CITY OF SONOMA
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
July 14, 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. Wellander, Cribb, Willers, Sek, Coleman, McDonald (Alternate)
Absent:	Comm. Roberson
Others Present:	Planning Director Goodison, Associate Planner Atkins, 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. Sek led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: Karin Skooglund, resident, (126 Blue Wing Drive), expressed concern about the prospective First Street East development as she believes it will create serious negative impacts in that neighborhood. She will oppose any commercial component if a mixed use project is submitted as a formal application.

Lynda Corrado, resident, stated that traffic circulation and parking will be problematic if the First Street East development is pursued.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Comm. Willers made a motion to approve the minutes of June 9, 2016, with corrections. Comm. Cribb seconded. The motion was unanimously approved (6-0). (Chair Felder and Comm. McDonald abstained).

CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER: None

CORRESPONDENCE: The Planning Director reviewed late correspondence submitted after the distribution of the agenda packet.

Item #1 – Consent Calendar – Request for a one-year extension to the Use Permit allowing a multi-tenant marketplace, including restaurant uses for the Sonoma Cheese Factory at 2 West Spain Street (Applicant: Viviani Trust).

Comm. Cribb made a motion to approve the one-year extension to the Use Permit. Comm. Willers seconded. The motion was unanimously approved (7-0).

Item 2 – Public Hearing – Consideration of an Exception to the height standards and rear yard setback requirements to legalize an existing accessory structure located in the rear yard of a residential property at 458 East MacArthur Street.

Applicant/Property Owner: Robert Baumann & Associates/Leslie Carlson

Comm. Cribb recused due to conflict of interest and left the room.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.

Robert Baumann, project architect, explained that the application was the result of the property owner receiving a Notice of Violation issued by the Building Department. He conveyed that financial constraints prevented the property owner from upgrading the structure as a second unit. Instead, the property owner proposes to correct the Building Code deficiencies and retain the building as a guest house.

Chair Felder asked if a kitchen will be added.

Mr. Baumann responded that the building currently contains a kitchen, but it will be removed, and any other changes made will be in conformance with the Building Code.

Comm. Coleman asked about the age of the homeowner and costs projected for the demolition and renovation.

Mr. Baumann responded that he did not know his client's age and the estimated demolition cost range is between $8,000 and$10,000 and the costs to upgrade the existing structure is between $25,000 and $35,000.

Patty Daffurn, neighbor, felt the existing structure should be grandfathered-in since it provides an opportunity for housing for a small household, seniors, or the working force.

Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.

Comm. Willers confirmed with staff that the accessory structure was built without a building permit.

Chair Felder asked Mr. Baumann to re-approach the dais, as there were additional questions on the part of the Commission.

Robert Baumann explained that the 120 square foot structure (built by the previous owner in 2004) initially did not require a building permit. He understood that modifications to the structure require a building permit.

Comm. Wellander conducted a site visit and expressed reservations about the 8-foot fence since it appeared imposing.

Comms. McDonald and Coleman agreed with Comm. Wellander's comments that the proposed fence height suggested in the draft conditions of approval is unnecessary.

Comm. Coleman asked whether it would be possible to approve the structures as constructed.

Chair Felder confirmed with Planning Director Goodison that a portion of the structure must be removed as otherwise it would exceed the 600 square foot standard for a guest room and it is not financially feasible for the applicant to renovate the structure as a second unit.

Staff clarified that reference to an 8-foot solid fence in the draft conditions of approval should be 7-foot solid plus 1 foot of non-solid fencing.

Comm. Sek did not have an opportunity to visit the site. She appreciated the owner working with the Building Department to correct deficiencies.

Comm. Willers stated that he supported allowing the two exceptions as he felt that the renovated structure would be compatible with its surroundings. In his view, the existing landscaping along the property line was a sufficient screen and he did not feel that a new fence was necessary.

Comm. Willers made a motion to approve the two exceptions as submitted with amended conditions of approval to remove the requirement for additional fencing. Comm. McDonald seconded. The motion was unanimously approved (6-0).

Comm. Cribb returned to the dais.

Item 3 – Public Hearing – Consideration of a Use Permit to convert a building into a vacation rental unit at 450 Fifth Street West.

Applicant/Property Owner: Ryan Martin

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.

Ryan Martin, property owner, felt the location is not ideal for a full-time rental, given the adjoining commercial uses, but more appropriate as a vacation rental. He will hire a property manager to oversee. He canvased the neighborhood and said the commercial tenants in the Sonoma Valley Center supported the vacation rental use.

Jim Bohar, resident in the Historic Overlay Zone, is concerned with the intrusion of commercial uses in the residential districts. He did not support the vacation rental use since in his view the home is ideal for a working family as a long-term rental. Mr. Bohar confirmed with staff that public notices are sent to all property owners and tenants within a 500-foot radius.

Jean Marsh, resident at 472 Church Street, was notified of the public hearing from the mailer. She supported the request since she viewed the neighborhood as mainly a commercial district instead of exclusively residential. She is of the opinion that property owners should be allowed to generate income from their homes.

Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.

Comm. Willers stated that he opposed the conversion of the property to a vacation rental because it removed much needed housing inventory. In his view, the location is well-suited for a long-term rental.

Comm. Cribb indicated that he was inclined to support the application as the building has not been in the housing stock for a long time.

Comm. Coleman expressed the view that the location was appropriate for a long-term rental. He concurred with Comm. Willers and opposed. He asked about the City's public notice procedures and suggested that a larger radius for mailings should be considered.

Planning Director Goodison said public noticing for meetings exceed State standards.

Comm. Sek opposed the proposal as the unit had never been legally converted to a commercial use.

Comm. McDonald recognized the increased demand for affordable housing and is concerned with vacation rental conversions replacing rental housing units.

Comm. Wellander opposed the application and felt the house should remain a conventional rental.

Comm. McDonald confirmed with staff that the applicant could apply for a Use Permit for a commercial use on the property, as had been done with the adjoining parcel on the south.

Chair Felder agreed with his fellow commissioners. He opposed the change since it would take away a housing site. He is concerned with the town transforming into a more transient community as a result of the increase in vacation rentals in recent years.

Comm. Willers made a motion to deny the Use Permit to convert a building into a vacation rental unit as submitted. Comm. Wellander seconded. The motion was approved on a vote of 6-1. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Comms. Wellander, McDonald, Willers, Coleman, Sek, Chair Felder Noes: Comm. Cribb.

Item 4: Public Hearing: Review of Draft Downtown Sonoma Preservation Design Guidelines

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Presenters: Christina Dikas and Ruth Todd representing Page & Turnbull

Christina Dikas, Page and Turnbull, reviewed the draft guidelines and discussed the process used in developing them.

Comm. Cribb asked how the boundaries of the of Downtown District were originally defined.

Planning Director Goodison replied that the Downtown District was established when the Planning Commission adopted the Development Code. He explained that the boundaries of the individual districts were created through a lengthy public review process.

Comm. Coleman confirmed with Planning Director Goodison that the new guidelines do not substitute for the commission review that considers individual circumstances of a property.

Planning Director Goodison said the guidelines are not a vehicle for amending the FAR.

Chair Felder opened the item for public comment.

Mary Martinez, representing Johanna Patri, suggested that the guidelines consider FAR and could be incorporated into the Development Code and General Plan. She recommended the consultant compare guidelines in other California historic cities such as Pasadena and Santa Barbara. She recommended more time to review and suggested a new title could be “Downtown Sonoma Historic Preservation Guidelines”.

Patricia Cullinan, resident, agreed with Johanna Patri’s comments in her letter and felt the design guidelines are a unique opportunity to make a contribution to the future character of Sonoma but need more study before adopting.

Robert Demler, resident, is disappointed that it is not practical to have the public review all the late mail in advance of the meeting since speakers reference the contents. For example, the detailed letter received from Johnanna Patri.

Gina Cuclis, Sonoma valley resident/former planning commissioner, appreciated the progress made in developing Downtown Design Guidelines. She was an early proponent for having City design guidelines for more clarity in the application process.

Chair Felder closed the item for public comment.

Comm. McDonald recommended bridging gaps between the General Plan and Development Code guidelines in place today. In a general sense, he recommended more emphasis on mixed use and defining features of contributing commercial buildings in the guidelines. He suggested more clarification on the priorities for the contents of the document. He suggested incorporating ADA requirements for building conversions, lighting, landscaping, off-street parking, fencing, massing, scale, and setbacks. He will submit detailed comments directly to staff.

Comm. Wellander, is enthusiastic about the document but wants more time to digest the comments and provide additional input.

Comm. Cribb is in favor of keeping the guidelines less prescriptive. In addition, he would like to see more emphasis on large-scale commercial projects. He suggested more discussion regarding ADA compliance.

Comms. Coleman and Sek agreed with Comm. Wellander and requested more time to study the document.

Comm. Willers participated in the advisory committee process and recommended that Johanna Patri’s points be considered. While he does not support codifying the guidelines as part of the Development Code, in his view the new document will improve the review process by providing common language. He envisioned more examples of acceptable landscape and exteriors for historic buildings.

Chair Felder agreed with his fellow commissioners’ comments that the guidelines should not be immediately codified, as in his view they can be integrated with the Development Code and the

General Plan over time. He appreciated the efforts made but agreed that more time is needed to gather public and commissioner input. He asked that an updated draft be prepared, as that would assist the Planning Commission in evaluating the document.

Planning Director Goodison stated that staff understood the direction and will continue the item to a future agenda.

Issues Update: Planning Director Goodison reviewed the issues update report.

Comments from Commissioners: Comm. Wellander requested a more in-depth discussion on work force housing incentives for developers.

Planning Director Goodison noted that there will be a joint meeting with the City Council on August 15 to discuss housing and junior second units and inclusionary and housing impact fees.

Comm. Coleman asked if the public noticing could be broader to include more residents beyond the 500 feet radius.

Planning Director Goodison noted that as the minimum standard required by State law is 300 feet, Sonoma's local rules exceed that requirement. However, the Commission could discuss whether it wishes to increase the radius even further.

Comments from the Audience: Patricia Cullinan, reported that the World Heritage Foundation, a California mission studies group, is scheduled to have their multinational nomination in Sonoma in February 2018.

Robert Demler, resident, is satisfied with the 500 ft. public noticing. He inquired why developers are not proposing affordable housing. He criticized the commission public hearing protocol and stated that more dialogue is needed.

Jean Marsh, resident at 472 Church Street agreed with Mr. Demler on many points. She is disappointed that vacation rentals are not universally allowed and wants the City to be more respectful of property owner's needs.

Adjournment: Chair Willers made a motion to adjourn. Comm. Cribb seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 11, 2016.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Sonoma Planning Commission on the 11th day of August , 2016.

Approved:

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Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant