

**CITY OF SONOMA
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
April 9, 2015**

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

MINUTES

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

Roll Call:

Present: Chair Willers, Comms. Heneveld, Cribb, Wellander, Roberson

Absent: Comms. Felder and McDonald

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. Comm. Cribb led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Comm. Roberson made a motion to approve the Minutes of February 12, 2015. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Comm. Cribb made a motion to approve the Minutes of March 12, 2015. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was unanimously approved (Comm. Roberson abstained).

CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER: None

CORRESPONDENCE: Late Mail was received on Items #1, #3 and #4.

Item #1 – Consideration of a Use Permit amendment and Parking Exception to allow the following uses associated with the William-Sonoma store and culinary center: 1) conversion of residential area to retail display of home furniture/furnishings; 2) outdoor retail display and other uses in the retail display and other uses in the garden area ; and, 3) special events at 605 Broadway.

Applicant/Property Owner: Williams-Sonoma, Inc.

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Chair Willers opened the item to public comment.

Max Crome, Crome Architecture, introduced the Williams-Sonoma representative and land use attorney, who are available to answer questions. He noted that the redevelopment of the site resulted in an additional nine parking spaces. He envisioned special events to include wine

tasting and celebrity chef book signings. He reviewed the results of the neighbor outreach that had been conducted regarding the proposed changes in use.

Comm. Roberson confirmed with the applicant that valet parking for special events would utilize the private, off-street parking lot of a nearby church. The applicant noted that there have been some individual events with valet service that has worked successfully.

Comm. Cribb asked the applicant about existing and proposed business operations, kitchen capacity, staffing levels, deliveries, parking, and how events would be handled. Through this questioning, the applicant confirmed that 1) the commercially rated kitchen can handle all food preparation needed for events (i.e., no outside catering needed); 2) approximately 15 staff are needed for events with 100 people; 3) some staff for events would be contracted out; 4) staff park on street; 5) shipments to the adjoining property leased by Williams-Sonoma at 596 First Street West are limited to standard UPS deliveries 4-5 times per week; 6) food for events is picked up by Williams-Sonoma in a van; 7) take away food operation would offer pre-prepared items from the culinary center area

Comm. Roberson stated that he had seen delivery trucks parked on First Street West. The applicant noted that a refrigerated delivery truck was parked off First Street West for an event that generated a noise complaint but Williams-Sonoma has since addressed that issue to ensure that it won't happen again. Typically, there is space available in the parking lot and they have not heard of other neighbor complaints about parking impacts.

Comm. Wellander confirmed with the applicant that the residential unit was never used as a corporate retreat as was originally intended.

Comm. Cribb asked the applicant if they had considered developing additional parking on the adjoining property leased at 596 First Street West. The applicant said it had been discussed but the property lease is short-term.

Larry Barnett, resident, strongly opposed the proposal. He stated that the property is not an appropriate site for an event center with the levels of attendance proposed and that events are unclear and not quantified. He felt that Williams-Sonoma should accept the limitations of the site and restrict its activities in accordance with the approved use permit.

Pamela Garant, neighbor directly across the street at 617 First Street West, indicated that she does not object to the changes but had some concerns. She objected to the Williams-Sonoma delivery van consistently parked on First Street West taking up two spaces, given limited parking available on street. In addition, she was impacted by a refrigerated delivery truck with loud compressor that parked within the parking lot several days. She felt that such refrigerated trucks should be banned from events, and also noted that some people may not utilize valet parking for events, which could impact street parking along with staff parking on-street.

Lynn Downey, archivist, supported the proposal and was impressed by Williams-Sonoma's reverence for the town and Check William's legacy.

Mary Martinez, resident and nearby property owner, appreciated Larry Barnett's comments and agreed that the scope of the revised proposal is inappropriate. She expressed concern about parking and traffic impacts and doubted that there is sufficient off-site, off-street parking for events using valet parking. She opposed granting an exception from the parking requirements since, in her opinion, it erodes the effectiveness of the Development Code.

Sondra Bernstein, resident/owner of the Girl & The Fig, supported the proposal and commended Williams-Sonoma's investment in upgrading the property and giving tribute to Chuck Williams and Sonoma. She acknowledged that certain issues need addressed but there is room to negotiate some level of events. She noted that parking is always going to be an issue downtown and emphasized Williams-Sonoma's contribution to the local economy.

Comm. Roberson asked Sondra Bernstein, based on her experience, what size event would work on the property. She indicated that 100 people is doable, but less may work better. However, it is hard to put a number on it because people can come and go at different times.

Patricia Cullinan, resident, supported the initial concept, but is concerned about parking impacts with the revised proposal. She opposed allowing a parking exception and suggested that an EIR may be necessary given the intense use now proposed for the small space.

Bob Garant, neighbor/local engineer, followed all parking guidelines for his projects and is disappointed that a parking exception is considered. He expressed concern about the proposal involving so many uses, all of which generate parking demand. He felt that additional details and a parking plan were needed, especially considering that parking is problematic on First Street West.

Jay Rook, resident, appreciated that business plans can change as you get into the details. He supported the proposal and felt that reviewing the allowance for special events after one year makes sense.

Robert Berger, resident, expressed concern that the valet parking service would take over 4-5 public parking spaces on Broadway during events, which could occur frequently.

Max Crome, project Architect, indicated that the valet parking service could be better managed so as not to lose 4-5 public parking spaces on Broadway during events. He clarified that a maximum of 15 mid-size events are proposed per year with no more than 4 mid-size events per month. He explained that the furniture showroom represented the evolution of the Chuck William's legacy.

Chair Willers closed the public comment.

Chair Willers requested two separate discussions for the changes to retail and for special events.

Retail Discussion:

Comm. Roberson felt challenged to make a decision tonight. He expressed disappointment that the retail display of home furniture and accessories was put in without any approval and that the outdoor garden area is not what the Planning Commission originally considered. He is perplexed that store management is not familiar with where staff parks. He felt that the applicant should come back with more information, including a plan that addresses staff parking and how parking impacts can be mitigated.

Comm. Cribb supported the initial proposal, which he viewed as a "like for like" change with 9 on-site parking spaces gained. However, with the commercial intensification and parking exception now requested he feels that some form of parking mitigation must be provided.

Comm. Wellander noted that he was not involved in the previous review. In general, he feels the project has been beneficial and is he open to additional retail uses but the parking demand needs to be addressed. He likes that the project is not wine related and contributes to the diversity of businesses in town.

Comm. Heneveld agreed with Comms. Roberson and Cribb.

Comm. Roberson indicated that he is challenged by the conversion of the residential unit to retail sales area because it is after the fact. However, he is ok with changing the previously approved café use to take away food service..

Chair Willers was dismayed that the residential unit had been converted to a furniture showroom from opening day and indicated that he would not have approved that use if it had been presented with the original proposal. He felt that on-site parking is working as expected, except that the staff and the delivery van are not utilizing the parking lot, which results in on-street parking impacts. He expressed comfort with the retail furniture display but opposed relocation of the majority of seating for the food service component to the rear yard.

Special Events Discussion:

Comm. Heneveld requested more specifics on the special events and expressed concern about allowing proposed large scale events.

Comm. Roberson expressed willingness to support some events at the facility but agreed with Comm. Heneveld that the intensity of proposed large scale events is problematic and could negatively impact the traffic flow on Broadway. He felt that all three special event categories defined in the project narrative should be scaled back by 20% and that mitigation should be identified.

Comm. Cribb supported allowing Williams-Sonoma to have some special events, provided they are managed well and do not occur too often. In general he viewed events as a benefit that enrich the fabric of the community, citing the Tuesday night Farmer's Market as an example. However, he felt that more details are needed, including the timing of events, if support vehicles are needed, and staff levels. He indicated that the attendance levels set forth in the project narrative are too high.

Comm. Wellander expressed willingness to support some small and medium size events but had difficulty with the large scale events. Regardless, he felt that the details and logistics for events needed clarified.

Chair Willers was not convinced that the property could handle events with over 50 people attending, and opposed large scale events, especially four times per year as proposed. He felt that events requiring valet parking four or more times per month as proposed could negatively impact the area and residential neighbors, and emphasized that the majority of events would occur in the evening at a time when activity on First Street West has finally died down. He felt that the applicant should greatly reduce the number and size of events and develop a plan for how they would be managed, including parking.

Comm. Cribb made a motion to continue the item in order for the applicant to respond to the concerns raised. Comm. Roberson seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Item #2 – Public Hearing – Consideration of a Use Permit to convert a nonconforming detached garage to a pool house, while adding a carport at 330 Patten Street.

Applicant/Property Owner: Alan Heoney

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Chair Willers opened the item to public comment.

George Bevan, project architect, emphasized that the owner has no intention of using the accessory structure as a living unit in response to correspondence submitted on the item. He noted that the property is deep and the residence distant from the pool, which is why the conversion is desired. He met with staff prior to the submittal and received positive responses from the neighbors. He noted that no exceptions or variances are proposed, that the request is simply for a change in the use of an existing accessory structure.

Chair Willers closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Cribb made a motion to approve a Use Permit for the project as submitted.

Comm. Roberson expressed concern that a more intense use of the structure could occur in the future.

Comm. Heneveld was conflicted by the changes requested by the Use Permit application.

Comm. Wellander supported the plan since there is no visual impact from the street.

Chair Willers noted that an accessory use of the structure would be maintained under the proposal and that the property owner has the right to make future applications.

Comm. Wellander seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-1. Comm. Roberson abstained.

Item #3 – Public Hearing – Consideration of a Use Permit to operate a Bed and Breakfast (B&B) within an historic residence at 827 Broadway.

Applicant/Property Owner: Rick Suerth and Pat Coleman

Chair Willers recused due to proximity and left the room for Item #3 and Item #4.

Senior Planner Gjestland presented staff's report.

Chair Roberson opened the public comment.

Rick Suerth, applicant, indicated that they intend to use a spare bedroom on the ground floor for occasional use as a B&B guestroom. He confirmed that food cooking/preparation is not contemplated and that guests would be provided with a remote for gate access. He felt a B&B would integrate well into the Broadway Corridor district.

Chair Roberson closed the public comment.

Comm. Heneveld made a motion to approve a Use Permit for the B&B as submitted, Comm. Cribb seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Item # 4 – Public Hearing – Consideration of a Use Permit to convert office area to a vacation rental unit at 846 Broadway.

Applicant/Property Owner: Len Tillem

Planning Director Goodison presented staffs report.

Chair Roberson opened the public comment.

Tom Anderson, representing the applicant, said there is no impact on the housing stock and noted there is reduced demand for office space in Sonoma. He confirmed that one of the three bathrooms must be ADA.

Susan Fagen, co-owner, is pleased to change the uses in the building.

Chair Roberson closed the public comment.

Comm. Heneveld is satisfied that the unit is ADA compliant.

Comm. Cribb supported the concept as an appropriate response to changes in the market for office space.

Comm. Wellander agreed with Comm. Cribb's comments.

Chair Roberson supported the change in use.

Comm. Cribb made a motion to approve the conversion subject to conditions of approval. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chair Willers returned to the dais.

Item #5 – Public Hearing – Consideration of an Exception to the fence height standards to allow overweight fencing within the front yard setback of a residential property at 289 Chase Street.

Applicant/Property: Mark and Judy Krawec

Planning Director Goodison presented staffs report.

Mark Krawec, applicant, said the additional space provided more privacy when gardening and is in the sunniest part of the yard.

Chair Willers opened the public comment.

Patricia Cullinan, stated that fence companies should be aware of the regulations in Sonoma but often times do not follow them.

Robert Berger, resident, felt the fence is not obtrusive and he supported the application.

Chair Willers closed the public comment.

Comm. Roberson is frustrated with the fence contractors non-compliance with the regulations.

Comm. Heneveld opposed the proposal based on the principle of the issue.

Comm. Wellander stated that he evaluated the proposal on its merits and he felt that the findings can be made.

Comm. Cribb respected the owners privacy. He felt the fence was not visually imposing or a public safety issue.

Chair Willers recommended adjusting the fence ordinance and felt local fence companies should pay a fine for building a non-compliant fence since it is a cost to owners and staff.

Comm. Roberson made a motion to approve as submitted. Comm. Cribb seconded. The motion was adopted 4-1. Comm. Heneveld opposed.

Item #6 – Public Hearing – Consideration of an amendment to the Development Code that would identify “Vacation Rental” as a conditionally allowed use in the Public zone.

Planning Director Goodison presented staffs report.

Chair Willers opened the public comment.

Patricia Cullinan, President of the Sonoma Valley Historical Society, supported the recommendations to amend the Development Code.

Tom Anderson, resident, supported the proposal.

Chair Willers closed the public comment.

Comm. Roberson made a motion to approve. Comm. Heneveld seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Planning Director Goodison reported the following:

The City Council will consider the appointment of two new Planning Commissioners at the meeting on April 20th.

The Chateau/Sonoma Hotel proposal initial study is underway and the Commission will review the scope of the EIR.

The applicant for the mixed use project on East Spain Street is preparing public improvement plans but is delayed because of a disagreement with The Sanitation District regarding the design of sewer improvements.

Staff is scheduled to meet with a new project manager for the mixed use development at the corner of Broadway and East MacArthur Street.

Commissioner comments: None

Comments from the Audience: None

Adjournment: Comm. Roberson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m. to the next meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2015. Comm. Wellander seconded. The motion was unanimously adopted.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes of April 9, 2015 were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Sonoma Planning Commission on the 14th day of May, 2015.

Approved:

Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant