

CITY MANAGER'S ORAL REPORT

The City Manager stated staff would be meeting with representatives from the Golden Gate Bridge District to discuss parking issues at the ferry terminal. City Hall would be closed Thursday, November 22nd and Friday, November 23rd for the Thanksgiving Holidays. The Regular City Council meeting scheduled for November 21st has been cancelled. Staff is working on scheduling a Special Meeting the morning of the 21st to discuss the Twin Cities Police Facility and legal matters.

Councilmember Hillmer arrived at the meeting.

Mayor Arlas read a letter of appreciation from the Principal of Poway High School addressed to Fire Chief Sinnott and the heroic firefighters who helped save their school and community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Rick Adler, William Avenue, discussed the problem of global warming and climate change and suggested the Council form an Environmental Protection Department.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. SPA/PreIPD: CLASP SUBAREA 3 (Niven Property) 2 Ward Street (APN 022-110-45). Larkspur Housing Partners, LLC, applicant; Irving Group, LLC, property owner. Request for the approvals listed below to develop a mixed-density residential project with: 14 cottages ranging in size from 910 sq. ft. to 1,520 sq. ft., 29 single-family homes ranging in size from 3,200 sq. ft. to 4,325 sq. ft. including garages (plus six second units); and 36 apartment style senior housing units ranging in size from 1,084 sq. ft. to 1,717 sq. ft. not including garages; the project also provides 2.79 acres for a community facility and park and a 0.62-acre common area. Requested approvals, at this time, include; (1) Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP) text amendments to (a) revise the average lot size for single family detached dwellings from 7,500 sq. ft. to 9,050 sq. ft.; and (b) allow cottage homes ranging up to 1,525 sq. ft. in living area rather than the maximum of 1,250 sq. ft. currently permitted in the CLASP, and to change the maximum allowable cottage size of 1,250 sq. ft. to an average size cottage exclusive of garage and carports; (2) Preliminary Development Plan approval pursuant to Larkspur Municipal Code Section 18.55.060, Planned Development District; (3) Exceptions to the CLASP as part of the Preliminary Development Plan application to: (1) allow an FAR of up to 0.45 for the single family homes where the allowable maximum FAR is 0.40; and (2) allow for tandem parking for the smaller cottages; and (3) Affordable Housing Alternative Equivalent Action pursuant to Section 18.31.040 C of the Larkspur Municipal Code.

An Environmental Impact Report was prepared and certified for the Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP), which this project site is included in and known as Subarea 3. In addition, a Mitigated Negative Declaration of environmental impact has been prepared for the project pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

Mayor Arlas stated the format of the meeting would be as follows: 1) staff report; 2) Council questions; 3) presentation by applicant; 4) issue identification and public comments.

The City Manager presented the staff report.

The Planning Director presented the staff report.

Mayor Arlas noted the developers submitted original plans that were presented to the Planning Commission on October 11th. Prior to the Planning Commission's October 30th meeting, the applicant suggested changes to the plan. He stated the City Attorney is of the opinion that the Council could do the following: 1) approve the original application as submitted; 2) indicate by straw votes that they would approve the original application with modifications as presented by the applicant; 3) continue the public hearings to a date certain to provide the applicant the opportunity to submit a new, complete application with the alternatives; 4) direct staff to analyze the alternatives as submitted which would require a continuation of the hearings; 5) deny the original application without prejudice and comment on the alternatives suggested by the applicant.

The City Attorney stated the main issue was one of procedure under State law regarding what the Council can do when the Planning Commission recommends denial of what is in essence a Rezoning Ordinance. The Preliminary Plan is in effect a Zoning Ordinance for this site. State law requires that if the Council is inclined to approve something that differs from what the Planning Commission considered then it must be sent back to the Commission for review and reconsideration. Mayor Arlas asked for clarification: if the Council would like to consider the applicant's revisions, or modifications suggested by the Council, then the applicant would need to submit a new, revised application that would need to be deemed complete, and then would need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Council. The City Attorney stated that was correct.

Mayor Arlas opened the meeting to public comments.

Mr. Steve Seeley, representing Larkspur Housing Partners, made a Powerpoint presentation. He stated their attorney would be responding to the City Attorney's position and he was not sure they agreed with it. There were a lot of misunderstandings at the Planning Commission meeting.

They are presenting the alternative plan, which is the original plan with some modifications to it. This is a Preliminary Development Plan and they would be returning with a Precise Development Plan that would have more detail. This is the beginning of the road. The staff report notes that the plan is substantially in conformance with the Specific Plan and the General Plan. The housing presented in the plan includes a mix of various types, has been deemed reasonable, and the single-family homes are minimized. This is an urban infill site surrounded by three nonresidential uses. Twenty percent of the plan includes a community facility and park and the balance of the eighty percent includes the various residential uses- the cottage homes, the single-family homes, and the senior project. They have de-emphasized single-family housing (28 units) and maximized senior housing (36 units). They are proposing 16 cottage homes that would include the affordable housing component. He stated the site has four major east/west connections: 1) along Doherty Drive; 2) into the middle of the shopping center and the area of the community facility; 3) from the railroad plaza to the eastern part of the site; 4) the entrance of Ward Street moving across the site. He pointed out the north/south connections. The emergency vehicle access would be off of Ward Street. The Planning Commission had concerns about the road system but he noted it was very similar to Figure 5.1 in the Specific Plan. He noted the length of the central road was about 680 feet. He discussed a depiction of the entrance to the railroad plaza and Ward Street and stated it had a very inviting nature for bikes and pedestrians. There would be very few garages as seen from Ward Street. They plan to save all the large trees in the railroad right-of-way. There would be a Class I bike path and a Class II bike path running through the project.

Mr. Mark Day, architect for the Dahlin Group, stated his firm has designed all the housing in the project and they feel the project would be a great asset to the community. He discussed the three product types: 1) The Rose Garden Homes- the original submittal showed 29 single-family homes, they are now proposing 28 homes; a street pattern similar to other neighborhoods to the south; four floor plans with three elevations each resulting in a wide variety of 12 housing styles; ranging from 2,350 to 3,560 square feet; three, two-story floor plans and one single-story plans, all with a master bedroom and bath downstairs; emphasis on the streetscape, scale and massing, and garage back and architecture forward; two-car garages; a variety of lot widths and setbacks; 2) The Cottages at Rose Garden- the original submittal showed 14 cottages, they are now proposing 16 cottages; a carriage drive that locates all the garages in the back; de-emphasis of the garage door; the streetscape on both sides has full width porches, living room windows, front doors; all architecture is forward with eyes on the street; three floor plans ranging from 910 to 1,250 square feet; two plans have the master bedroom downstairs; bungalow/cottage style design; 3) Regent on Rose Lane Senior Complex- they ruled out a podium structure for the three-story element and decided on surface parking for the garages; the three-story units are in the middle looking onto a green belt; single-story garages; one-story recreation building in the middle; unit sizes ranging from 1,000 to 1,700 square feet;

fifteen three-bedroom, two bath units; fifteen two bedroom, plus den and bath units; six one bedroom, one bath units.

Mr. Seeley discussed a matrix that showed there was a mix of lot sizes and housing types. There are seventeen lots over the average size of 7,500 square feet. There is also a variation of lot width and setbacks. There is an average distance between homes of 26 feet. They disagree with the assertion that there should be an integrated mix of housing. He referred to Specific Plan Policy D2 and stated it talks about integration of the plan subareas. He discussed the Senior Housing component and stated they have changed the description of the units but not the sizes. The current mix includes 17% one bedroom, 41% two bedroom, and 42% three bedroom. They believe the sizes of the units are appropriate and there was a range of affordability that would work in the marketplace. He discussed the creek enhancement plan and stated their property line runs through the middle of the channel of the creek. He displayed a cross section of the creek. Plan One depicts the upland portion from the top of the bank into the property line. It is clear in the plan that they are supposed to pay for the design and installation of that portion and the homeowner's association would maintain it. Plan Two is in the channel itself and Plan Three includes the upland habitat from the top of the bank moving south. He stated they agree to pay for the cost of all three plans and they see this as one of the extraordinary benefits to the community. They would also give the City a maintenance agreement over the properties. He asked that there not be any delay in issuance of Certificates of Occupancy during the permitting process (Corp. of Engineers and Fish and Game) for the restoration plan. The community facility area includes 2.59 acres and a .2-acre (sliver of land to the west) for a total of 2.79 acres. They are proposing a park dedication of .79 acres, a donation of one acre to the City, and a lease/option on the other acre. He discussed the matrix depicting the "extraordinary benefits" delineated in the plan and stated their plan meets and exceeds the criteria.

Councilmember Chu asked for clarification regarding the composition of the senior complex. Mr. Seeley explained the layout.

Councilmember Hartzell stated she was surprised to see a three-bedroom, three bathroom arrangement in some of the cottages. Mr. Day stated the revisions do not include a third bathroom. Councilmember Hartzell stated she liked the idea of putting Senior and workforce housing together and she asked if they contemplated affordable units in the senior complex and market rate cottages. Mr. Seeley stated the original plan mixed the affordable units throughout the project and they could go back to this type of proposal. They like the idea of being able to deliver affordable housing for sale and this would be a very unique item in Marin County. However it turns out, the affordable units would be "seamless visually". The Planning Director stated the applicants have not submitted specifics on what they mean by "senior" and "workforce".

They originally had proposed all single-family detached cottage homes for seniors but she was not sure how a single-family lot could be restricted by age. Mr. Seeley stated they could deed restrict the units.

Councilmember Lundstrom noted there was a big demand for single-story senior units, affordable and market rate, and she asked if they had considered this in the cottage units. Mr. Seeley stated they could put the master bathroom downstairs and the office upstairs. Councilmember Lundstrom reiterated that many seniors want everything on one floor and she suggested some single-story units. She asked if there would be elevators in the senior complex. Mr. Seeley stated there would be two per building (a total of six).

Councilmember Lundstrom asked for more information about the community facility and park dedication component of the plan. Mr. Seeley stated the main contiguous piece was 2.59 acres, .79 was for park dedication, 1.8 acres was a combination donation and lease option, and .2 acre was a sliver of land on the west side. Councilmember Lundstrom noted the .2 acres was a 50-foot wide strip that backed up to the commercial buildings. She was not sure what benefit it could be to the public.

Councilmember Lundstrom had questions about the buffer area to the east side of Camellia Circle. Mr. Seeley stated that was contained in Plan One of the creek restoration plan. It was the upland habitat that would be maintained by the homeowners association. Councilmember Lundstrom asked about the maintenance of the landscaped area in the middle of the senior complex. Mr. Seeley stated it was common area and would be maintained by the homeowners association. Councilmember Lundstrom asked if there would be three homeowners associations. Mr. Seeley stated there would be at least three.

Councilmember Hillmer referred to the senior complex and the cottage units and asked if they considered alternatives to traditional driving lanes and parking areas so they did not have such an "alley" character. He did not want them to look like back door areas. Mr. Seeley stated the cottage units were "double front" and the outdoor living space fronted the carriage drive. Councilmember Hillmer stated he was not sure how he felt about the blending of units.

Mayor Arlas asked why the setback along Doherty Drive was decreased from 70 to 50 feet. Mr. Seeley stated that was a result of 16 vs. 14 units. They are of the opinion that the Noise Ordinance and decibel levels dictate the setback variance issues. Mayor Arlas asked how they plan to buffer the noise coming from Doherty Drive. Mr. Day stated the 70 feet was in reference to a noise standard and the outdoor space is well beyond the 70 feet. Mayor Arlas asked if it was a good idea to have front doors facing a main thoroughfare. Mr. Day stated there was a significant setback and the Liquid Ambers would remain. There was also a Class I bike path. There are individuals who would rather have a significant front yard rather than a significant back yard.

The Planning Director referred to the Specific Plan, page 723, Standard D57, and stated it specifically says that habitable residential space shall be located a minimum distance of 70 feet from the south curb facing Doherty Drive. There is no mention of decibel levels in this standard.

The Council took a 10-minute break at 9:15 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 9:25 p.m.

Mayor Arlas asked for comments about the following issue: traffic circulation (street lengths, pedestrian bike paths, etc.) and access to the development through Ward Street.

Councilmember Hillmer stated Ward Street access should be for emergency access only. He is satisfied with what is shown in terms of the pedestrian and bicycle network assuming the widths of the different elements are adequate. The streets lengths are satisfactory

Councilmember Lundstrom stated she agreed with Councilmember Hillmer. She is pleased that the proposed bike path connects with the existing bike path and the specifics would be addressed at the next level. The length of streets was similar to those in other neighborhoods. Transportation and circulation issues along Doherty Drive have been well studied in the Specific Plan.

Councilmember Hartzell stated she has never been committed to only emergency vehicle access from Ward Street if there was an opportunity for a cluster of the cottage homes (five or six) off of Ward Street. The one-way street around the senior complex seems awkward but the rest of the circulation around the project was not problematic.

Councilmember Chu stated the proposal for bike and pedestrian paths met the requirements of the Specific Plan and provides non-vehicular access into the downtown. He asked about the possibility for a connection in the south side of the project. He asked if there was an existing requirement for a bike path from the bridge on Meadowood towards the Ward Street bike path (the "L" shaped portion). He referred to the Ward Street access issue and stated the General Plan says that circulation facilities should be designed such that they minimize the disruption to neighborhoods and communities. He would like to keep this access for emergency vehicles only. He referred to the general layout of the streets and stated his only concern would be with the length and the width. He suggested some traffic calming measures to increase the safety.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated the Council discussed the Ward Street access at length and she was satisfied with emergency access only.

Mayor Arlas stated he did not want vehicular access, aside from emergency vehicles, into the project from Ward Street. He had no trouble with the length of the streets and the pedestrian and bike path circulation. He referred to the senior complex and asked if there would be off-street parking on only one side. Mr. Day stated "yes".

Mayor Arlas opened the meeting to public comments.

Ms. Nancy Weninger, Elm Avenue, stated overall the pedestrian and bicycle circulation was fine. She stated the most important aspect was to give people who live there an opportunity to get out. She is most concerned with maintaining a regional bikeway. She has some concerns about how the multiuse paths intersect the roads. There is no such thing as a Class II bike/pedestrian path and they need to find another term. However, increasing the width of any path is a good thing.

Mr. Rick Adler, William Avenue, stated he was concerned about the two major intersections on Doherty Drive and felt there should be two left turn lanes going in both directions. This would necessitate widening the street. He was concerned about the traffic lights and how it would back up traffic. There should be an emergency exit near Redwood High School that could be used by the residents of Heather Gardens.

Ms. Laura Lovette, Larkspur Plaza Drive, asked if the turn lane down the center of Doherty Drive could be added without widening the road. The Planning Director stated "no" and added they would cut into the south side. Ms. Lovette asked how much would be lost to widen the road. The Planning Director stated she did not have the exact dimensions and guessed it would be eight to ten feet. Ms. Lovette was concerned that the Lucky's Supermarket loading docks would be moved to the community center side.

Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, asked about the guest parking standards for the senior complex. The Planning Director stated the ratio for multi-family units and cottages was one guest stall for every four units. Mr. Holmes stated sidewalks were very important and he asked which streets do not have sidewalks on both sides. Mr. Seeley stated all the streets, except the one-way street around the senior complex, have sidewalks on both sides. Mr. Day stated there were three paths within the senior complex- the north and south sides and through the middle. Mr. Holmes asked if there were sidewalks on either side of the one-way street. Mr. Day stated "no". Mr. Holmes stated this could be a problem since people tend to walk next to roadways. He stated there could be a potential safety concern with backing out of the driveways into the alley at the cottage units.

Ms. Barbara Landy, Sycamore Avenue, agreed with the applicant's assertion that seniors would drive less during peak hours.

She stated there was a discrepancy with the number of parking places allocated for the three-bedroom units. She stated there should be adequate parking.

Mr. Michael Hooper, Madrone Avenue, referred to the intersection of Camellia Circle and Doherty Drive and stated that is the area where the school bus stops and kids cross the road. He had safety concerns and stated the sidewalk should be more generous in that area of high activity.

Mayor Arlas closed the meeting to public comments.

Councilmember Chu stated he saw the potential for a cut-through along that first street near the Lucky's Supermarket.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated the use of the bike lane coming off of the existing old railroad track was a huge community benefit. A large percentage of Hall Middle School students bike and walk to school.

The Planning Director asked if the proposed 2.5 wide landscape strips at the back of Lucky's was sufficient. Councilmember Lundstrom stated this should be dealt with later by the Planning Commission.

Mayor Arlas stated Mr. Holmes has raised a good point regarding the west end of the senior complex. Some consideration should be given to establishing some type of safe path given the garages, the one-way street, and the location of the pool.

Councilmember Hillmer agreed there should be consideration for the walking environment in the senior complex.

Mayor Arlas asked for a straw vote regarding restricting the access from Ward Street to emergency vehicles only.

Ayes: Mayor Arlas, Councilmembers Chu, Hillmer, Lundstrom

Abstain: Councilmember Hartzell

Mayor Arlas asked for a straw vote regarding the concept of the roads as they are proposed.

Ayes: Mayor Arlas, Councilmembers Chu, Hartzell, Hillmer, Lundstrom

Mayor Arlas asked for a straw vote regarding the proposed pedestrian/bicycle paths, including the sidewalks.

Ayes: Mayor Arlas, Councilmembers Chu, Hartzell, Hillmer, Lundstrom

Mayor Arlas noted the Council has asked for further review regarding the sidewalks and paths in the senior complex.

Mayor Arlas asked for comments regarding the concept presented for the location and groupings of the three housing types.

Councilmember Chu referred to the issue regarding separation of the housing types and stated if an organization like EAH came in and wanted to do the cottages in one location then that would be a benefit to the community. However, Larkspur has always encouraged a mix of housing types and this is suggested in the General Plan goals of demographic diversity and different housing sizes. Policy D51 of the Specific Plan states that the siting of single-family and cottage homes shall be varied to provide a range of home sizes and a visually diverse appearance on individual street segments and among the cluster of homes. In terms of the location and type of affordability, the Inclusionary Ordinance requires 20% and this should be split 50%-50% between moderate and low income. There was a stipulation that the affordable units should be dispersed throughout the residential project. The intent was to provide different housing types for different levels of affordability. There was an exception to that ("it may be clustering in a residential project") subject to the approval of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission did not agree to an exception and he supports the Commission.

Councilmember Hartzell stated she was concerned that housing size includes living area but not the garage. She asked about the size of the proposed garages. Mr. Day stated the two-car garages were around 420 square feet. Councilmember Hartzell referred to Policy D51 guideline that discusses "diversity in size and appearance, single-family and cottage homes, the siting shall be varied to provide a range of home sizes and a visually diverse appearance on individual street segments and among clusters of homes". She stated that is a strong statement that encourages the concept of more of a mixture. She would like to see more intermingling and one way to achieve this might be to put more of the affordable units into the senior complex.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated she has always envisioned market rate cottages for seniors in this project. She is surprised to see the three story condominium senior units. She would prefer to see the affordable housing intermixed. She was concerned about the high percentage of three-bedroom units in the senior complex and would rather see more two-bedrooms or studios. She referred to the lot sizes for single family detached dwellings and noted they ranged from 7,000 to 15,700 square feet and she had a problem with that large a lot.

Councilmember Hillmer stated this was about preferences and he noted Councilmember Hartzell's comments were persuasive. He stated he was not sure about the visual quality of the cottages. He understood why the housing types were as proposed and his concerns were on a more detailed level. He appreciates the economic relationships and the responsiveness of the applicants.

Mayor Arlas stated he had no problem with the way the housing was clustered but he does have a problem that there are no affordable senior units. He recognized that there were some senior units in the cottages but many seniors do not want the responsibility of a house. He could support more market rate cottages if it meant more affordable units in the senior complex. He stated it was disingenuous to call a unit with two bedrooms and a den a "two-bedroom unit".

Mayor Arlas opened the meeting to public comments.

Mr. James Holmes disagreed with the applicant's attorney's assertion that there was no legal basis for any kind of intermixing. While the Council probably could not force them to intermix the units, they could find that the failure for intermixing could go against a finding for extraordinary benefits and thus a lower number of units. He stated there should be more one and two-bedroom units for the seniors.

Ms. Laura Lovette stated there should be affordable units in the senior housing complex. She did not care about intermingling of the units. She would never buy a cottage that faced Doherty Drive.

Mr. Larry Lanctot, Meadowood Drive, wanted to reinforce comments made by the Council about the lack of market-rate housing within the cottage units. The result of market rate cluster housing would be that the senior housing would have to have some affordable units. Affordable housing intermixed with single-family homes could be done tastefully. He is concerned with the view on Ward Street looking towards the senior housing complex and would like to see the parking broken up on the southern edge of Rose Lane.

Mr. Rick Adler stated he would like to see some workforce housing dedicated for emergency personnel since most of them commute long-distances.

Mr. Tom Flynn, Willow Avenue, stated they should be open to the possibility of clustering of units in order to get affordable units. They may need to be flexible in the Precise Development Plan stage.

Mayor Arlas closed the meeting to public comments.

Mayor Arlas asked for a straw vote in support of the original plan.

Ayes: None

Noes: Mayor Arlas, Councilmembers Chu, Hartzell, Hillmer, Lundstrom

Mayor Arlas asked for a straw vote in support of the plan as presented tonight.

Ayes: None

Noes: Mayor Arlas, Councilmembers Chu, Hartzell, Hillmer, Lundstrom

Mayor Arlas asked for a straw vote in support of physically mixing cottages within the single-family dwellings.

Ayes: Councilmembers Chu, Hartzell, Lundstrom

Noes: Mayor Arlas, Councilmembers Hillmer

Councilmember Hillmer stated they should remain flexible since he could see other possibilities.

Mayor Arlas thanked everyone for his or her comments.

ADJOURN MEETING

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 10:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary