

City of Albany

Planning & Zoning Commission Minutes of June 27, 2018 Meeting

1 Note: These minutes are subject to Planning & Zoning Commission approval. The minutes are
2 not verbatim. An audiotape of the meeting is available for public review.

3 4 **Regular Meeting**

5
6 1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was
7 called to order by Chair Kent in the City Council Chambers at 7:00 P.M. on
8 Wednesday, June 27, 2018.

9
10 2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

11
12 3. **ROLL CALL**

13
14 Present: Donaldson, Giesen-Fields, Watty, Jennings, Kent

15 Absent: None

16 Staff Present: City Planner Anne Hersch
17 Associate Planner Christopher Tan

18
19 4. **EX PARTE COMMUNICATION DISCLOSURES**

20
21 None

22
23 5. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

24
25 5-1. **Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes June 13, 2018**

26 **Recommendation: Approve Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes.**

27
28 Commissioner Donaldson requested the June 13 and all future minutes state "public
29 hearing opened/closed" rather than "public comment opened/closed."

30
31 **Motion to approve** the June 13, 2018 minutes as amended. Donaldson

32 Seconded by: Giesen-Fields

33 AYES: Donaldson, Giesen-Fields, Watty, Jennings, Kent

34 NAYES: None

35 ABSTAINING: None

36 ABSENT: None

37 **Motion passed, 5-0-0-0**

1
2 **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

3
4 None

5
6 **7. DISCUSSIONS AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:**

7
8 **7-1. **Study Session** PA 18-043 Design Review & Parking Exception for a First-Floor**
9 **& Second-Story Addition at 1110 Ordway Street** - The applicant is seeking
10 Design Review and Parking Exception approval for a first-floor and second-
11 story addition at 1110 Ordway Street. The subject site is a 3,500-sq.-ft. lot with a
12 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom 1,166-sq.-ft. house built in 1941. The applicant is
13 proposing to add a total of 739 sq. ft. to the existing home. A 363-sq.-ft.
14 addition to the main level and garage level is proposed to accommodate an
15 expanded kitchen/living room and new storage room. A 376-sq.-ft. second-
16 story addition is proposed to accommodate a new master suite with balcony.
17 The existing colonial, Spanish style appearance of the home is proposed to
18 remain. This will result in a 3-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom 1,905-sq.-ft. home with a
19 maximum height of 26'-7". One parking space is provided in the existing
20 garage. A Parking Exception is required to allow the second off-street parking
21 space in the front yard setback.

22 **Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission**
23 **review the proposed project and provide feedback to the applicant and staff.**
24 **This is a study session and no action will be taken.**

25
26 **CEQA: The project is Categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15303 "New**
27 **Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" of the CEQA Guidelines.**

28
29 Associate Planner Christopher Tan presented the staff report dated June 27, 2018.

30
31 Commissioners noted the compass directions stated on the plans were incorrect, but for
32 clarity they would utilize the stated directions.

33
34 **Romaine Curtis**, applicant, reported his intention to improve the house's condition and
35 make it larger. The addition will be located at the rear of the house to take advantage of
36 the interior stairwell. The windows above the entry will open into the stairwell and make
37 the structure appealing from the exterior. The windows beneath the balcony will be
38 located high in the wall for privacy. While the balcony probably will not be used, it
39 contributes to the look of the building. The second-floor windows will be recessed and,
40 thus, further from the property line. The back of the house has over-sized windows at the
41 ground floor. From the front of the house, the upper windows open to the stairwell and
42 help the upper floor look less boxy. The entrance is located on the side of the house
43 because there is not enough room at the front of the house. When asked, Mr. Curtis stated
44 the exterior wall material around the upper windows on the front of the house will be
45 stucco. No one will notice the different-sized windows because they're located away from
46 the street. Adjacent neighbors have not seen the plans for the house. He had not

1 considered a different base treatment because stucco is expected with a clay-tile roof
2 and dark window trim. He did consider reducing the number or types of windows, but they
3 read well from the interior, provide light to the interior, and they're not seen from the
4 exterior. The size and/or type of a window is based on the needs of the room. He did not
5 know why the deck was placed on the north side rather than the south side of the home.
6 The 10-foot doors at the rear of the house open completely to a patio and yard. A tree is
7 planned for the front yard, but none in the rear yard.

8
9 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

10
11 None

12
13 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

14
15 Commissioner Giesen-Fields suggested Commissioners consider the language of the
16 existing McGregor windows when looking at the new windows. The existing house is a
17 McGregor, but the addition feels more modern. The pathway to the entrance could be
18 more defined. If the front arched window is original, he could accept it with the upper
19 arched window of the same width. The smaller arched windows do not feel right. Wood
20 trim with wood windows would be more true to the McGregor style. Clerestory windows
21 are fine for the addition, but the number and/or type should be refined.

22
23 Commissioner Watty would be able to make the findings for a parking exception but not
24 for exceptional design. The existing McGregor style should be respected. It would be more
25 appropriate to have a half-flight using a gable roof; a hipped roof is not an appropriate
26 architectural style for integration into a McGregor home. The massing at the rear is big and
27 out of scale. Windows should be wood, possibly aluminum-clad wood. Arched windows
28 and stone trim are not appropriate for a McGregor. The existing muntin pattern for the
29 front picture window should be retained or replicated. The style and recess of the entry
30 should be retained.

31
32 Commissioner Jennings concurred with changing or removing the smaller arched windows
33 on the front elevation. Windows in the addition should be consistent with the existing
34 window patterns and scale. The rear of the house reads as flat and needs depth or texture.
35 With some changes, the home would be a nice addition to the neighborhood. Also, she
36 could make the findings for a parking exception. Existing elevations should be accurate.

37
38 Commissioner Donaldson concurred with Commissioners' comments and supported staff's
39 comments. Approving a parking exception was not a concern. He favored the existing
40 front entry. The houses at 1108 and 1110 are mirror images. Ideally landscaping for the
41 two houses' entries could be mirror images. Improved exterior lighting is important, as staff
42 stated. Eliminating the balcony could reduce the size of the addition and enlarge the
43 backyard to a livable size. He did not favor the 12-foot doors to the backyard. The number
44 of the windows on the rear should be reduced.

1 Chair Kent indicated the folding doors at the rear seem pretentious for the small size of the
2 yard. The landscape plan is not fully developed. The neighbors may object to the balcony.

3
4 **Mr. Curtis** visualized removing the balcony, pulling the wall back, and altering the roof in
5 response to Commissioner Donaldson's comments about the balcony.

6
7 **7-2. **Study Session** Economic Development Strategic Plan Implementation:**
8 **Recommendations for Zoning Ordinance Revisions to Streamline Commercial**
9 **Development Review – Parking Regulations** – The Planning & Zoning
10 Commission will review and provide feedback on ideas for Zoning Ordinance
11 revisions related to parking that seek to streamline the review and permit
12 process for commercial development.
13 **Recommendation: This is a study session item and no action will be taken.**

14
15 **CEQA: The project is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3).**

16
17 Contract Planner Jean Eisberg presented the staff report dated June 27, 2018. The City of
18 Berkeley held a study session regarding parking requirements and sought additional
19 information regarding parking requirements for a change of use.

20
21 Commissioner Donaldson remarked that the Commission is not obligated to implement all
22 facets of the Economic Development Strategic Plan policy to remove obstacles to
23 commercial development. Rather, the Commission should take a balanced approach
24 pursuant to the General Plan and consider adjoining residential uses. Changes in parking
25 standards and commercial standards could affect parking demand.

26
27 When asked, Contract Planner Eisberg advised that the proposed ground-floor retail
28 exemption should be the maximum threshold because retail spaces were not larger than
29 2,500 square feet typically. Requiring offsite parking within the specified distance of a
30 project should be considered before granting a parking reduction.

31
32 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

33
34 **Tod Abbott** commented that a vibrant business community was a quality of life issue for
35 residents. Often, parking requirements are used to delay or prevent a project. Streamlining
36 review would reduce delays and appeal to small businesses. He supported efforts to
37 streamline review.

38
39 **Allen Cain**, Solano Avenue Association, concurred with Mr. Abbott's comments. People
40 move into the Solano Avenue area because of the businesses. Driving around in search of
41 parking spaces has an environmental impact. A disconnect often exists between a
42 business' parking plan and the planning of infrastructure such as bus stops and bike lanes.

43
44 **Clay Larson** felt the effort was to obfuscate issues by hiding inconvenient data. The
45 granularity of existing parking ratios potentially allows an assessment of a project's impacts.

1 The impacts of a change in use should be assessed with accurate parking ratio
2 determinations and provided during the public process. Ground-floor exemptions would
3 apply to new development only. With respect to proposal D, the issue was eliminating the
4 approval requirement.

5
6 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED
7

8 Commissioner Watty remarked that parking demands for certain land uses have changed,
9 and this is a good opportunity to review that. She could support consolidating uses if it
10 made sense but, based on existing information, the three categories may not be accurate.
11 She also could support exempting change of use requests from having additional parking,
12 particularly in the Solano Avenue Corridor and existing buildings on San Pablo Avenue. The
13 proposed 2,500-square-foot exemption for new construction feels high. Perhaps the
14 Commission could look at new construction projects for the layout of ground-floor retail. A
15 parking survey is a futile exercise when the applicant proposes a change of use for a
16 building with no existing parking. The Commission could need some sort of data in
17 instances where a use would require parking or new construction.

18
19 Commissioner Giesen-Fields supported recommendation A-1. The recommendations do
20 not seem to address people parking on residential streets to access commercial areas.
21 Residents have expressed concerns about noise, blocked driveways, damaged or turned
22 over trash bins, and delivery vehicles blocking streets. While he supported the 2,500-
23 square-foot exemption for ground-floor retail, he requested the percentage of square
24 footage of existing commercial businesses that would be affected by the change. He
25 hoped the proposed revisions would encourage the use of now-empty storefronts. He
26 wanted to ease review for commercial development but preferred a more scientific
27 parking survey.

28
29 Commissioner Jennings did not understand the concern about parking on residential
30 streets to access businesses. There was no information to support an assertion that revisions
31 would make life difficult for residents. With respect to parking ratios, she needed more
32 information about how it would work but liked the idea of applying some kind of blended
33 standards. Having regimented parking standards did not make sense practically. Blended
34 standards would address tenant changes over time and barriers to re-leasing spaces. She
35 liked the retail exemption in general but was unsure about the 2,500-square-foot
36 exemption. She favored not requiring a survey when there was no onsite parking or offsite
37 parking. Staff approval of a parking reduction would be appropriate if there were clearly
38 defined criteria for granting a reduction. She requested more information about what
39 works or doesn't work in similar commercial districts in other cities.

40
41 Commissioner Donaldson commented that it would be difficult to consolidate the parking
42 table. He expressed concern that revising the change of use exemptions could remove
43 the public's opportunity to address the Commission. He preferred to leave them as is and
44 think about the implications of the revisions. The Commission should review the proposed
45 parking ratios and consider the implications. He agreed with recommendation A-2. He

1 was leery of revising the change of use exemption because it could create a loophole that
2 would support the trend of changing retail uses to personal services uses. Regarding the
3 ground-floor retail exemption, the Commission needs to determine the right number and
4 understand the number and size of store fronts along Solano that would be affected. He
5 preferred not to eliminate the survey requirement because surveys provide information to
6 the Commission for making decisions. Surveys are minimal and not burdensome for staff.
7 The current public sentiment is anti-parking; therefore, the Commission should carefully
8 consider any revisions to parking.

9
10 Chair Kent believed many of the proposals could be implemented and would be good.
11 He supported recommendation A-2, but questioned whether staff should suffer public
12 backlash, if it occurred. Staff can handle the change of use exemption. He questioned
13 the information provided by parking surveys.

14
15 City Planner Anne Hersch advised that staff would provide the information requested by
16 Commissioners.

17
18 **8. NEW BUSINESS**

19
20 **9. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/DISCUSSION**

21
22 **9-1. July 11, 2018 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting cancelled.**

23
24 None

25
26 **10. NEXT MEETING: July 25, 2018**

27
28 **11. ADJOURNMENT**

29
30 The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 P.M.

31 Next regular meeting: Wednesday, July 25, 2018 at 7:00 P.M. at Albany City Hall.
32
33
34

35 _____
Submitted by: Anne Hersch, City Planner

36
37
38 _____
39 **Jeff Bond, Community Development Director**