

CORONADO PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Regular Meeting

October 12, 2010

The regular meeting of the Coronado Planning Commission was called to order at 3 p.m., Tuesday, October 12, 2010, at the Coronado City Hall Council Chambers, 1825 Strand Way, Coronado, by Chairperson Grimes.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Gaylord, Grimes, Santos, St. Denis

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jensen

STAFF PRESENT: Rachel A. Hurst, Director
Peter Fait, Associate Planner
John Swanson, Assistant Planner
Martha L. Alvarez, Recording Secretary/Minutes Preparer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting of September 14, 2010, were approved as submitted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Hurst asked that the Commission review their holiday schedules and identify any potential meeting cancellations. The Commission tentatively cancelled the meetings of November 23 and December 28.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Vice Chair St. Denis reported that the Historic Resource Commission, at their meeting of September 1, approved a Notice of Intent to Demolish application at 711 Fourth Street; denied a Notice of Intent to Demolish application for 1105 F Avenue, designating the property as an historic resource; discussed the Historic District ordinance, and directed staff to prepare a draft of the Ordinance for review at a future meeting.

Vice Chair St. Denis also reported that the Historic Resource Commission, at their meeting of October 6, designated 723 A Avenue as an historic resource; approved an alteration permit for a chimney at 300 First Street; recommended approval to the City Council for alterations and code exceptions to the residence at 1125 Flora Avenue.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS

NON AGENDA ITEMS

There were no members of the public wishing to speak at this time.

LISTED AGENDA ITEMS

There were no members of the public wishing to speak at this time.

APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW

PC 2010-12 GERALD AND THELMA NATHANSON – Request for a Variance from Section 86.10.050(C) of the Coronado Municipal Code to allow a reduced second story rear setback for a proposed single family dwelling addressed as 715 Fourth Street and located in the R-1B (Single Family Residential) Zone.

Commissioner Gaylord asked if the second item scheduled on the agenda (PC 10-09) regarding proposed amendments to the Residential Standards Improvement Project (RSIP) Ordinance language could be heard first.

Chairperson Grimes asked if staff could include in their presentation how the proposed changes to the RSIP Ordinance language would affect the subject request for a variance.

Mr. Swanson introduced the agenda item as outlined in the staff report.

Vice Chair St. Denis asked staff to read from the existing Ordinance the language that pertains to rear second level balcony exceptions. She asked if the language will change if the proposed RSIP Ordinance is adopted.

Mr. Fait stated that the Ordinance allows roof decks and second story balconies that are otherwise prohibited from larger (in this case, 15-foot) second story setbacks. The applicant cannot build out over the entire roof deck but is only allowed the normal projection that is allowed from a second story which is 4 feet from the 15-foot second story setback line.

Mr. Swanson read from the Ordinance, "...balconies as an architectural projection can extend into a rear yard setback not more than 4 feet; however, never closer than 3 feet from the property line."

Director Hurst clarified that the question may be whether changes to this portion of the Code are included in the RSIP recommendations. Ms. Hurst said there is a section in the RSIP recommendations which proposes changes to rear yard setback regulations; however, it applies to large lots and would not apply to a small property such as this one.

Mr. Fait stated that there is a 20 percent setback for shallow lots.

Commissioner Gaylord asked what a 20 percentage setback would mean for this property.

Mr. Swanson said it would be 15 feet.

Commissioner Gaylord asked if the basic request for the variance is to have a 10 foot setback and a balcony.

Mr. Swanson replied yes.

Chairperson Grimes asked if the proposed changes to the RSIP recommendations were enacted, would the Commission still review this item.

Mr. Fait replied yes.

The applicant's representative, John Campisano, 334 G Avenue, gave a brief overview and answered questions of the Commission.

Chairperson Grimes noted that the applicant can still build a second story in the rear yard regardless of the setback requirements. He said the question is whether the setback can be reduced by 5 feet.

Commissioner Gaylord asked if the Lamb's Market project is also a two-story structure.

Mr. Campisano said yes.

Commissioner Gaylord said she was concerned with the surrounding structures.

Commissioner Santos asked about the letter of complaint that was received by the City.

Mr. Swanson confirmed that the letter was received from a neighboring property owner.

Commissioner Gaylord asked if the complainant's garage is single story.

Mr. Swanson said the complainant has a single story, two-car garage.

Commissioner Gaylord asked if the complainant is allowed to build a second story to his residence.

Mr. Swanson said it is allowed in the zone; however, the manner in which the parcel is configured may not accommodate a second story. He added that there are severe restrictions on carriage houses which are defined as habitable guestrooms located above a garage.

Commissioner Santos expressed concern with the rear balcony and privacy issues with neighboring property owners.

Mr. Campisano said the intent of the design is to have views of the San Diego skyline, which is why the master suite is located at the rear of the lot.

Commissioner Santos commended Mr. Campisano's design; however, she reiterated her concern with privacy issues.

Mr. Campisano replied that he took into consideration the size of the lot and his ability to meet all of the requirements with the aforementioned exception. He said that the requested 5-foot reduced setback is quite minimal even if he were to conform to the 15-foot setback requirement; however, it will considerably impact the proposed design on the small lot.

Vice Chair St. Denis asked about the depth of the lot.

Mr. Campisano said the depth lot is 75 feet. He said that he is conforming to the front yard setback requirement which is 12 ½ feet, which moves the buildable area further back and imposes additional restrictions at the rear of the property, which is why he is asking for the 5-foot reduced setback.

Commissioner Gaylord asked if the 5-foot relief provides a setback of 5 or 6 feet.

Mr. Campisano replied that it would allow for a 10-foot rear yard setback at the second-story level, instead of 15 feet. He stated that he has conformed to all of the requirements at the first-floor level.

Vice Chair St. Denis asked about the setback of the edge of the second-story balcony at the rear property line.

Mr. Campisano replied that on a 10-foot setback, it would be 6 feet.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public wishing to speak at this time.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Chairperson Grimes commented that variance requests are always unique in nature. He said he likes the design and the fact that the second story addition is not a “box.” He said the unique design requires building in the rear yard setback; if the variance is not approved, it would require the structure be moved forward which would impact shade and air of the neighboring lots.

Commissioner Gaylord said she was concerned that the lot located behind the subject property would be boxed in. She said that the applicant has done a good job of opening up the middle section so that the adjacent lot gets a fair share.

Chairperson Grimes commented that if the balcony is 6 or 11 feet, it may not change the view. He said he would support the variance because, architecturally, he likes the effect the structure has on the adjacent lot.

Commissioner Gaylord commended staff for their report. She read from the staff report, under Finding B, as follows: “The encroachment sought by the applicant would result in a 10’ rear yard building setback with a balcony at a 6’ rear yard setback.” Ms. Gaylord said she understands

there are properties in the area that have the same type of setback.

Vice Chair St. Denis said she has difficulty with the findings. She understood that variance approvals do not set a precedent and that each variance is its own. Ms. St. Denis said the staff report refers to a structure on Coronado Avenue that was not habitable space but was granted a variance approval. She asked about Finding B, which reads, "Is the privilege sought by the applicant enjoyed by owners of property in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification?" Ms. St. Denis stated that the seven structures referred to in the staff report were built before the existing Ordinance was changed. She read from the staff report, under Finding B, as follows: "...however, this construction was completed before the current zoning standards were adopted. New dwellings constructed today must comply with the new second story rear yard setback requirements." She said the information was the same under Finding C. Ms. St. Denis said she has respect for the Mr. Campisano's designs and solutions on a very difficult lot; however, she also takes into the consideration the letter from the complainant who resides at 364 F Avenue. She agreed that the complainant is significantly impacted by the existing adjacent two-story house and she understands their concerns. Ms. St. Denis understands that in order to approve a variance, it must comply with all four findings. She also expressed concern with the second story balcony and potential privacy issues of neighboring property owners.

Commissioner Gaylord said that the findings refer to a home on Coronado Avenue which, unlike the subject property, is located on a large lot and backs up to a semi public golf course. She said that this structure sits on a tiny lot and is surrounding by other property owners.

Chairperson Grimes agreed that the two variance requests are different. He reminded the Commission that regardless of whether the variance is approved or not, the applicant can build a second story addition. The question is how much of an impact the setback would create if it was moved back 5 feet. Mr. Grimes opined that by setting the balcony back by 5 feet, it would not change the view into the neighboring properties.

Commissioner Santos said she felt inclined to approve the request. She said that each variance request is unique and she recognizes that the lot is very small. Ms. Santos has taken into consideration the complainant's concerns; however, she understands that the complaint will have similar issues regardless if the setback is or is not approved.

Vice Chair St. Denis read from the complainant's letter as follows: "The request for variance cites the difficulty of building on such a small lot, and the hardship of being on Fourth Street. I understand both situations well, but I am forced to point out that the lot has been that size for most of the past 100 years and Fourth Street has been an unaddressed and growing hardship for everyone living on or near it since 1969. There were no unknown or unforeseen issues with the lot known at 715 Fourth when it was purchased."

Chairperson Grimes said he did not feel that the applicant was asking for a variance in order to obtain a significant advantage. He said that from an architectural standpoint, he likes the design and although he agrees with some points in the complainant's letter, he also does not agree with other points. Mr. Grimes said he would support the request.

Commissioner Gaylord said that the RSIP Ordinance was established in part with the intent of keeping houses in the community as compatible as possible. She said her inclination is to deny the request although she would like to see the property developed.

Chairperson Grimes agreed with the stated principle and agreed that the RSIP Ordinance affects 99 percent of the lots; however, he understands that there will always be exceptions.

Vice Chair St. Denis said she has an issue with findings that are set and worded by state law.

Director Hurst said that findings for variance requests are standard. She said that the City of Coronado has used the standards consistently in evaluating variances. Ms. Hurst commented that when a staff report is written, the intent is to provide the Commission with facts in support or not in support of the findings. The applicant is also intending to provide the Commission with facts that support the findings.

Commissioner Santos agrees that our volunteer committees, such as RSIP, do a wonderful job; however, she feels that one of the duties of the Planning Commission is to review and make determinations based on the findings of each unique request.

Vice Chair St. Denis stated that she cannot base her decision on staff's findings as she does not feel they apply in this case.

Mr. Campisano said the decision should be based on the uniqueness of the lot. He questioned the point of having a Commission that reviews variances if consideration is not given to unique properties in unique situations. He clarified that the property owner located behind the rear of the subject property will be just as impacted with or without the approval of the variance. Mr. Campisano said the applicant will be significantly impacted if the variance is not approved. He added that this unique property should not be compared to other properties in the community.

Chairperson Grimes reiterated that this lot is very unique and small and there is an alley that runs adjacent to the property. He said that this type of variance request will always exist and it is the Commission's duty to consider it and make a decision.

Commissioner Gaylord stated that she would support the request.

COMMISSION ACTION

COMMISSIONER GAYLORD MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE REQUEST, AS SUBMITTED.

COMMISSIONER SANTOS SECONDED THE MOTION.

AYES: Gaylord, Grimes, Santos.
NAYS: St. Denis.
ABSENT: Jensen.
ABSTAIN: None.

The motion passed 3-1.

There is a 14-day appeal period.

PC 10-09 **CITY OF CORONADO**: Consideration of an Ordinance amending portions of Title 86 Zoning of the Coronado Municipal Code to implement the recommendations of the Residential Standards Improvement Project (RSIP). The following chapters of the Coronado Municipal Code are proposed to be amended: Chapter 86.04 Definitions; Chapter 86.08 R-1A Single Family Residential Zone; Chapter 86.09 R-1A(BF) Single Family Residential Bay Front Subzone; Chapter 86.10 R-1B Single Family Residential Zone; Chapter 86.56 Special Provisions; and Chapter 86.58 Off Street Parking. Said amendments pertain to zoning development standards and include but are not limited to the following standards: Floor Area Ratio additional design features; building height; and roof deck and second story setbacks.

Mr. Fait introduced the agenda item as outlined in the staff report.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public wishing to speak at this time.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

None.

COMMISSION ACTION

COMMISSIONER GAYLORD MADE A MOTION TO RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPTION OF THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE.

COMMISSIONER ST. DENIS SECONDED THE MOTION.

AYES: Gaylord, Grimes, Santos, St. Denis.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Jensen.

ABSTAIN: None.

The motion passed 4-0.

There is a 14-day appeal period.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Rachel A. Hurst, Director of Community Development,
Redevelopment & Housing Services