given the large parcel size.

Comm. Roberson concurred with Comm. Wellander but also expressed concern about how the larger project complied with zoning requirements.

Comm. Willers expressed his view that the larger project, because it involves a parcel merger, constitutes a redevelopment of the site and does not meet the minimum density requirements of the Development Code. Therefore, he found it difficult to vote in favor of any element of the application before the Commission. He felt the front unit (guest house) should be brought forward to improve compatibility with the neighbors. Regarding the two specific items brought to the Planning Commission for consideration, he had no objection to the use permit to convert the existing accessory structure but disagreed with the setback exception for the new pool house.

Comm. Cribb concurred with staff's view that a duplex is allowed without a use permit based on the R-M zoning. He agreed with his fellow commissioners that the new pool house did not warrant an exception from the front yard setback.

Comm. Coleman supported the overall plan since the majority of the proposal is within the interior of the site but agreed that the pool house did not warrant a setback exception.

Chair Felder supported conversion of the detached accessory structure but opposed the setback exception request.

Comm. Cribb made a motion to approve a Use Permit to convert part of the existing detached garage and workshop into guestrooms/residential use and deny an Exception from the front yard setback standard for the new pool house. Comm. Coleman seconded. The motion was adopted 4-3 (Comms. Willers, Roberson, 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.

Steve Ledson, resident/developer, disputed Larry Barnett's comments from the previous discussion of this issue in which he stated the homes in the MacArthur subdivision were sold for \$800,000. The sale prices ranged from \$450,000-\$708,000, averaging \$600,000. He is satisfied with his project goal to provide high quality work force housing in that 17 units of the 26 built were purchased by household who live or work in Sonoma. He held many meetings with staff and neighbors about the development plans since its inception in 2007. He supported retaining the option of 100% residential use in mixed zones and agreed with the 55-year affordability period for inclusionary housing units.

Dave Ransom, Sonoma Valley resident, recognized that second units can be used for long term rentals.

JJ Abodeely, Sonoma Valley, urged the Planning Commission to use the Mixed Use zoning to its fullest. He reviewed changes that he submitted to the draft Code revision that in his opinion would clarify the provisions. He supported allowing all housing types within mixed use zones.

Ed Routhier, resident, felt challenged with the development process in Sonoma, as it can be arbitrary and bureaucratic. He suggested that the Housing Element should aim to reduce bureaucracy at the micro-economic level.

Kathy Swanson, Sonoma Valley resident, recommended a penalty for empty commercial buildings.

Frank Hines, resident, said tenants are concerned with rising rents due to the lack of available rental units.

Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.

Comm. Roberson expressed support for the revisions as reflecting the direction previously given by the Planning Commission.

Comm. Willers expressed support for the provisions related to second units and the term of affordability. He felt that the proposed modifications to the Mixed Use and the Planned Development Permit regulations clarified the objective for affordable housing within the Development Code. However, he remains somewhat concerned that allowing Planned Developments in the Mixed Use zone could work against that objective. He agreed with the idea that Mixed Use zone allows for multiple development opportunities that need to be evaluated on their merits.

Chair Felder stated that although on the whole the changes were good, he felt that the provisions citing "identified community needs" were too vague. As discussion ensued as to how or whether to address this issue. Comm. Willers suggested referencing the Housing Element.

Comm. Cribb agreed with his fellow commissioners that additional workforce housing is needed with smaller unit sizes, which will reduce commuter traffic. He stated that while price-restricted affordable housing is needed, un-restricted units at a smaller size also fulfill a need and provide benefits to the community.

Comm. Roberson agreed with principle of making certain allowances through the Planned Development permit process, including in the Mixed Use zone, as long as concessions are made by the applicant. Comm. Coleman concurred.

Comm. Heneveld is satisfied that the proposed changes reflect the direction given by the Commission at the previous discussion.

Chair Felder, Comm. Wellander, and Comm. Willers expressed support for the 55-year inclusionary housing term restriction. Comm. Wellander clarified with staff the 55-year term applies to all three affordable housing types. Comm. Coleman stated that he would prefer additional investigation on this subject in light of some of the comments made in the public hearing. Commissioners discussed whether this portion of the draft Ordinance should be set aside for the time being, but the consensus was to proceed with it as drafted.

Comm. Heneveld made a motion to forward the proposed Development Code amendments to the City Council, with a recommendation for approval, subject to a change the language in section 3.d of Exhibit "C" (Mixed Use Zoning District), to make reference to the Housing Element. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was approved 6-1 (Comm. Coleman dissenting).

ITEM #5 – DISCUSSION – Discussion of Affordable Housing Overlay zone and related concepts.

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Planning Director Goodison is pleased to report that a Joint Study session on housing issues will be held with the City Council.

Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.

Fred Allebach, Sonoma Valley resident, noted that many definitions are used with regard to affordable housing and he would appreciate greater clarity and consistency. He recommended that staff clarify the terms frequently used to describe affordable housing for seniors and the work force and preferred that affordable housing developments be spread out rather than concentrated in one area.

Dave Ransom, Sonoma Valley resident, is encouraged by the commissioner's comments that suggest a commitment to offer more affordable housing.

Planning Director Goodison noted that the City Council shared with the concerns expressed over the limited supply of affordable housing units. The City Council is engaged in a number of actions aimed at promoting affordable housing, including a revised mobile home park ordinance to limit rent increases for seniors.

JJ Abodeely, Sonoma Valley resident, agreed with Fred Allebach that housing definitions need more clarification. In his view there are the following needs; 1) build more housing of all types, 2) grow funding sources for affordable housing; 3) streamline the development process.

Anna Gomez, Sonoma Valley resident, is of the opinion that services are not in place to accommodate more housing developments.

Lynda Corrado, Sonoma resident, believed that affordability can be attained with smaller units.

Frank Hines, resident, said that people are doubling up on housing to live in Sonoma.

Ed Routhier, resident, stated that achieving affordability is a broader housing issue that is not limited only to providing affordable housing exclusively, but housing of all types.

Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Roberson expressed disappointment that there are not enough choices in housing types for work force and seniors and that few applications are made for rental and condominium developments.

Comm. Willers noted that City no longer has redevelopment funds with which to purchase sites for affordable housing. He noted that the City is looking at impact fees, but even if these are adopted, there needs to be sites to acquire. In his view, these sites are the Housing Opportunity sites identified in the Housing Element. He wants to protect those sites for affordable housing, especially those within city limits. In his view, in the absence of redevelopment funds, the only way to accomplish land banking is through mixed use zoning. Although he likes the cottage housing concept, it may be mostly applicable as an alternative to traditional single-family housing and may not last as an affordable option over time.

Comm. Cribb is satisfied that many planning tools are in place and there is no need to rezone or predesignate properties with artificial restrictions. He would like to pursue a different model in which affordable units are mingled with market rate housing. In his view, low and very low income units need subsidies to be developed, but he would prefer that to occur in a mixed setting of units of various income levels. He is concerned that the funding component is lacking, which needs to be addressed. He expressed the view cottage housing is a viable concept, as long as there is variety in income levels with restrictions on the affordable units to preserve them as such. However, to achieve this goal, funding options need to be made available, which occurs at a different level than what the Planning Commission addresses.

Chair Felder concurred with many of Comm. Cribb's comments, in that there are many tools already in place. He stated that the Commission has a responsibility to use those tools to protect options for affordable housing and take advantage of opportunities as they emerge.

Comm. McDonald agreed with Comm. Cribb and Chair Felder and felt the General Plan and zoning code are progressive with respect to affordable housing. He suggested that the City needs to focus on impact fees and in-lieu fees to help provide funding for affordable housing programs. He suggested that real estate transfer tax revenues might be a source of revenue in this regard.

Comm. Coleman concurred with his fellow commissioners that more affordable units and housing of all types should be built. He noted that fees on new development are often quite high, which works against affordability.

Comm. Roberson recommended including and promoting incentives in the Development Code so developers are encouraged to build more rentals and condominium units. In his view, incentives are more powerful and more equitable than disincentives, such as new fees and taxes. He felt that while many pieces are in place, they do not always work together well to accomplish housing goals. Few development applications come forward with units aimed at the lower or even the middle income segments of the market. He feels that we cannot say that the

current set of tools is fully successfully and he is interested in having further discussions on the inclusionary requirement and the concept of minimum densities. However, he finds some of the other concepts presented in the staff report somewhat troubling with respect to property rights.

Chair Felder closed the item for this agenda, but suggested further discussion on the subject.

Item #6 – Discussion Review of draft Circulation Element update revised policies.

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Chair Felder opened the item to public comment.

Anna Gomez, Sonoma Valley resident, is concerned with traffic safety if there are more developments resulting in more trips by new residents and visitors.

Chair Felder closed the item to public comment.

Comm. McDonald recommended a designated area for transportation pick up/drop off in the Plaza district to reduce traffic congestion during the tourist season.

Following Commission discussion, Planning Director Goodison received direction on some further revisions to the draft policies.

Item #7 – Discussion Continued discussion of the parameters and conduct of study sessions.

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.

Chair Felder suggested that once the guidelines are finalized, they should be formally adopted as an expression of policy.

Comm. Willers noted that Commission comments during a study session should reflect individual views and that straw votes or polls should not be taken.

Comm. Wellander wants massing to include the broader site parameters beyond the specific project site.

Comm. McDonald suggested that staff should report on any feedback from neighborhood meetings prior to a study session.

Planning Director Goodison will prepare guidelines for study session protocol for review and adoption at the next regular meeting.

Issues Update: Planning Director Goodison reported the following:

A special study session on March 24th will be held to review an updated proposal for a mixed-use project at 216-254 First Street East and 273-299 Second Street East.

The Public Works Director/City Engineer is scheduled to make a presentation on the urban water management plan at a future meeting.

Planning Director Goodison will contact the Sanitation District about issues raised and report back.

Comments from the Commission: Comm. Wellander appreciated Planning Director Goodison offering to contact the Sanitation District.

Comments from the Audience: Frank Hines resident, appreciated the commissioners expertise and dedicated service to the community.

Comm. Willers made a motion to adjourn. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 10:31 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 14, 2016

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Sonoma Planning Commission on the 14th day of April, 2016.

Approved:

Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant