

**CITY OF SONOMA  
DESIGN REVIEW AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
February 18, 2014  
Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Tippell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

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

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** None.

**COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION:** None.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Late mail for Item #8, letter re: 408 First St. East (Grandma Linda's Ice Cream).

Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve the minutes of December 17, 2013, with a minor correction. Comm. Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, Randolph absent.

Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve the minutes of January 21, 2014, as submitted. Comm. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, Randolph absent.

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**ITEM #1 – DISCUSSION ITEM:** Review of the qualifications of Baseline Consulting and McKale Consulting to prepare historic evaluations.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

**Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.**

Arthur Dawson of Baseline Consulting addressed the Commission with respect to his qualifications.

George McKale of McKale Consulting addressed the Commission with respect to his qualifications.

Patrician Cullinan would like to make a comment with regard to the Williams-Sonoma project. She feels it is important to have the person who evaluated the project be present to answer any questions the Commission may have.

Karla Noyes is very passionate about historic preservation of structures and the landscape of Sonoma. She believes the City deserves the highest professionalism possible.

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

After discussing the matter, Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve Baseline Consulting and McKale Consulting to prepare historic evaluations. Comm. Barnett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, Randolph absent.

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**ITEM #2 – SIGN REVIEW:** Consideration of sign review for a retail/service business (Patt's Copy World) located at 677 First Street West. Applicants: Charles and Patricia Bettinelli.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. McDonald asked if the frame on the site pre-existing or abandoned. Associate Planner Atkins noted the existing frame was for a previous sign, but she was unable to find any past approvals for same. In addition, since the public right-of-way standards have changed, this freestanding sign would not comply. She noted that the Commission needs to determine if the driveway to north is a vehicular right-of-way.

**Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.**

Charlie Bettinelli, applicant, was present to discuss the application. They have been looking for a new location for their business and finally found one suitable. There is no documentation for the previous sign. The location of the existing sign is critical for their business.

Robert Demler is a neighbor, two lots over. This building has been a blight on the block for a long time. He has no issue with the signs. This is a local business and he could support the application.

Karla Noyes cautioned the Commission that any time a variance is approved, the next applicant will say, "you let them get away with it."

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Barnett feels this is a great application and the sign is necessary. He was surprised that this Commission has to determine vehicular right-of-way.

Com. McDonald wanted to understand how vehicle traffic will enter and exist. He feels the existing sign should be "grandfathered" in, as it pre-exists, although aesthetically it is not the best looking frame. He has no issue with the color or sign. With respect to the variance, in terms of concession, he wouldn't necessarily be in favor of a larger illuminated sign.

Comms. Johnson and Anderson, as well as Chair Tippell, concurred with their fellow Commissioners and could support the application as presented.

Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve the application as submitted, with the condition that the illuminated “open” sign not exceed two square feet. Comm. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, Randolph absent.

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**ITEM #3 – SIGN AND DESIGN REVIEW:** Consideration of sign and design review for a mobile coffee service trailer (Coffee & Coco) located at 195 West Napa Street. Applicant: Rocio Fuentes.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff’s report.

Comm. McDonald asked if there was a site plan available illustrating how the trailer relates to the property. Associate Planner Atkins stated the proposed trailer location is directly to the west of the gas station building.

Comm. Barnett confirmed that the signage for the gas station is included in the aggregate signage.

**Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.**

Dave Leuschner, representing the applicant, was present to discuss the application. He noted the County Health Department requires signage on the trailer.

Comm. McDonald confirmed with the applicant that the trailer will be painted beige with white trim, with lettering on the top of the trailer. He verified that there will be no outdoor seating and he plans on opening the business in a month or so. Karla Noyes reminded the Commission about setting precedent in the granting of variances. She is in favor of small businesses and feels this is a great location close to the Best Western.

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Barnett found it difficult to conceptually grasp the visual of the trailer. He would like to see a graphic with the signage in place. The applicant confirmed that the trailer has already been painted and he could provide a paint chip and color photo at a future date. Comm. Barnett also requested a site plan showing the location of the trailer. Associate Planner Atkins displayed a site plan with the proposed location of the trailer.

Comm. McDonald asked if the applicant is proposing any planters. Mr. Leuschner replied that he is planning on placing planters at the front of the trailer. Comm. McDonald requested clarification on where the parking for this use will be located. The applicant confirmed there will be no drive-up traffic, only walk-up. Trash receptacles will be provided for customers at the southwest corner.

Comm. Johnson expressed concern about traffic and pedestrian safety. He would like to see more of a description of the use and details of the signage.

Comm. Anderson found it difficult to visualize the proposal. He would like to see something more cohesive and a more concise presentation. He suggested to the Chair that this be considered a study session and the applicant could return to a future meeting with a proposal taking into account the Commission’s comments.

Chair Tippell echoed the comments of her fellow Commissioners. Conceptual detail is needed, as well as a paint chip and color photo.

Comm. McDonald noted the primary use of the site is a gas station, and the coffee cart is an ancillary use. He does not see the need for a separate freestanding sign and doesn't want to set a precedent. The design of the sign and positioning in the landscaping is unattractive and may compromise vehicular movement on the site. Comm. Barnett concurred.

Comm. Anderson made a motion to use this as a study session and have the applicant return to a future meeting with more well defined information. Comm. Barnett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, Randolph absent.

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**ITEM #4 – DESIGN REVIEW:** Consideration of an exterior color change for a restaurant (General's Daughter) located at 400 West Spain Street. Applicant: Virginia Lemoyne.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

**Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.**

Virginia Lemoyne, applicant, was present to discuss the application. She noted the proposed colors selected are the original historical colors. Comm. Barnett asked how it was determined that these were the original colors. The applicant noted that research had been done and consultation with the local historical society.

Comm. McDonald asked the applicant if the Christmas lights on the building will remain after the building is painted. Ms. Lemoyne stated they can be removed.

Karla Noyes appreciates that the building will be returned to its original colors.

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Barnett found this to be a great application and is happy to see the structure restored to its original color palette. He has no issues with the application.

Comm. McDonald is pleased the applicant is returning the building to the original colors and will remove the holiday lights.

Chair Tippell complimented the applicant on the beautiful color selection.

Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Comm. Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, Randolph absent.

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**ITEM #5 – DESIGN REVIEW:** Consideration of design review for three residential units on a mixed-use property located at 830 Broadway. Applicant: Victor Conforti, Architect.

Comm. Anderson recused due to proximity and left the dais.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. McDonald asked if an initial study had been prepared or any information regarding CEQA. Associate Planner Atkins stated that the project is considered exempt, as it's an in-fill project. It did undergo Planning Commission review and an historic evaluation was prepared. She noted that the redwood tree was approved to be removed. Comm. McDonald commented that it would be helpful if the historic and tree information were included with the staff report. The site is located in an historic district, and he feels the reports should look at all in-fill projects.

Planning Director Goodison clarified that the subsequent evaluation prepared for the residence at the front concluded it was not historically significant because it was actually built outside of the period of significance that was used to establish the finding of significance. For that reason, it is not subject to the Secretary of Interior findings that apply to historically-significant sites and structures. Instead, the project evaluation is based on the City's guidelines for infill development in the Historic District.

**Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.**

Victor Conforti, project applicant, was present to discuss the application. The design of the buildings follows the patterns of the neighborhood massing and scale. He is proposing stucco on the first floor and horizontal wood siding on the upper floors. The hip roof design will constrain the apparent height of the buildings and separate them from the house at the front. His goal was to design something to fit into the neighborhood and complement the front house.

Diane Merlo, property owner, displayed a color board of the proposed colors. Comm. McDonald confirmed that the front house will be painted.

Comm. McDonald confirmed that a landscape plan will be submitted at a later date. He asked about the location of the trash enclosure. Mr. Conforti stated that each townhouse will have its own trash area, and these will be identified on the landscape plan.

Comm. Barnett confirmed that the application had been discussed with neighbors.

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

Comm. McDonald thanked the owner and applicant for putting together a site plan that is sensitive to the neighborhood while preserving the front house. He generally likes the site plan, massing, and color, but wishes the redwood tree could have been preserved. He believes there are a couple of things that could be done to make the building more compatible with the neighborhood. While the two townhouses at the rear are acceptable, the carport unit looks long and ominous, as the long vertical facade is not broken up in any manner. He recommended adding more composition to the second-story to break up the roofline so as not to appear so static, and suggested a hip roof be utilized at one end. He was disappointed that no siding sample was included, as well as a cut of the vinyl-clad windows.

Comm. Johnson likes the overall project and agrees that the scale and colors are nice. He is glad the neighbors seem supportive of it.

Chair Tippell suggested using a deeper body color on Units 1 and 2 and eliminating painting the body band the same color as the trim, as it looks dated. She concurred with Comm. McDonald that wood railing would be preferable to metal. In addition, she would like to see wood siding on the entire building, rather than stucco.

Comm. Barnett concurred with his fellow Commissioners and found the project to be a good example of an attached infill project, although he feels the architecture could be a little more in keeping with the historic theme of the area. He agreed with Chair Tippell and would prefer wood siding rather than stucco.

Chair Tippell made a motion that the applicant return to a future meeting with the landscape plan and taking into consideration the recommendations made by the Commission.

**Chair Tippell reopened the public hearing.**

Mr. Conforti stated that, in general, the Commission's comments are acceptable to the applicants. The railings can be changed from metal to wood and board and batten siding could be used on the first floor, instead of the stucco. The double-hung windows are not an issue. A gable element could be added on the carport unit to break up the roofline while still maintaining all setback requirements.

Rich Merlo, owner, would like to move forward with the structural drawings. He would like to get the structures approved by the Commission so he can begin engineering plans for sewer, water, etc.

The Commission noted that this item could be reviewed at its March meeting.

Mr. Conforti, project architect, stated he could have the revisions in time for that meeting and Rich Merlo stated that the time-frame would not be a problem.

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

Comm. McDonald made a motion to use this as a study session and have the applicant return to a future meeting with revised project information, including a landscape plan. Comm. Barnett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, Anderson and Randolph absent.

Comm. Anderson returned to the dais.

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**ITEM #6 – DEMOLITION REVIEW:** Consideration of a demolition permit to allow the demolition of the main house, water tower, garage, and hatchery buildings located at 800 West Spain Street. Applicant: Caymus Capital.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. McDonald asked for elaboration on the code violations and code enforcement issues. Associate Planner Atkins noted the notice of violation does not require the structures be demolished.

Comm. Barnett feels this is a classic case of demolition by neglect and wondered how a property gets to the point where it is no longer salvageable. Planning Director Goodison noted the property has been under the same ownership for many years. The City Council considered a policy to regulate demolition by neglect several years ago, but chose not to pursue the issue and the City had no occasion to be called to the property. The property is now under new ownership.

**Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.**

Doug Hilberman of Axia Architects, representing the applicant, was present to discuss the application. He noted the property is in very bad condition, with hazardous electrical wiring and all the buildings collapsing in one form or another. He would have loved to have seen these buildings 50 years ago. George McKale was also present on the historical side.

Mr. Hilberman noted the City has given a short window for abatement (May 1). The owner is unable to get insurance for property. The structures have been broken into several times. Make a finding for immediate demolition. Structures are hazardous and beyond repair.

Patricia Cullinan would like to use this item as an example. The condition of the property should not affect its integrity and there is neither the political or economic will to reconstruct the buildings. She would like to stress to the Commission that integrity and condition are separate issues and condition does not affect the integrity. She wants to make sure this is a point well taken.

Robert Demler is rarely in agreement with Ms. Cullinan, but agrees with her today. Steps should be taken going forward to encourage property owners to maintain their buildings before they become deteriorated.

Barbara Wimmer, President of the Sonoma League for Historic Preservation, noted there is no hope for the buildings on this property. While unfortunate, we don't have control over who was living there. The League does support the demolition.

Karla Noyes encouraged the Commission to develop an ordinance that addresses demolition by neglect.

Pat Pulvirenti respectfully requested that interior and exterior photographs be taken prior to demolition.

George McKale noted that back in 1993, this was a rural property in what is now an urban setting. Condition does play a role in integrity. Comm. Anderson appreciated Mr. McKale's report.

**Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.**

Comm. Barnett is angry that the property was so neglected. It is unfortunate that the west side of town doesn't get as much attention as the east. He looks forward to reviewing the future plans for this property.

Comm. McDonald noted this is the first time he's seen a project with an abatement that is a public nuisance. It would be harder to justify the demolition without the Building Official's report. He would like to convince the owner to use the information from the historical report to prepare a beautiful elevation and site plan to pay tribute to what was once there.

Comm. Johnson concurs with his fellow Commissioners. This is a teachable moment and gives the opportunity to take a deeper look into a problem such as this so a demolition doesn't happen unnecessarily.

Comm. Anderson found this to be an interesting discussion. It appears the structures are beyond repair. The demo permit is based on public nuisance criteria from the Building Official. Historically demolitions such as this would not take place until a building permit for replacement is approved, but in this case he could approve the demo at this time without that caveat.

Planning Director Goodison noted that having a building permit in place prior to demolition is a practice the DRHPC has followed, but it is not an ordinance. The decision is at the Commission's discretion.

Chair Tippell gave her support of the demolition based on the reports provided and the fact that the property is not salvageable and presents a nuisance.

Comm. Barnett noted that it appears the majority of the Commission is in support of the demolition, although he would rather see this particular situation come before the City Council as an agenda item to discuss demolition by neglect, at which time the Commission could make general recommendations to the Council.

Comm. Anderson made a motion to approve the application as submitted, with the condition that the Sonoma League of Historic Preservation, and particularly the Cochran binders, be provided with interior and exterior photographs of all structures, as well as copies of all reports. In addition, the Commission is not applying the concept that the applicant would have to wait until a building permit is issued for replacement structures to demolish the buildings.

Comm. McDonald seconded the motion, with the condition that once the structures are demolished and the site is vacant, it should be kept weed free and fenced, so it doesn't become an attractive nuisance. The motion passed 4-1, Barnett dissenting, Randolph absent.

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As the time was shortly after 10:00 p.m., Chair Tippell suggested that Items 7 and 8 be postponed to the next regularly scheduled meeting in March. Associate Planner Atkins will look at the March agenda with a view to perhaps starting the meeting a little earlier.  
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**ISSUES UPDATE:** Associate Planner Atkins polled the Commission to determine their interest in scheduling a special meeting on April 29. As she received limited response, no special meeting will be added. Planning Director Goodison noted that a citizen has filed an appeal of the DRHPC's approval of the colors and signage for Grandma Linda's Ice Cream at 408 First Street East, to be heard by the City Council on March 3. Comm. Barnett noted a neon sign was approved for this property six years ago, but there appears to be a new flashing neon coffee sign. Associate Planner Atkins will look into this matter.

At the next meeting, Comm. McDonald would like to discuss historic evaluations and the scope of work for what applicants need to submit in the way of reports. Planning Director Goodison noted that the current policy is to recommend that applicants choose from two categories of the CHRIS list. Comm. McDonald requested a copy of the list.

**COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION:** None.

**COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:** Karla Noyes supports what Comm. McDonald said. She believes the DRHPC should see all reports that go before the Planning Commission, as well as site plans of existing buildings and how they relate other buildings being proposed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m. to the special meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 25, 2014.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Design Review and Historic Preservation Commission on the day of 18<sup>th</sup> day of March 2014.

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Robin Evans, Administrative Assistant