



## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** 1/11/2016  
**Time:** 7:01 p.m.  
**City Council Chambers**  
**701 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025**

### A. Call To Order

Chair Onken called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

### B. Roll Call

Present: Andrew Combs, Katie Ferrick, John Kadvany, Larry Kahle, John Onken (Chair), Katherine Strehl (Vice Chair)

Absent: Susan Goodhue

Staff: Thomas Rogers, Principal Planner; Michele Morris, Assistant Planner; Corinna Sandmeier, Associate Planner

### C. Reports and Announcements

Principal Planner Thomas Rogers said the City Council at its January 12 meeting would consider the 133 Encinal Avenue project. He said the project, 24 residential units on the former Roger Reynolds nursery site, was reviewed by the Planning Commission with a positive recommendation to the City Council with an encouragement to the applicant to work with neighbors regarding the rear building. He said the applicants have revised the plan in that area and staff was making a positive recommendation to the City Council to approve. He said the General Plan update or ConnectMenlo would have a zoning focus group meeting on Thursday, January 14. He said the draft zoning information has been released online.

Replying to Commissioner Katherine Strehl's question about the 133 Encinal Avenue project, Principal Planner Rogers said the applicant had originally proposed to do one three-unit building in the rear with a residents' community amenities space in the former carriage house, but now would remove the carriage-style building. He said that would allow an increase to the first floor of the residential building, which would pull back the second story and reduce the potential for direct views to neighbors and limit the height from what was allowable.

Commissioner Katie Ferrick said that former Council Member Andy Cohen had passed away, and she wanted to acknowledge his many years of public service to the City and his focus on poverty alleviation and social justice. She said he had encouraged her to become involved in public service during a town hall meeting in 2003 at a neighborhood coffee house.

Commissioner John Kadvany asked about Facebook's plan to study the Dumbarton corridor. Principal Planner Rogers said that he did not have information beyond the news article he had seen, but he would find out if there was any additional information to share with the Commission

later.

**D. Public Comment**

There was none.

**E. Consent Calendar**

- E1. Approval of minutes from the December 7, 2015 Planning Commission meeting. ([Attachment](#))

**ACTION:** Motion and second (Strehl/Combs) to approve the minutes as submitted; passes 5-0 with Commissioner Ferrick abstaining and Commissioner Goodhue absent.

**F. Public Hearing**

- F1. Use Permit/Karen Douglass/1253 University Drive:  
Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and detached garage and construct a new two-story, single-family residence with an attached garage on a substandard lot with regard to lot width and area in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban) zoning district. ([Staff Report #16-001-PC](#))

Staff Comment: Associate Planner Corinna Sandmeier said there was a correction to the data table to include the basement in the total square footage.

Applicant Comment: Mr. Alan Douglass said he and his wife Karen were the property owners.

Commissioner Larry Kahle noted the letter from the neighbor at 1265 University Drive and asked if they had addressed that neighbor's concerns about the facing windows and the location of the air conditioner.

Mr. Douglass said they had worked with that neighbor and relocated the air conditioning unit and reduced the size of the windows.

Replying to a question from Commissioner Ferrick, Mr. Douglass said the air conditioner unit would be in the light well in the left back corner if facing the house. Commissioner Ferrick asked if the neighbor on that side had been informed about the location of the air conditioner. Mr. Douglass said they had worked with that neighbor on the location of trees and that home's bedrooms were on the opposite side from their home.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ferrick regarding the changes to the windows, Mr. Jim Stoecker, Stoecker and Northway Architects Incorporated, project architect, said they had raised the sill heights to 36-inches on all the side yard windows on the east and west. Commissioner Ferrick asked if both neighbors had an opportunity to review the changes. Mr. Stoecker said he sent an email to both neighbors regarding the change to the plans after they made their first revision.

Chair Onken asked about the first floor gable and roof junction on the south elevation, Mr. Stoecker said that they slipped the roof under the gable, noting the gable roof extends from the back to front yard.

Commissioner Strehl confirmed with the architect that the garage was two-car; she noted the data sheet showed a one-car garage, which was acknowledged as an error.

Commissioner Kahle said there were numerous and different roof styles. He said on the front elevation, the ridge from the back at the master bedroom would be visible from the street. Mr. Stoecker said that it would not appear as prominent on the structure as it appeared in the 2-D graphic. He said the only solution would be to bring that gable forward, and he thought a small gable would look odd on top of the ridge spanning from east to west.

Commissioner Ferrick asked for detail on why the property owners chose this particular design style on this lot. Mr. Stoecker said the lot was only 50-foot wide and substandard in lot size as well. He said the property owners' goals were to have a style appropriate for the community and to maximize the floor area ratio and lot coverage allowed. Commissioner Ferrick asked why they wanted to maximize the square footage. He said the 2,800 square feet allowed was modest compared to other homes in the area and the property owners wanted bedroom space. Commissioner Ferrick asked about energy efficiencies that might minimize the environmental impact of a large home. Mr. Stoecker said CalGreen standards required certain levels of efficiencies in development. He said additionally they would use spray-in insulation at the rafter level and would have a high-recovery water tank system. Commissioner Ferrick asked about the plate heights. Mr. Stoecker said the first floor plate height was eight-feet, nine-inches.

Chair Onken asked if a street parking space was lost due to the driveway widening. Associate Planner Sandmeier said she did not think there was a designated parking space in front of the project site.

Chair Onken opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Kadvany noted that 10-foot of curb was being lost with the driveway widening and he suggested this loss of curb and street parking was something they needed to start paying attention to with development projects.

Recognized by the Chair, Mr. Stoecker said they had looked at how best to provide access to the two-car garage and protect a tree by doing a curb cut around it. He said there had been no comments received about on street parking space preservation. He said he was not sure if there were parking space marks on the street.

Commissioner Ferrick noted the Google photo showed a red curb there.

Commissioner Kahle said this was an R-1-U lot that interfaced with a commercial and more urban area. He said it was a nicely designed project with the exception of the piece of ridge toward the back of the house he would like to see eliminated. He moved to approve as recommended in the staff report. Commissioner Kadvany seconded the motion.

Commissioner Ferrick asked about landscape screening between the project and adjacent neighbors. Mr. Stoecker said they considered landscape screening particularly for the west side yard as that neighbor had a concern. He said an existing pittosporum and liquid amber tree were directly in front of the main two-story elements and almost as tall as the window heights on the second story, which greatly protected that adjacent property. He said on the other side that currently it was a driveway without plant screening. He said he did not think having a side yard path on that side would worsen the existing situation. Commissioner Ferrick said she disagreed as the project would be built to the five-foot setback where now there was open air, space and light. She suggested a robust planting plan of hedges or trees to reduce the impact to the neighbors' views of a large structure.

Commissioner Strehl said the project met all of the specific standards but was a very big house on a small lot. She said she would support the project but thought this amount of lot coverage was something to be discussed in an appropriate context such as residential design guidelines.

Commissioner Combs said he was supportive of the project. He suggested that more discussion regarding building to the maximums should occur.

Commissioner Ferrick said the design was beautiful but she wished the lot was much larger. She said this project was built to the maximum and all the elements that were allowed to encroach, such as the eaves and chimney, were encroaching. She said one reason a project like this had discretionary review rather than administrative review was for an experienced body like the Commission to look at the nuances of a project within the context of the neighborhood. She said with the lack of screening she would need to oppose the project.

Commissioner Kadvaný said with this project and the area in which it was situated that there should be more of a setback on the second story element. He said if they needed to have a front facing garage, it should be pushed back so that visually living space was dominant.

Commissioner Combs said he understood the concerns being expressed. He said the neighborhood context in addition to the adjacent one-story and modest two-story residences was commercial and included a multi-story building.

In response to Chair Onken, Commissioner Ferrick said requiring a landscape plan would help alleviate her concerns. She said Commissioner Combs made a good point that there was greater density and more developable area in the larger area beyond the immediate neighbors' properties. She said however she was sensitive to the impact of a much more massive residence just five feet away from smaller scaled homes. She said the project would stand out because of the bulk.

Commissioner Kadvaný suggested screening could be planted along the path on the west side. Mr. Stoecker said within the five-foot setbacks there were window pop-outs and they were trying to maintain a three-foot wide path. He said they would have about two feet of planting area and any planting would need to be a vertical shrub along the fence. Commissioner Kadvaný said he thought it was essential to have a screening plan.

Chair Onken confirmed with Commissioners Kahle and Kadvaný as the makers of the motion to approve and the second to add a condition for a landscaping plan.

Mr. Stoecker said that fortunately on the west side where they would have window bump outs there was quite a lot of screening on the neighbor's property including a liquid amber and pittosporum. He asked adjacent to the bump outs if they could leave the area clear to the fence and create a little planting strip on either side of the bump outs so the path would weave around those.

Chair Onken said the plan needed to show clearly on either side what would be planted. He said they should work with staff on the details and then staff would email the Commission with it and ask if the Commission found it in conformance with the project approval.

Commissioner Kadvaný asked whether the pavers were pervious. Mr. Stoecker said that they were interlocking pavers and as such partially pervious. Chair Onken said driveways were either pervious or not.

Commissioner Ferrick said a letter from a neighbor asked how airborne dust particles from the basement excavation would be mitigated. Mr. Stoecker said the only way was to water it; he said

they had talked with the neighbor about that concern. Commissioner Ferrick asked if the neighbor acknowledged their acceptance of that. Mr. Stoecker said they were fine with all the solutions and measures they had discussed including the curb cut around their tree, the basement excavation, and debris issue.

**ACTION:** Motion and second (Kahle/Kadvany) to approve the item with the following modification; passes 5-1 with Commissioner Ferrick opposed and Commissioner Goodhue absent.

1. Make a finding that the project is categorically exempt under Class 3 (Section 15303, "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures") of the current CEQA Guidelines.
2. Make findings, as per Section 16.82.030 of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the granting of use permits, that the proposed use will not be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, and will not be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the City.
3. Approve the use permit subject to the following **standard** conditions:
  - a. Development of the project shall be substantially in conformance with the plans prepared by Stoecker and Northway Architects Incorporated consisting of 12 plan sheets, dated received January 4, 2016, and approved by the Planning Commission on January 11, 2015, except as modified by the conditions contained herein, subject to review and approval by the Planning Division.
  - b. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicants shall comply with all Sanitary District, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, and utility companies' regulations that are directly applicable to the project.
  - c. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicants shall comply with all requirements of the Building Division, Engineering Division, and Transportation Division that are directly applicable to the project.
  - d. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall submit a plan for any new utility installations or upgrades for review and approval by the Planning, Engineering and Building Divisions. All utility equipment that is installed outside of a building and that cannot be placed underground shall be properly screened by landscaping. The plan shall show exact locations of all meters, back flow prevention devices, transformers, junction boxes, relay boxes, and other equipment boxes.
  - e. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit plans indicating that the applicant shall remove and replace any damaged and significantly worn sections of frontage improvements. The plans shall be submitted for review and approval of the Engineering Division.
  - f. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit a Grading and Drainage Plan for review and approval of the Engineering Division. The Grading and Drainage Plan shall be approved prior to the issuance of grading, demolition or building permits.

- g. Heritage and street trees in the vicinity of the construction project shall be protected pursuant to the arborist report by Kevin Kielty Arborist Services LLC, dated received December 18, 2015.

4. Approve the use permit subject to the following **project-specific** condition:

- a. The lightwell on the left (east side) of the property shall be constructed using shotcrete techniques as described in the letter from GeoForensics Inc, dated received December 4, 2015. The building permit plans shall include clear specifications to this effect, subject to review and approval of the Planning Division.

- b. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit an enhanced landscape plan, which shall have the objective of providing additional screening along both side property lines. The revised landscape plan shall be subject to review and approval of the Planning Division. The Planning Commission shall be notified by email of this action, and any Commissioner may request that the Planning Division's approval of the revised landscape plan may be considered at the next Planning Commission meeting. The revised landscape plan shall be fully approved prior to issuance of the overall building permit.**

F2. Use Permit/Cheryl Cheng/760 Hobart Street:

Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story residence and construct a new two-story residence with a basement on a substandard lot as to lot width in the R-1-S (Single Family Suburban Residential) zoning district. ([Staff Report #16-002-PC](#))

Staff Comment: Assistant Planner Michele T. Morris said there were no additions to the staff report.

Applicant Comment: Mr. Jon Jang, project architect, said the home was a mixture of gables with shed roofs coming off those gables. He said the upper floor side walls were set back and there was a fair amount of articulation of the upper floor side wall mass. He said the front second-story massing was also setback. He said the garage although attached in front was mitigated somewhat by the veranda.

Chair Onken asked if they had considered the second-story view from the side facing windows and the neighbors' privacy. He said there was considerable fenestration on the east side.

Mr. Jang said the window placement had addressed not looking over into any of the neighbors' patio living area.

Chair Onken opened the public hearing. He closed the public hearing as there were no speakers.

Commission Comment: Chair Onken said in contrast to the last project they saw this project's mass was moved back on the second story. He said the roof lines were challenging but he appreciated the complexity. He said his only concern was the size of the windows on the second-story sides specifically on the east side, where there was a large pair of casements between two other windows with two-foot, six-inch sills. He said he would like the sill height to be higher on a side second-story wall.

Commissioner Kahle said the last project had six roof pitches and this one has nine roof pitches. He said his main concern was how the second-story massing on the front elevation seemed so much larger than that of the first story. He said he did not think the shed roof of the gable should



be tied into the main roof but should have a secondary ridge drop from there. He said he would like the massing addressed if not the roof pitches.

Chair Onken said this house from the street would be seen as a two-car garage. He asked if there was something they could do to mitigate the appearance of the double garage doors. Mr. Jang said he agreed with that but his client's preference was for a single garage door. Chair Onken said there were ways to visually alter the appearance so it did not look like a single garage door.

Mr. Jang said he could see Commission Kahle's point about not having the shed roof tie into the ridge but he worried that the shed roof pitch would get very shallow when viewed from the side. He said regarding pitch roof variations that they vary on the gables and while they looked prominent in the 2-D drawings he did not think people would notice them in reality from one gable to another.

Chair Onken said he was comfortable with varying roof pitches.

Commissioner Kahle said the siding was noted as vertical v-groove. He asked if this was intended to have a farmhouse type of look. Mr. Jang said it was not intended noting the client liked the v-groove look. Commissioner Kahle asked if they had thought about using some other material or vents for the gable noting there was a lot of the v-groove around the gables at the garage end and elsewhere. Mr. Jang said a vent or trellis would help.

Commissioner Kadvany said this was a 70-foot wide lot and the two-car garage was as prominent as it possibly could be. He said the existing home, which was a one-story was configured similarly, but it would be demolished. He said this was one of the nicest streets with some of the nicest homes in Menlo Park, and he could not support the project as designed. In reply to Chair Onken, Commissioner Kadvany said that possibly a side-facing garage would work.

Commissioner Ferrick said she thought there were options for split-look garage doors. She said if the garage was moved to a side entrance most of the front landscaping would be destroyed. She said there were two trees that would need to be removed for that type of garage placement. She concurred however with minimizing the garage face.

Commissioner Kahle said he still could not support the project. He said he thought the project needed another round of design refinement.

Commissioner Kadvany said that from the aerial view the garage would not line up with neighbors' garages.

Commissioner Ferrick said if they recommended to continue that she would like to see more articulation about the plant screening for the project. She said she was comfortable with the size of the house on this size lot.

Commissioner Kadvany moved to continue the project for redesign. Motion died for lack of a second.

Chair Onken said the garage door needed to be looked at; but also the roof form at the garage. He asked if the gable there had to come all the way out or whether it could stop and another roof pitch come down lower noting there was no habitable space over the garage except rafters. He said they were concerned about the size and prominence of the garage.

Commissioner Kahle asked about neighbor outreach. Assistant Planner Morris said the neighbors had received notices, and she had received no comments on the project.

Commissioner Strehl said she had to leave. She said she agreed the prominence of the garage was problematic. She said she felt some frustration with voting for a continuance because this project was a better house than the last one they approved and this project provided greater side setbacks.

Chair Onken noted Commissioner Strehl had departed. He said he would like to make a motion to continue the project.

Commissioner Combs said he could not vote for a continuance unless he knew the specific guidance they would provide to support the continuance.

Chair Onken said the desired changes he would like to see was to adjust the roof at the garage so there was not a full tall gable all the way to the front. He said if there was enough scope to do so the garage could be moved back. He said additionally the garage door could be articulated so it did not appear to be such a wide double-garage door.

Commissioner Kahle asked if the applicant could also create a more cohesive roof plane noting especially the second story front gable and how that affected the shed behind it. He suggested they also consider a better refinement of the materials noting the predominance of one material, and as suggested by Commissioner Ferrick some type of landscape plan.

Commissioner Combs said he could support a continuance based upon reducing the prominence of the garage door and providing landscaping plan information. He moved to second the motion.

**ACTION:** Motion and second (Onken/Combs) to continue the item with direction for redesign, in particular with regard to reducing the prominence of the garage; passes 5-0 with Commissioners Goodhue and Strehl absent.

## **G. Informational Items**

- G1. Future Planning Commission Meeting Schedule – The upcoming Planning Commission meetings are listed here, for reference. No action will be taken on the meeting schedule, although individual Commissioners may notify staff of planned absences.
- Regular Meeting: January 25, 2016
  - Regular Meeting: February 8, 2016
  - Regular Meeting: February 22, 2016

## **H. Adjournment**

Chair Onken adjourned the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Thomas Rogers, Principal Planner

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by the Planning Commission on February 8, 2016