



PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Virtual Meeting
Albany, CA 94706

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020, 7:00 P.M.

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1. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Watty called the regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to order at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday, June 24, 2020.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Donaldson, Kent, MacLeod, Jennings, Watty
Absent: None
Staff Present: Community Development Director Jeff Bond
Planning Manager Anne Hersch
Associate Planner Christopher Tan
Community Development Intern Michelle Plouse
City Clerk Anne Hsu

3. EX PARTE COMMUNICATION DISCLOSURES

None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4-1. Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes of May 27, 2020

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission review and approve the meeting minutes.

4-2. PA 20-012 Design Review & Parking Reduction for a Two-Level Addition at 1148 Garfield Avenue – The applicant is seeking Design Review and Parking Reduction approval for a two-level addition at 1148 Garfield Avenue. The subject property is a 3,650-sq.-ft. lot with an existing 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom 1,289-sq.-ft. house with an attached, single car garage built in 1938. The project scope includes an addition on the ground floor to accommodate a new guest bedroom, and a second story addition to accommodate a master suite, one additional bedroom, and laundry room. The exterior of the addition is proposed to be a combination of painted stucco and horizontal wood paneling. The architectural style of the home is proposed to remain. A Parking Reduction is required to waive one off-street parking space triggered with the project scope. This will result in a 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom, 1,929-sq.-ft. home with a maximum height of 24'-5".

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission review and approve the project request subject to the findings and Conditions of Approval.

CEQA: The project is Categoricaly exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15303 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" of the CEQA Guidelines.



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4-3. PA 20-023 Design Review & Parking Exception for a Single-Story Front Addition at 629 Stannage Avenue – The applicant is seeking Design Review and Parking Exception approval for a single-story front addition at 629 Stannage Ave. The subject property is a 2,500-sq.-ft. lot with a 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom, 880-sq.-ft. house built in 1910. The applicant is proposing a 258-sq.-ft. addition at the front of the home to accommodate a new master suite. The exterior is proposed to be clad in painted vertical wood paneling with a gable roof to match the existing home. A deck is also proposed at the front of the home and will be 5'-4" high from grade. The existing architectural style is proposed to remain. This will result in a 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom, 1138-sq.-ft. home with a maximum height of 18'-3". A Parking Exception is required to locate one off-street parking space in the front yard setback.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission review and approve the project request subject to the findings and Conditions of Approval.

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

Motion to approve the consent calendar. Donaldson
Seconded by Kent

AYES: Donaldson, Kent, MacLeod, Jennings, Watty

NAYES: None

ABSTAINING: None

ABSENT: None

Motion passed, 5-0-0-0

Chair Watty noted the 14-day appeal period.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

6. DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

6-1. **STUDY SESSION PA 20-019 Density Bonus & Design Review for a New 14-Unit Apartment Building at 423 Evelyn Avenue** – The applicant is seeking Density Bonus and Design Review approval to construct a 14-unit apartment building on the rear portion of 423 Evelyn Ave. The subject site is a 9,325-sq.-ft. lot with an existing 2,172-sq.-ft. 4-unit apartment building built in 1960. The existing four-unit building would remain, creating a total of 18 units onsite. The request includes waivers under State Density Bonus Law to increase residential density, floor area ratio (FAR), and building height/stories, and to reduce the rear setback and parking space dimensions. A concession is also requested to reduce the open space and parking requirements. The project would include two (2) below-market-rate units onsite to meet the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and State Density Bonus Law.



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1 **Recommendation:** The Planning & Zoning Commission review the proposed project and
2 provide feedback to the applicant and staff. This is a study session and no action will be
3 taken.
4

5 **CEQA:** The project is Categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15332 “In-
6 Fill Development Projects” of the CEQA Guidelines.
7

8 Jean Eisberg, Contract Planner, presented the staff report dated June 24, 2020.
9

10 **Isaiah Stackhouse**, project architect, reported the site is located a half block from a grocery store
11 and services and a quarter mile from BART and abuts the Ohlone Greenway. The General Plan
12 identifies the site as a housing opportunity site. The site is unusually long and narrow. A standard
13 perpendicular parking space would need to extend 8 feet 6 inches onto the adjacent property.
14 With parallel parking, only four parking spaces can be developed onsite. Underground automated
15 parking is technically feasible but would be prohibitively expensive. Rooftop open space requires
16 an elevator and two stairways, which would increase the building height by about 10 feet and add
17 to the project cost. Demolishing and rebuilding the existing four apartments would add to the
18 project cost without increasing the unit count. The State Density Bonus Law addresses this type
19 of situation by modifying standards such that the construction of housing is possible. None of the
20 existing four units are accessible to persons with physical disabilities. A parking space compliant
21 with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will be constructed with the new building. The two
22 affordable units will be comparable to other units, and details will be provided with the project
23 application. Materials will be stucco and horizontal siding and aluminum windows. When asked,
24 he agreed to explore converting the four existing units to affordable units and removing the two
25 affordable units from the new building; adding windows to stairways; and converting the parking
26 area to dwellings and reducing the number of stories to three. Several of his projects in Berkeley
27 were approved with concessions that reduced parking to zero.
28

29 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED 30

31 **Steven Edrington** stated the project is too large for the site and adopts the Greenway for onsite
32 open space. The lack of onsite parking will push potentially 14 vehicles to on-street parking,
33 which is already congested. Several large trees will have to be removed or trimmed severely,
34 which could permanently damage the trees. By his calculations, the number of units should be
35 14.8 rather than 18. The driveway may not be wide enough for fire apparatus to reach the new
36 building at the rear of the lot.
37

38 **John Irminger**, 1247 Brighton, did not believe the two affordable units would substantially affect
39 the housing shortage. Traffic volume has increased and parking is congested in the area because
40 of the construction of apartments at El Cerrito Plaza. The balcony on the existing building
41 prevents fire apparatus from traveling the driveway. The project would significantly decrease
42 existing residents' quality of life.
43

44 **Aaron Tiedemann** indicated the project is a pretty good design, is located near apartment
45 buildings and a major transit center, and has access to the Ohlone Greenway. The applicant is
46 proposing a project that effectively utilizes a lot with many constraints.
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48 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED



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Commissioner Jennings supported the proposed density of the project. The project is a creative use of a constrained site. Given the degree of existing nonconformities, the applicant should avoid requesting additional waivers if possible. Staff should ensure the Fire Department does not have concerns about access to the site. The proposed parking seems quite low, even for a density bonus project. She encouraged the architect to consider some type of architectural integration of the new building with the existing building. A greater number of affordable units could bolster support for waivers.

Commissioner Donaldson was comfortable with the proposed density bonus and the building height of 45 feet. He raised concerns about the parking reduction and the open space concession. Based on his observations over the past few days, on-street parking is filled most of the time. The project probably would not need one parking space per unit, but the amount of parking needed is unknown. Albany Middle School is located behind the property, and teachers have to park on the streets around the school. From a planning perspective, access to light, air and open space is fundamental. The Ohlone Greenway could act as open space, but there should be some open space onsite.

Commissioner Kent believed the trees could be saved, and saving them is important for screening the building and adding privacy. The new building will have no presence on the street, and its setting behind a smaller building is awkward. The Ohlone Greenway probably will not work as private open space for the project. The Greenway is a trail, not an area for sitting and conversing. Perhaps a deck above the parking could serve as open space. The project would be better with a different configuration or one less unit and more open space.

Commissioner MacLeod indicated the site is excellent for a high-density, transit-oriented project. He supported the parking reduction. Removing parking from a project makes the project more affordable and reduces rents. The project has traded parking for units. A transit-oriented development should emphasize bicycle amenities. Balconies may be a way to provide open space for each unit. The entry sequence, passageways, and stairways are concerns. The proposed building height seems appropriate for the neighborhood. He supported the project and suggested the use of all electric appliances and solar panels.

Chair Watty also supported the project. She requested renderings of square footage reallocated to the parking area and of a reconfigured building that accommodates a rear yard. The renderings would help the Commission understand tradeoffs and building height. The center parking area and the narrow entry raise concerns about safety conflicts. She could support a no-parking project if the parking area is a well-designed open space. Balconies could overlook the open space and provide additional open space. The project's impacts on adjacent buildings have to be addressed.

Commissioner Donaldson concurred with the comment about integrating the designs of the two buildings. The bike area should have charging stations.

Commissioner MacLeod noted the driveway is also the pedestrian access to the rear building. Eliminating onsite parking would eliminate the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. Adding an elevator would allow a greater diversity of tenants.



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1 **7. NEW BUSINESS**

2
3 **7-1. **Study Session** Green Building Update** – The Planning & Zoning Commission will
4 receive a presentation from Sustainability staff regarding proposed green building
5 updates. The Climate Action Committee reviewed the proposed updates at their May 20,
6 2020 meeting and requested that the Planning & Zoning Commission review the proposed
7 updates and provide feedback.

8
9 **Recommendation:** The Planning & Zoning Commission review the proposed updates
10 and provide feedback to staff. This is a study session and no action will be taken.

11
12 **CEQA:** The project is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3).

13
14 Community Development Intern Michelle Plouse presented the staff report dated June 24, 2020.

15
16 Community Development Director Jeff Bond reported the Climate Action Committee
17 recommended the City require upgrades to electric panels when panels are replaced. Staff has
18 discovered PG&E is charging applicants to replace the electric line between the pole and the
19 meter and the transformer if they cannot accommodate a 200 amp electricity flow. Replacing an
20 electrical panel triggers new Building Code requirements and can trigger Design Review. Staff is
21 exploring the Climate Action Committee's recommendation to require permeable paving.

22
23 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

24
25 None

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27 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

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29 Commissioner Donaldson expressed concern about the requirements increasing the cost of
30 housing construction. Perhaps the requirements could be guidelines or the City could develop a
31 program to subsidize implementation of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan.

32
33 Commissioner MacLeod shared his experiences serving on the Green Building Subcommittee,
34 which developed the requirements. He supported the electric panel requirement so that houses
35 are ready to be all electric. The Council has reviewed a proposal to utilize an increase in the
36 Utility User Tax to fund climate change programs. Applicants usually receive a checklist of Green
37 Building requirements.

38
39 Chair Watty believed expensive modifications should not be required for modest remodel projects.
40 The costs of requirements for remodels seem to be low enough that they will not deter
41 homeowners from remodeling projects.

42
43 Commissioner Jennings clarified that energy efficiency measures would not apply to accessory
44 dwelling units (ADU). She expressed concern about increasing the cost of residential construction
45 given the housing shortage. She hoped there would some type of exemption if the measures
46 could not be implemented.

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1 **8. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/DISCUSSION**

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3 **8-1. Schedule for SB2**

4
5 Planning Manager Anne Hersch advised that the July meeting will begin slightly early for a
6 discussion of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.

7
8 **9. NEXT MEETING** – July 22, 2020, City Hall Council Chambers, 1000 San Pablo Avenue or virtual
9 meeting pursuant to state and county guidance

10
11 **10. ADJOURNMENT**

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13 The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

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17 _____
18 Submitted by: Anne Hersch, Planning Manager

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21 _____
Jeff Bond, Community Development Director