

**CITY OF SONOMA  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING OF  
Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West  
August 8, 2013  
MINUTES**

I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the agenda for this meeting was posted on Friday, August 2, 2013, on the bulletin board outside the front of Sonoma City Hall, No. 1 the Plaza, Sonoma, California. Chair Roberson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West.

**Roll Call:**

Present:	Chair Roberson, Comms. Edwards, Henevald, Felder, Willers
Absent:	Comms Tippell, Howarth
Others	Planning Director Goodison, Associate Planner Atkins, Administrative
Present:	Assistant Morris

Chair Roberson stated that no new items would be heard after 10:30 p.m. unless the Planning Commission so decides. Any decisions made tonight can be appealed within 15 days to the City Council. He reminded everyone to turn off cell phones and pagers. Comm. Henevald 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 July 11, 2013. Comm. seconded. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0. (Comm.Tippell, Howarth absent)

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Late mail regarding Items #3 and #5. Staff Memo Item #5.

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Comm. Willers recused due to proximity and financial interest and left the room.

**Item #1 – Public Hearing** – Request for a one-year extension to an approved Planned Development Permit for a four-unit project at 881-887 First Street West

**Applicant/Property Owner: Clyde Ikeda**

Associate Planner Atkins explained consent calendar protocol.

Comm. Felder made a motion to approve a third one-year extension of the approved Planned Development Permit for a four-unit project at 881-887 First Street West (maximum number of discretionary extensions for the project is six). Comm. Edwards seconded. The motion was unanimously approved 4-0. Comm. Willers recused. (Comms. Tippell and Howarth absent).

Comm. Willers returned to the dais.

**Item #2– Public Hearing** – Re-evaluation of a previously approved Music Venue License allowing live music to be performed in association with special events at 405 First Street West.

**Applicant/Property Owner:** Treg Finney/EDI Associates

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Staff notes that there have been no calls of service for noise or associated issues at the site.

Treg Finney, applicant and General Manager, is pleased with the music license conditions of approval. There have been special events with music-seven DJ's and seven acoustic performers.

**Chair Roberson opened the public hearing.**

No public comments

**Chair Roberson closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Henevald confirms that there are no changes to the amplified music provision.

Comm. Howarth made a motion to approve the re-evaluation of a previously approved Music Venue License subject to the existing conditions of approval. Comm. Willers seconded. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0. (Comms. Tippell and Howarth absent).

**Item #3 – Public Hearing** – Re-evaluation of a previously approved Music License allowing regularly-scheduled live music to be performed at Hopmonk Tavern at 691 Broadway.

**Applicant/Property Owner:** Dean Biersch/Hopmonk Tavern

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Staff received one written complaint from a neighbor when a performance exceeded the noise limits. There have been no calls of service to the Police department. There have been four separate reviews of the music venue license permit.

Comm. Felder confirms with staff that moving forward the license is administratively reviewed unless issues/complaints arise then the Planning Commission would re-evaluate.

Comm. Henevald confirms that the City has received no other calls about noise disturbances during musical performances.

Dean Biersch, applicant, feels he has compromised and worked through many of the neighbors issues/concerns relating to music performances. He has successfully dealt with each issue as presented. The applicant responded to the recent letter from a neighbor.

Chair Roberson suggests that the owner, restaurant staff and musicians become more familiar with the music limits including the type of instruments. In his view, this is a "wake up call". An ambient noise level check list is recommended and the music should not compete with the crowd noise.

**Chair Roberson opened the public hearing.**

Robert Ryan, commercial property owner, (Broadway) supports the music permit and likes the ambiance at Hopmonk.

**Chair Roberson closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Felder commends Mr. Biersch for acknowledging the isolated noise issue. He wants a more complete report from the restaurant management/staff going forward. He feels the administrative review is fine and is optimistic/confident that there will be continued diligence on the part of Mr. Biersch.

Comm. Edwards agrees with Comm. Felder.

Comm. Edwards made a motion to approve the re-evaluation of a previously approved Music License allowing regularly-scheduled live music to be performed at Hopmonk Tavern subject to the current conditions of approval. Comm. Henevald seconded. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0. (Comms. Tippell and Howarth absent).

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Comm. Willers recused due to proximity and left the room.

**Item #4 – Public Hearing** – Consideration of a Use Permit to convert a single-family residence into a two-bedroom vacation rental at 780 Broadway.

**Applicant/Property Owner:** Donna Dambach and Christine Argenziano/Lisa Ellis

Planning Director Goodison presented staff's report.

Vacation rentals are allowed in mixed use zones with a Use Permit that complies with the standards set forth in the Development Code and met through the conditions of approval. The City of Sonoma has approved 18 vacation rentals within the past 13 years. Although there has been a steady increase in applications, in staff's view vacation rentals do not negatively impact housing stock in Sonoma. The close proximity to the Plaza may reduce traffic since tourists might walk rather than drive a car.

Comm. Henevald suggests a change to the curfew time from 10 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Comm. Edwards would not support this change.

Donna Dambach and Christine Argenziano/Lisa Ellis, applicants, are experienced vacation rental managers and are in contract to purchase the property. They have spoken to many of the neighbors.

**Chair Roberson opened the public hearing.**

No public comments.

**Chair Roberson closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Henevald suggests that the 10 p.m. curfew time change to 9 p.m.

Comms. Edwards and Felder would not support this change.

Comm. Felder made a motion to approve a Use Permit to convert a single-family residence into a two-bedroom vacation rental. Comm. Edwards seconded. The motion was approved 3-1. Comm. Henevald opposes. Comm. Willers recused. (Comms. Tippell and Howarth absent).

Comm. Willers returned to the dais.

**Item #5 – Study Session** – Study session on a proposal to construct 12 apartments on a 1-acre site at 840 West Napa Street.

**Applicant/Property Owner:** Victor Conforti, Architect/ Michael Rabbitt

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Victor Conforti, applicant/architect, explains that this rental housing infill project has certain characteristics; difficult site with narrow dimensions. The existing building has no significant historical value. Mr. Conforti met and discussed some of the issues with the neighbors on Palm Court. The Fire Department access drives the site plan and leads to the driveway extension leaving a narrow remainder. There are a series of smaller scale buildings with duplex elements. The enclosed yards are oriented to the North and South ends of the duplex units.

A demolition permit is required from the Building Department and the Design Review Commission will review the project at a later date. If approved, the applicant is amenable to reversing the driveway location. He appreciated Associate Planner Atkin's table showing the adjacent properties. The guest parking has been expanded. A single gate would be agreeable on West Napa Street. The units facing West Spain Street will have private front yards (224 sq. ft. exceeds the private open space minimum requirement) with picket fences and landscaping on both sides of the gate. Trash bins may be located within the fenced yards with recycling bins limited to curbside pick up.

Chair Roberson confirms that Sonoma Garbage will pick up the garbage along the driveway.

Comm. Henevald suggested that the intent for this housing project may be for a future condominium conversion,

The applicant says the project is designed for rental units not condominiums.

Planning Director Goodison explained the process for condominium conversions.

**Chair Roberson opened the public hearing.**

Robin and Kathleen McCartney, Sonoma Garden residents, are situated between Nicora Place and the project. They have not discussed the following concerns with the applicant: noise, traffic, proportion of structures to lot size (small and narrow). They are not opposing development on the site however they expressed reservations for the demolition of the house since it represents a "piece of Old Sonoma". Sonoma Gardens backs up between two new proposed housing projects creating the potential for negatively impacting existing residents. A major concern is the density that will increase traffic in the area at the detriment to pedestrians.

Wendy Byrd, Palm Court resident, says her primary concern is density along with safety. She also discussed "affordable housing".

Jeff Paggini, resident representing his son, is concerned about privacy, garbage, noise and aesthetics. His opinion is that the driveway fire access does not matter.

Jessica Schorr, resident, does not want any changes to the bucolic setting that has been her home for many years. She is concerned about the size of the units. In her opinion, there are differences between homeowners and renters assimilating in the community. She envisions/perceives the changes proposed for the neighborhood as "negatively changing her lifestyle forever".

Sarah Hartnet, Sonoma Garden resident is concerned about an increase in area traffic. Her family rides bikes and more cars may jeopardize their safety.

Mike and Lori Hemner, resident property managers at Sun Valley (a neighboring 14 unit housing development) received a letter from the applicant but have not had an opportunity to voice their concerns until tonight's meeting. They feel that the new apartments would not be "visually pleasing" and that there is already enough density in the area. They suggest a senior housing facility may be more suitable with one level units or a smaller scale housing project. Their main objections stem from the demographics, traffic and noise.

Mary Jane, Sonoma Park resident, (24 condos), has similar concerns. She is concerned with noise and air pollution during the construction period. "Quality of life" may be compromised since there would be a demand for limited valuable resources.

Anthony Hass, adjacent property owner is surprised that there is not a denser use. His only concern is to have the driveway flipped to the other side so it would not limit his future development plans. He does not oppose the project.

Mike Rabbitt, property owner, does not intend to have condominiums in the future.

Beryll Brooks, 20 year resident, met with City staff. She feels that only eight units will be directly affected. She hopes there is a revision for either fewer units or one level to make the project more "livable". She has no issue with garbage trucks. Her opinion is that West Spain Street is "unsafe" at times.

#### **Chair Roberson closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Henevald is concerned with egress and thinks the hedge along West Spain Street (20 foot sight line) should be addressed. He is concerned for the Palm Court residents living in a "fishbowl". He proposes a right turn only lane on West Napa Street and the repositioning of the driveway.

Comm. Willers suggests that changing the driveway may cause more concerns. He has practical experiences from a similar development and is familiar with community involvement. There may be a reduction in garbage with this type of project. The neighbors are concerned about setbacks. He is not concerned with the density. The current layout has carports dimension almost 2 narrow between buildings. He feels that garbage can be solved favorably with adjacent properties and yards. It is preferred that dumpster trash be picked up more frequently.

Comm. Edwards confirms with staff that the new Valley Oaks affordable housing project is full and the demand for affordable housing has increased due to the economic climate/recession.

The Housing Element requires some affordable units in new developments. The urban growth boundary dictates the perimeters for infill projects. The traffic on Spain Street is of concern and two people have written to the Traffic Safety Committee. He is of the opinion that the majority of traffic is generated from travelers through Sonoma. He envisions neighbors sharing garbage services. Comm. Edwards feels that the project is not being overbuilt since more units are allowed under the zoning/regulations.

Comm. Edwards encourages the public to continue dialogue with the City and as a Planning Commissioner is happy to be a facilitator. (Planning Commission is a "bridge" to the City.)

Comm. Felder feels the project options are limited by the constrained lots confronted with density issues. He agrees with Comm. Willers that carports and driveway access is problematic. He is also concerned with traffic, water and the impacts on the neighborhood and community at large. He is optimistic that the project has merits and will be successful.

Comm. Roberson wants more width in the driveways and feels the configuration of units to single story might mitigate some of the issues. He feels that constructive feedback is very important in the process.

Comm. Willers discusses the City's condo conversion policy that is not automatic. The owners would apply for a subdivision/tentative map that the Planning Commission reviews. The retrofitting would apply if it was determined to be better for rentals than for owner occupied units.

#### **Issues Update:**

1. The Valley Oaks affordable housing project received 450 applications for the 44 rental units-fully occupied
2. The City Engineer/PW Director will present a report on water issues.
3. The City Council meeting on August 19<sup>th</sup> will discuss the Planning Commission vacancy and the Hotel Ballot measure.
4. The Chateau Sonoma Hotel project was suspended in the planning department by the applicant a while ago.
5. The Sonoma County Water Agency is close to a critical water level for Lake Mendocino. The next meeting is September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Comments from the Audience:** Wendy Byrd inquired about affordable housing. Staff says there is no longer the substantial financial subsidy offered through the City since the close of the State's Redevelopment Agencies. She suggested senior housing for the project at 840 West Napa Street. .

Comm. Edwards made a motion to adjourn. Comm. Henevald seconded. The motion was approved 5-0. (Comms. Tippell and Howarth absent)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 12, 2013.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on the 10th day of October, 2013.

Approved:

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Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant