

**CITY OF SONOMA
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
June 12, 2014**

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

MINUTES

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

Roll Call:

Present: Chair Willers , Comms. Felder, Howarth, Edwards, Heneveld, Roberson,

Absent: Chair Tippell, Comm. Cribb (Alternate)

Others

Present: Planning Director Goodison, Senior Planner Gjestland, Administrative Assistant Morris

Chair Willers 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. Edwards led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: No Public Comments

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Comm. Edwards made a motion to approve the minutes of May 8, 2014, subject to corrections. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted.

CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER: None

CORRESPONDENCE: Late mail received for Item # 2 (a petition of support) and Item #3.

Item #1 – Public Hearing – Consideration of a Temporary Use Permit to hold the annual zucchini car race outdoors on the grounds of the Sebastiani Winery on Friday, August 1, 2014 at 389 Fourth Street East.

Applicant/Property Owner: Sonoma Valley Certified Farmers Market/Foley Family Wines, Inc.

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Comm. Edwards asked if there had been any neighbor concerns with other special events held at the winery recently. Staff noted that over the past two years only one event had created some issues (the Sonoma Valley Historic Race Car Festival held in May 2013). However that was due to unusual circumstances associated with the last minute administrative review and approval of the event.

Comm. Howarth confirmed with staff that the proposal is the same as last year.

Chair Willers opened the item to public comment.

Gary Peter, President Sonoma Valley Certified Farmers Market, noted that there will be no microphones or music associated with the event and there is a minimal impact on neighbors, since it is the same event as last year.

Chair Willers closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Edwards made a motion to approve the Temporary Use Permit for the annual zucchini car race outdoors on the grounds of the Sebastiani Winery. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted.

Item #2 – Public Hearing- Consideration of an Exception from the fence height standards to construct a section of 10-foot tall replacement fencing along the western boundary of a residential property at 222 West Spain Street.

Applicant/Property Owner: Michael Larbre/Michael & Rita Larbre

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Comm. Howarth clarified with staff, apart from the section where an exception is proposed, the replacement fences around the perimeter of the property will conform with the fence height standards.

Chair Willers opened the item to public comment.

Michael Larbre, homeowner, did neighborhood outreach that resulted in no opposition. He noted that replacing the fence at the same 10-foot height will address his privacy concerns created by the proximity of the residence to the adjoining church parking lot.

Chair Willers closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Roberson supported the fence height and design given uses on the adjoining church property and is pleased with the neighborhood support.

All the Commissioners agreed that the new fence is an improvement.

Comm. Felder made a motion to approve the application subject to the conditions of approval. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted.

Item #3 – Public Hearing – Consideration of a Use Permit allowing conversion of a mixed-use building into two vacation rentals as an adaptive reuse of an historic structure at 162-166 West Spain Street.

Applicant/Property Owner: Leonard Tillem/Leonard Tillem and Laura Olsen

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Comm. Henevald confirmed with staff that there will be no parking changes.

Comm. Howarth questioned the number of vacation rentals in the area for comparison. Staff will report back with the exact number and recalled at least five in the vicinity.

Comm. Roberson confirmed that ADA accessibility requirements would be required, including making the ground floor unit handicap accessible through the provision of a wheelchair lift or ramp.

Chair Willers opened the item to public comment.

Leonard Tillem, applicant and co-owner of the property, introduced Laura Olsen the other co-owner. They have had difficulty leasing the upper floor office space and the two downstairs units are small and in terrible condition. He indicated that renting the upstairs and downstairs as long-term units would not cover the significant improvements and upgrades necessary for the building, including plumbing, electrical, and deck replacement. He sees the vacation rental as a solution. He has no intention to make any exterior modifications to the historic building, which suffers from deferred maintenance. The wheel chair ramp would be located at the back of the structure below the deck,

Comm. Edwards questioned whether there had been any maintenance to the building by the owners.

Mr. Tillem noted that the outside of the building looks good but the inside is in poor condition. In regards to noise concerns, he is willing to put limitations on the use and has not had any noise issues with his vacation rental on Broadway.

Comm. Howarth expressed concern about the loss of downtown apartment units. He noted that the rental market is currently tight and that rental units command high rents.

Michael Larbre, resident, supported the conversion to vacation rentals on the site.

Philip Rosasco, resident manager of the adjoining Cypress Apartments, is concerned with noise and considers vacation rentals in residential neighborhoods as a nuisance. He opposes the application.

Patricia Cullinan, resident, questioned whether the cultural resources analysis prepared by McKale Consulting could be relied upon. She expressed her view that George McKale is not a qualified architectural historian and the report does not specify the character-defining features of the building. She also felt that plans should be developed at this point clearly showing what would happen the building exterior. She suggested that if the adaptive reuse is allowed then the conditions of approval should mandate that some of the income derived from the use be spent toward maintenance of the historic building.

Karla Noyes, resident, noted that significant tax benefits are available for the remodeling of buildings placed on historic Registers. She agreed with Patricia Cullinan that an assessment of character defining features is needed and that any exterior modifications should be evaluated by an architectural historian. She is concerned with the density of use and how it could impact the historic building. She wished more details were provided on the economics of the proposal and the rental market.

George McKale, City Historian/McKale Consulting, clarified his role in the process. He has the required training and expertise to serve as an architectural historian and has done a significant amount of work in this field with a variety of lead agencies.

Denise Ewings, rental property owner, felt that this vacation rental request is reasonable. She pointed out that issues related to misbehaving guests or noise can be avoided through the appropriate screening of applicants by the owner.

Chair Willers closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Heneveld is concerned that potential exterior modifications could harm the historic significance of the building.

Planning Director Goodison noted that, except for providing an accessible entrance at the back of the building, no exterior modifications were proposed. He emphasized that a condition of approval was included that adequately addresses potential exterior modifications, including ADA upgrades.

Comm. Edwards felt that the application submittal was not adequate. He shared some of the concerns expressed by the public and was worried about setting precedent with the application. He had doubts about the proposal and was not prepared to make a decision.

Comms. Felder indicated that he cannot support the request due to the loss of two apartments from the housing stock and because not enough information has been presented about how the proposal could affect character defining features of the historic building..

Comm. Howarth concurred with Comms. Edwards and Felder, noting that more complete plans are typically provided for consideration.

Comm. Roberson felt that the proposal can be done in a manner that would not affect the character defining features of the building, but that a more complete analysis is necessary in this regard. He suggested continuing the item to give the applicant an opportunity to provide additional information.

Chair Willers concurred that more information is needed to evaluate the application, including an assessment of the character defying features of the building and more details addressing the finding specific to approval of a vacation rental as an adaptive reuse. He expressed concern about the loss of housing.

Comm. Roberson made a motion to continue to the next regular Planning Commission meeting on July 10th so the applicant can address the following:

1. Provide detailed floor plans and building elevations.
2. Identify character-defining features of the building and assess whether the project would adversely affect the structure's historic significance.
3. Provide additional information on economic issues relevant to required findings for an adaptive re-use.

Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion to continue the item was adopted 5-1 (Comm. Edwards opposed).

Item #4 – Public Hearing – Study session on a proposal to construct a 7-unit Planned Development on a 0.86-acre site at 800 West Spain Street.

Applicant/Property Owner: Caymus Capital

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Chair Willers opened the item to public comment.

Doug Hilberman, project architect (Axia Architects), felt that the PUD design has met the standards given the property constraints. The developer recognized the neighbor's concerns with the two story units although he viewed the overall general neighborhood feedback as positive. By way of background, the City condemned the buildings on the property and the current owner sought a demolition permit and planned to provide more housing in the downtown area with a portion designated for affordable units.

Laverne Northrop, Sonoma Commons resident, is concerned with fire access and an increase in traffic congestion on West Spain Street.

Chair Willers closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Edwards would like to ensure that the front porches will be useable space for the residents.

Comm. Felder suggested eliminating a unit and locating Lot 1 further from the street.

Comm. Howarth agreed with Comm. Felder and is also concerned with parking and future development impacts in the area.

Comm. Roberson wanted more variation in the models of the homes with the drawings depicting cars and people. He valued the front yards of the community.

Chair Willers agreed with Comm. Felder that there might be one too many units. He would like to see more variation in unit design. He agrees that the unit on the lot adjoining West Spain Street is too close and does not address the street.

Issues Update: Planning Director Goodison reported the following:

1. A community workshop on the Housing Element update has been scheduled for June 25th at the Fire Station Training Room. from 6-8 p.m.
2. The AT&T cell tower on the Sebastiani/Foley property was approved by the City Council on June 2nd.
3. The Planning Commission decision regarding the issuance of a Type 67 ABC license for the Cottage Inn (310 First Street East) has been appealed and will be reviewed by the City Council on June 23rd
4. A development proposal for the former Sonoma Truck & Auto site (870 Broadway) is expected and may be the subject of Planning Commission study session in August.

Comments from the Audience: Patricia Cullinan, resident and contractor, expressed concern about the hedge height at the corner of Napa Street East and Fifth Street East. She asked the City Council to write a letter to support a tax credit that is being proposed by the Assembly.

Comm. Edwards made a motion to adjourn. Comm. Howarth seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 10, 2014.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Sonoma Planning Commission on the 10th day of July, 2014.

Approved:

Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant