

**CITY OF SONOMA
DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
August 20, 2013
Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Tippell called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Comms. Anderson, Barnett, McDonald, Randolph, Tippell
Absent: Comm. Baptista
Others Present: Associate Planner Atkins

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: George McHale, City Historian, presented each Board member with a cultural resource study prepared by CalTrans identifying the Broadway Historic District. It also takes into account the evaluating effects of projects on the rest of Broadway.

Comm. Anderson stated that CalTrans came to League of Historic Preservation for input regarding the street lights on Broadway between MacArthur and the Plaza. He thanked Mr. McHale for the study.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve the minutes of July 16, 2013, as submitted. Comm. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

ITEM #1 – DESIGN AND SIGN REVIEW: Consideration of new awnings and new awning signs for a restaurant (Sunflower Caffé) located at 421 First Street West. Applicant: James Hahn/Sunflower Caffé.

Associate Planner Atkins explained that the applicant requested a continuance to a future meeting due to last minute discussions between the applicant and property owner.

ITEM #2 – DESIGN REVIEW: Consideration of a revision to a previously approved design review proposal for a remodel and addition to a single-family home located at 298 First Street West. Applicant: Victor Conforti, Architect.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. McDonald asked if there was a copy of the elevations and height of the garage as originally approved. Comm. Anderson asked if there was a landscape plan.

Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.

Victor Conforti, applicant and architect for the project, was present. With regard to the garage, no change is proposed in the composition of the design (still three doors). The owner wanted the two side doors to be wider (9 ft. instead of 8 ft.). Other proposed changes were mostly in the final design with the owners. There is more focus to the south on the overall design. French doors will be placed on the south side, instead of the east. The element on the north side extended out at the northeast corner to gain more space in the bedroom and express the gable element projecting out on the north side. In the existing building, the current kitchen has three windows facing east. The proposed design has the kitchen at the southeast corner of the building. Access to the south patio will be provided through French doors in the dining room.

Comm. McDonald asked if the site plan was changing and if there was any reduction proposed to the paved area. Mr. Conforti noted that the site plan in the packet shows the area entering into the house from the street. The larger graveled parking area will be reduced. Comm. McDonald confirmed with Mr. Conforti that there would no changes to the plate line for the detached garage.

With regard to the windows, Mr. Conforti noted that several windows were replaced six or seven years ago, and those windows will be maintained. They will be using the same type for the new construction (baked enamel-clad aluminum). The French doors will be custom wood doors due to their height. Comm. Randolph noted that the south-facing pairs of French doors are different. Mr. Conforti stated that the French doors on the new part of the building are eight feet and head height on the existing house is a little over nine feet. The goal is to emphasize the vertical proportions on the new part of the building.

Comm. Barnett commented on the reduction in some of the parking footprint. Associate Planner Atkins stated this project did not require a landscape plan. If it were a new house, it would have, but not for a remodel.

Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.

Comm. Anderson stated this is a very local extension of the existing structure and keeps intact the overall look of the structure. He likes the repeating elements in the new structure. He noted that the garage is 130 feet from the street.

Comm. Barnett concurred. He likes the project, as all the proposed changes in in the same vein as the original proposal. He would approve as submitted.

Comm. McDonald is happy with the addition, as it is well thought out and very respectful of the existing house. He would like to see a landscape plan due to the property's proximity to a recreational area and historical site. With respect to the overall changes to the design, he has no issue with the French doors on the addition, but does have reservations about approving the French doors on the existing house, as they appear to be out of character and will change the perspective of the original house. He suggested that a single light would be more reminiscent of the period. He is not a fan of three-car garages, especially in the historic district, and this is not typical of what you would see on that street. The larger doors accentuate the garage.

Comm. Randolph noted that this is a very handsome property and will add a lot to the space that's there. She would be inclined to approve as submitted.

Chair Tippell walked the site today and feels it will be a nice addition. The landscaping in lieu of parking is an excellent idea. She understands the addition of the garage and has no strong issue with the French doors and it makes sense as they lead out to the patio. She would move forward as submitted.

Mr. Conforti noted the owners' desire to have open communication between the kitchen/dining/patio spaces. After looking at the proportions and comparing the existing to the proposed, this does preserve the feeling of the existing vertical proportions. With landscaping, it will create a space for the south patio and help define this as a private space.

Comm. Anderson made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Comm. Randolph seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-1, McDonald dissenting.

ITEM #3 – DEMOLITION REVIEW: Consideration of a Demolition Permit to demolish the single-family residence and detached accessory structure located at 840 West Napa Street. Applicant: Victor Conforti, Architect.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. Anderson noticed that the last paragraph of the staff reported stated that "no demo could occur until a building permit for the new project has been obtained." Associate Planner Atkins stated that while she is not aware of an ordinance that states that, the Commission could make that a condition of approval.

Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.

Victor Conforti, project architect, was present to discuss the application. Arthur Dawson of Baseline Consulting performed the historic survey of the house. The house was originally four rooms and has been added to and modified over the years. The front porch is an addition, as is the added room on the porch at the front of the house. There is a bedroom addition on the west side. On the north side, the kitchen has been extended and the enclosed porch acts as a back entrance to the house. There is a 15-foot dedication to expand the highway right-of-way. Some effort was made to try and find a reference to this structure in the inventory the League for Historic Preservation prepared in the late 1970's, but there was only a short sentence referring to the house.

Mr. Dawson did extensive research on the property and tried to gain access to the League's files. He noted that the League has minimal records and it was determined that this is not a historically significant property.

Comm. Randolph noted that any demolition is serious. She read the reports. She is curious about what's going to happen to the space. Mr. Conforti related that the proposal for a multi-family residential project on this site had been recently presented to the Planning Commission as a study session.

Comm. Barnett watched the broadcast of the Planning Commission meeting regarding this study session and heard quite a few neighbors expressing concern about the density of the project. This structure is a part of old Sonoma. He asked whether the applicant had considered retaining the house. Mr. Conforti stated the owner had discussed it with him. Mike Rabbitt, property owner, stated he had initially wanted to keep the house and is not opposed to doing so. He has not investigated the cost of moving the house, and its current location is too close to the street.

Comm. McDonald asked about the location of the CalTrans public right-of-way. He asked Mr. Conforti how many living units are proposed (12). He suggested using some of the unique features of the existing residence for the new project. While he is not opposed to the demolition, he would encourage his fellow Commissioners to do what was done in the past and have the applicant save or incorporate the existing structure in the future design.

Comm. Randolph commended Comm. McDonald on his open-mindedness about this application and expressed concern over the possible demolition when creative solutions are available.

Comm. Barnett echoed Comm. Randolph's comments. A demolition is a very final solution, and he is not convinced that this structure needs to be demolished. He is glad the owner and architect are open to pursuing other options. This may go a long way in appeasing the neighbors. He would strongly encourage the applicant to try and save the structure and would support a continuance of the item.

Comm. McDonald noted that the Design Review Commission will ultimately have to make the decision as to whether this building is worthy of protection. The property owner has an economic decision to make. He asked the applicant if he would like to continue the item; Mr. Conforti replied in the affirmative.

Comm. Anderson agreed with the sentiments of his fellow Commissioners. He is not totally opposed to the demolition, although it does have the influence of the Sonoma cottage character and he would encourage the applicant to look at it from that perspective. He believes a continuation would be appropriate.

Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.

Comm. McDonald made a motion to continue this item to a date to be determined to allow the applicant and owner time to assess the feasibility of preserving the existing structure and possibly incorporating it into the proposed development. Comm. Barnett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ISSUES UPDATE: None.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION: None.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m. to the regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 17, 2013.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Design Review Commission on the 17th day of September 2013.

Robin Evans, Administrative Assistant