



MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

July 31, 2006

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Teleconference with participation by Commissioner Keith from:
13073 Northwoods Blvd.
Truckee, CA. 96161

(Posted July 28, 2006)

CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Bims (Chair), Deziel, Keith (Vice-chair), O'Malley, Pagee, Riggs, Sinnott

INTRODUCTION OF STAFF – Deanna Chow, Senior Planner, Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

Commissioner Deziel said he was recusing himself from the Commission's consideration of items B.1 and B.2 as he had in the past, although no longer, a potential conflict of interest with those projects.

B. PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Use Permit, Architectural Control, Heritage Tree Permit, and Environmental Review/ Pollock Financial Group/321 Middlefield Road:** Request for a use permit and architectural control for the conversion of an existing 48,400-square-foot building from administrative to medical office use and the associated exterior modifications to the building located in the C-1 (Administrative and Professional District, Restrictive) zoning district. Request for Heritage Tree Permit for the removal of 11 heritage trees. The proposal requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.

Staff Comment: Planner Chow said the public hearing was to hear comment on the draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the project located at 321 Middlefield Road. She said the public circulation period on the DEIR began July 18 and would close on August 31, 2006. She said the comments received during the public review would be responded to as part of the Final EIR. She said the draft EIR through the initial study determined that the project would have a less than significant impact without the need for mitigation on the impact areas of "Land Use and Planning," "Population," "Housing," "Geology," "Energy and Mineral Resources," "Public Services," "Utilities and Service Systems," and "Recreation." She said for most of the remaining environmental impact areas including "Water," "Air Quality," "Biological Resources,"

“Hazardous Materials,” “Noise,” and “Cultural Resources,” that the DEIR including the initial study concluded the project would have less than a significant impact with the adoption of specific mitigation measures and these would be included as conditions of approval for the proposed project. She said the DEIR identified that two of the environmental impact areas, “Aesthetics” and “Transportation,” would have potentially significant and unavoidable impacts as a result of the project. She said Mr. Chip Taylor, the City’s Transportation Manager, would present an overview of the Linfield/Middlefield/Willow Area-Wide Transportation Impact Analysis, which provided the basis for the DEIR “Transportation” Section. She said two additional letters had been distributed to the Commission; one from Coleen and Peter Keller and the second from Brian and Michele DeHaaff in regard to potential increased safety concerns at the intersection of Middlefield Road and Seminary Drive because of the project. She said the concern was with a landscaped traffic island on Middlefield Road that residents find obstructs their view of southbound Middlefield traffic. She said the DEIR did not show an impact at that intersection, that the concern was about an existing situation and would be reviewed by staff.

Mr. Chip Taylor, Transportation Manager, said that the Linfield/Middlefield/Willow Area-Wide Transportation Impact Analysis had been completed for three different developments in this area and provided the base traffic impact study that was utilized within the EIRs. He reviewed the Traffic Analysis Guidelines and Thresholds. He said in a traffic study the existing conditions are looked at and take new counts for unsignalized intersections and analyze those intersections and roadways. He said they then do the “near term” conditions and add background growth about two years into the future when it was expected the development would be completed. He said they look at cumulative conditions and long range, a 10-year analysis into the future with background growth in those years and the development projects analyzed on top of that. He said there were intersection thresholds based on the type of intersection and the level of service of intersection. He said lastly they look at roadway segment impacts and that was volume of traffic on a roadway. He said the three developments looked at as part of the study were 321 Middlefield Road, 8 Homewood Place (not now part of the process) and 75 Willow Road with 110 and 175 Linfield Drive included in the background volumes for the study. He said potentially significant impacts included near term of El Camino Real and Ravenswood Avenue which had greater than .8 seconds delay and is a State-controlled facility with local approaches; Alma Street and Ravenswood Avenue during the morning peak hours at the left from Alma Street to Ravenswood Avenue showed a greater than .8 second increase or significant delay. He said several roadway segments were analyzed as having potentially significant impacts and included Middlefield Road to Waverly Street, Waverly Street to Laurel Street, Ravenswood Avenue from Laurel Street to El Camino Real, Middlefield Road from Willow Road to Ravenswood Avenue, and Willow Road from Middlefield Road toward U.S 101. He said in the long term cumulative impacts there were two additional intersections added as potential significant impacts: Willow and Middlefield Roads both in the morning and evening peak hours and Linfield Drive and Middlefield Road during the p.m. peak hours. He said there were two other roadway segments added as potential significant impacts and included Laurel Street from Waverly Street to Ravenswood Avenue and Ravenswood Avenue from Middlefield Road to Laurel Street.

Mr. Taylor said that elements were looked at that were not mitigations but would provide benefit and included some partial payment toward an adaptive signal at Ringwood Avenue, Ravenswood Avenue, and Middlefield Road; traffic detection cameras at Ringwood Avenue, Ravenswood Avenue and Middlefield Road as well as Laurel Street and Ravenswood Drive. He said there were proposed improvements to the bicycle shelter at the Caltrans station as well.

Mr. Taylor said that mitigations include: left turn restrictions through signage in the a.m. peak hours from Alma Street to Ravenswood Avenue; adaptor signal time at Middlefield and Willow Roads; lighted crosswalk and/or pedestrian signal at the corner of Linfield Drive and Middlefield Road; streetscape improvements to Linfield Drive; partial payment for adaptive timing at Ringwood Avenue, Ravenswood Avenue and Middlefield Road; video detection at the intersections of Ringwood Avenue, Ravenswood Avenue, and Middlefield Road and Laurel Street and Ravenswood Avenue; and bicycle shelter improvements at Caltrans shelter as well. He said that in the future after additional study there could be potential closing of access from Linfield Drive to the USGS site.

Commissioner Riggs asked about the City's position on extra lanes on El Camino Real. Mr. Taylor said that it was worth pursuing but there would need to be additional study on the impacts to the various businesses and community along that roadway.

Public Comment: Ms. Susan Eschweiler, DES Architects, said she was representing Pollock Financial Group, the applicant, and was available to answer questions.

Commissioner Sinnott asked if this was the final design. Ms. Eschweiler said that it was the final design for the building. She said they had been working on some detailed aspects with staff on the site plan with regard to trees. She said that it appeared three heritage trees would be saved by relocating them on the site. She said that they were looking at modifying the Middlefield Road streetscape by pulling the sidewalk back to the property so there would be a park strip along Middlefield Road.

Commissioner Riggs asked about simplifications to the architectural goals. Ms. Eschweiler said the existing windows were in excellent condition and in speaking with the prospective tenants of the building found that they did not need larger windows. She said that a landscape reserve area had been eliminated and there were 234 spaces proposed which represented five parking spaces per 1,000 square feet. She said there would only be two rather than three driveways, with one off of Middlefield Road and the other from Linfield Drive. Commissioner Riggs asked if the windows were single-pane and aluminum. Ms. Eschweiler said they were aluminum and they would need to check on the single-pane glass. She said the windows have operable panes for air flow.

Commissioner Keith asked if they would consider solar panels on the new metal roof. Ms. Eschweiler said that this would be a metal roof screen canopy and the actual roof was the existing concrete flat roof with mechanical equipment on it. She said the structure would probably not accommodate panels but they could investigate the use of solar panels. Commissioner Keith asked about the bike parking and whether that was just for occupants of the building. Ms. Eschweiler said that there was parking for bikes for the tenants and racks for visitors' bikes. Commissioner Keith also suggested considering gray water use and other green building elements.

Mr. Don Brawner, Menlo Park, said that he and others were bringing litigation against some of the projects coming through the Planning Commission along Linfield Drive and Middlefield Road. He said that several years ago residents had submitted a petition to the City regarding their opposition to these proposed projects and received no response. He said that there should be no more intensification of use in Menlo Park either commercial or residential. He said there was no need for more medical buildings along Middlefield Road.

Mr. Lou Deziel, Menlo Park, said he was speaking as an individual and representing neighbors in their concern about a left lane turn from Seminary Drive onto southbound Middlefield Road. He said there was heavy two-way traffic on Middlefield Road and an island with landscaping that blocks visibility. He said the neighborhood would like a stacking lane but that was expensive. He said a less expensive solution would be to redesign the landscaping on the island. He thought this was a reasonable condition to add because of the project's impact on traffic on Middlefield Road. He said the neighborhood did not object to the use and that ten families agreed on the landscaping improvement.

Chair Bims closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Riggs asked whether a stacking lane had been considered at Seminary Drive and Middlefield Road. Mr. Taylor said that this was an existing traffic situation and a traffic light had been considered a few years past but it was determined that traffic volume did not support a light. He said they would look at the median and the visibility as to whether and what level modifications could be made that would enhance the visibility. He said there had been two accidents at the intersection within the last five years, but neither was specific to the turning movement. He said a potential solution was the addition of left hand arrows at the Middlefield Road and Ringwood Avenue intersection and that was a Council priority. He said a person could then make a right on Middlefield Road and a u-turn to go southbound. Commissioner Riggs described the area and the possibilities of a stacking lane. Mr. Taylor said that they would be looking at ways to handle the complaint.

Commissioner O'Malley asked whether there would be any additional revenue to the City from the proposed project. Development Services Manager Murphy said that the main focus at this point was on the environmental impacts. He said when the Commission was asked to certify the final EIR there would be some information about the financial implications of the project. He said there would be property tax revenue but no sales tax or transfer tax involved. Commissioner O'Malley asked if the City has seen a need for medical offices. Development Service Manager Murphy said that there had not been a citywide study of need. He said in this instance the applicant believed that there was a need for medical offices in the City.

Commissioner Keith asked what size trees would replace the heritage trees. Ms. Eschweiler said that those would be replaced with 24-inch box trees that would grow to 30 feet in height. Commissioner Keith asked about trees at 75 Willow Road. Planner Chow said that they were a combination of 24-inch and 36-inch boxed trees. Ms. Eschweiler said that the City required only 15-inch box trees and they upgraded to 24-inch box trees. Commissioner Keith asked if the applicant could pay for the adaptive traffic signal at Willow and Middlefield Roads. Mr. Taylor said the cost was shared with all of the proposed projects in the traffic analysis.

Chair Bims asked for comments, noting Commissioner Keith's comment to look at solar panels and the use of gray water for landscaping. Commissioner Riggs said he would like to keep open whether the windows are dual paned or single paned and whether it was a thermal break frame.

2. General Plan Amendment, Rezoning, Conditional Development Permit, Tentative Subdivision Map, Heritage Tree Permit, and Environmental Review/SummerHill Homes/75 Willow Road:

- 1) General Plan Amendment: Change from Professional and Administrative Offices land use designation to Medium Density Residential land use designation;

- 2) Rezoning: Change from C-1 (Administrative and Professional District, Restrictive) to R-3-X (Apartment – Conditional Development District);
- 3) Conditional Development Permit: Establish specific development regulations and architectural designs for the demolition of an existing 40,000-square-foot office building and the construction of 33 single-family residential dwelling units;
- 4) Tentative Subdivision Map: Create 33 lots and associated common areas;
- 5) Heritage Tree Permit: Remove 46 heritage trees, relocate 4 heritage trees, and plant new trees; and
- 6) Environmental Review of the proposed project.

Staff Comment: Planner Chow said that this was an opportunity to hear and make comments on the Draft EIR. She said the public circulation period began on July 18, 2006 and would end on August 31, 2006. She said comments received during the circulation and at this evening's meeting would be responded to as part of the Final EIR. She said the DEIR examines the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. She said the DEIR through the initial study determined that the project would have a less than significant impact without the need for mitigation in "Land Use and Planning," "Population and Housing," "Energy and Mineral Resources," "Public Services," "Utilities and Service Systems," and "Recreation." She said the remaining environmental impact areas including "Geologic," "Water," "Air Quality," "Biological Resources," "Hazardous Materials," "Noise," and "Cultural Resources" conclude the project would have a less than significant impact with the adoption of mitigation measures. She said the mitigation measures were identified as conditions for approval of the project. She said the DEIR found that there were two impact areas that would have potentially significant unavoidable impacts because of the project and included "Aesthetics" and "Transportation." She said Mr. Taylor's presentation on the Linfield/Middlefield/Willow Area-Wide Transportation Impact Analysis was also applicable to this project and the records would reflect its content. She said a letter from Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence Basso and Chrissy and John Barnes had been distributed. The letter voiced their opposition to the removal of the existing building and the construction of new homes which would remove heritage trees and landscaping on the site and potentially cause additional strains on the existing services.

Commissioner Pagee noted that on page 8 of the staff report for the previous item that the date should read July 31 and not August 31. Planner Chow confirmed that was correct.

Public Comment: Ms. Elaine Breeze, SummerHill Homes, said they were prepared to meet all the mitigations listed in the DEIR. She noted that they had presented to the Environmental Quality Commission after the Planning Commission's last consideration of the project and a topic discussed was the introduction of more native plants and trees. She said that 36 of the 48 heritage trees to be removed were eucalyptus and they would work with the landscape architect and staff to introduce more native trees and shrubs. She said they were prepared to move forward with the Below Market Rate (BMR) Program as they had presented in July. She said that they were working with Mr. Taylor to widen the sidewalk to go from Willow Road through to 175 Linfield project. She said they have proposed an alternative to the tandem garage previously discussed.

Ms. Breeze said the original emphasis was to introduce the tandem garage to create a different streetscape and to save particular trees on particular sites. She said they took a closer look at that after the last study meeting and felt strong about keeping Plan 4 on lot 19 that faces Willow Road because of the way it was designed. She said lot 20 would face into the new park area with a minimized garage. She said that for the proposed connection to 175 Willow Road that it was good to have the front face of the house at that location. She said the other five locations

identified in the staff report would not require any additional removal of trees. She said Plan Five was a takeoff of Plan Four and would recess the garage another four feet off the front of the house. She said that they would be adding five parking spaces and would do Hollywood strip driveways to minimize impermeable surfaces and that would reduce the number of tandem garages on the site from eight to five.

Commissioner Pagee asked Ms. Breeze to address pedestrian safety and a pathway to the park area. Ms. Breeze said that they had looked at different circulation patterns. She said the scale of the location was less than a football field. She said the sidewalk would be widened to five feet throughout and there were some handicapped ramps provided. Commissioner Pagee confirmed with Ms. Breeze that the restriction on overnight parking would apply.

Commissioner Keith asked if they would offer air conditioning for the homes. Ms. Breeze said that they would. Commissioner Keith asked if they had considered solar panels on the home and the use of gray water for landscaping. Ms. Breeze said that she would look into the solar panels but she did not expect the use of gray water because of the number of trees on the lots. Commissioner Pagee suggested that a "whole house fan" might be more effective because of the tree canopies. Ms. Breeze said they would offer no air conditioning, air conditioning, or whole house fan. Commissioner Keith also suggested the use of tankless water heaters. Commissioner O'Malley said he was supportive of the "greening" of the project.

Mr. Don Brawner, Menlo Park, said the existing building was one of the nicest looking buildings in the City. He said he would like to get the exact information on when the traffic data was collected for the traffic analysis before the project went to Council for approval.

Mr. Tony Reynolds, Menlo Park, said that the existing property was beautiful and its destruction was counterproductive to the nuance and the attractiveness of their neighborhood. He said there were no mitigations for traffic down Linfield Drive to Sherwood Way. He said there are a number of children in his neighborhood. He said that increased school population had not been addressed either.

Chair Bims closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Keith said that there was an expectation of the applicant that there would only be nine children in the proposed 33 homes. She said that she thought there would be many more than nine children and it would impact the school district.

Chair Bims noted Commissioner Keith's prior comments regarding the use of solar panels, gray water and tankless water heaters.

Commissioner Riggs said because of the loss of water during a major disaster that regular water heaters might be desirable. He noted that in his neighborhood there were four 55-gallon drums of water for emergency use.

Commissioner Pagee said she agreed that there would be more than nine children living in the residences.

Chair Bims asked regarding solar panels whether tree canopy would need to be cut back. Commissioner Riggs said that if the developer was offering whole house fans or air conditioning that perhaps they could offer solar panels as well. He said that gray water systems would be

difficult for single-family residences because of the need for a cistern but perhaps the developer could also offer that.

C. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Consideration of the July 10, 2006 Planning Commission Draft Minutes.

Commissioner O'Malley noted that on page 4, the third paragraph, "Mr. O'Malley" should be changed to "Commissioner O'Malley."

Commission Action: M/S O'Malley/Keith to approve as modified.

Motion carried 6-0-0-1 with Commissioner Deziel not in attendance.

D. COMMISSION BUSINESS, REPORTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Review of upcoming planning items on the City Council agenda.**

Development Services Manager Murphy reviewed upcoming planning items on the City Council agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager

Prepared by: Brenda Bennett, Recording Secretary

Approved by Planning Commission on September 11, 2006.