



**City of South Pasadena
Planning Commission
Special Commission Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, May 12, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the South Pasadena Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Janet Braun on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. This meeting was held via Zoom webinar, in accordance with AB 361.

ROLL CALL

Present: Laura Dahl, Commissioner;
Richard Tom Commissioner;
Lisa Padilla, Secretary;
John Lesak, Vice-Chair; and,
Janet Braun, Chair

Absent: None.

City Staff

Present: Teresa L. Highsmith, City Attorney
Joanna Hankamer, Planning and Community Development Director
Kanika Kith, Planning Manager

Council

Present: Diana Mahmud, Mayor Pro Tem, Council Liaison

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Staff request to reorganize the agenda items as follows: 1.) Budget Presentation by the Finance Department 2.) General Plan and the Downtown Specific Plan Updates Part 1 – Discussion on development standards for the proposed Downtown Specific Plan. 3.) Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Methodology.

Chair Braun motioned to proceed with the requested changes to the agenda. Commissioner Lesak seconded motion.

Motion passed 5-0.

DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS

All Commissioners presented disclosed no contact, however, did drive by the project site.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Budget Presentation by the Finance Department

Presentation on budget was presented by City staff member from the Finance Department.

Commissioner Tom requested clarification on PERS issue. Staff explained, PERS suffered a significant loss in investments and it effected the City's and their payments.

Commissioner Padilla stated the budget was informative and that it was unprecedented and is unable to be compared to the 2008 situation and budget. Staff explained that we are experiencing an unprecedented situation and its far worse then it was in 2008, however, South Pasadena is in a safe spot because we have safe revenue sources, such as our property taxes. Staff went on to compare South Pasadena to other cities and explain what economists are predicting for our economy.

Chair Braun requested clarification on whether 70% of the budget was put towards personnel, and 20-22% put towards operations. Staff confirmed those percentages were correct and that it came from the general fund budget. Chair Braun continued by encouraging all to let their voices be heard on the budget survey.

2. General Plan and the Downtown Specific Plan Updates Part 1 – Discussion on development standards for the proposed Downtown Specific Plan.

Long Range Planning and Economic Development Manager Margaret Lin, introduced the item and presentation. Staff proceeded to show the PowerPoint presentation on the discussion on the development standards for the proposed Downtown Specific Plan. The Commission was presented with the following: details of the project, details on standards for density/intensity and character for downtown areas, development standards building setbacks and typologies, new considerations for the Commission that emerged from draft plans, and standards of building heights.

At the conclusion of presentation Chair Braun opened the floor to discussion from Commissioners.

Vice-Chair Lesak commented that the current situation is making him rethink planning, in general, and stated the Commission should begin thinking of the way businesses should operate in the future due to the impact of COVID-19 on planning and that a discussion on that should be had some point in time. He goes on to comment, that street sections and larger sections are very helpful in understanding height, and he proceeds to give examples and refers back to the

presentation/project. Vice-Chair Lesak questioned what are the parameters that allow for more dwelling units per acre or lower FAR.

The presenter, city consultant, Woodie Tescher from Placework, responded by explaining that the one notion about the additional height on the ground floor allows for flexibility of space and use over time, because of the uncertainties that may come over time, and expressed his agreement with there being many discussions to come regarding COVID. He continued by reinstating the key findings on the residential densities and gave examples to the Commission. The presenter concluded by stating, the standard for density merits reconsideration based upon where the City has gone based on the its processes.

Vice-Chair Lesak followed up and stated the presenter's analysis on the matter was good and helpful and explained that given the past few approved projects, with the existing conditions, would merit more height. He receives confirmation from the consultant that the standards are in the plan but not in the presentation.

Commissioner Dahl questioned: 1.) Would residential densities make South Pasadena not in compliance with SB 330? Presenter responded by referring to City Attorney. 2.) South Pasadena current code has a number for the 3rd/4th floor be set back, can we continue to use what we already have in our code? Presenter stated that the benefit is evident in visual images of building that have been constructed, and it would be for consistency to add that to this project. 3.) Concerns on bonus criteria, and we should consider moving items to be standards and not bonuses.

Commissioner Tom echoed prior Commissioners comments on 1.) need for affordable housing, 2.) uncertainty with COVID-19 issue, 3.) density bonus issues. He went on to question the following: 1.) What is the City's thinking as to what the right result is for height limits and what the standard is because we need to think about elements of flexibility? 2.) How are we going to do this that factor in the COVID-19 uncertainty and housing uncertainty that will allow us to still come up with a specific plan and revised general plan that we can reasonably manage? Presenter echoed Commissioner Tom's concerns and explained some of the data that has been published on density and housing.

Commissioner Padilla commented on wanting to ensure Mission Street floor heights are not too high and keep appropriate for fitting in; overall advocate for sustainability. Fair Oaks Avenue brings concern to the floor-to-floor heights; overall commission needs to ensure appropriateness of heights; should include ability for architects/developers to create variation for specific uses that would activate Fair Oaks Avenue. Dwelling units per acre; not encouraging developers to build a lot of small units, rather build what is appropriate for our specific location.

Chair Braun commented on horizontal setback on Mission Street being a good thing; requiring landscape would be a good idea. Guidelines to get the bonus are a little too easy/lenient; Commission needs to look at those again. Height is important feature on Mission Street. FAR and density information is fascinating and lowering the FAR and increasing the density is a creative idea.

Council Liaison Mahmud commented on the presentation and recommendations for future presentations to encourage the public participations.

3. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Methodology

Manager Lin introduced the item. Sean Daly from Iteris and Jillian Neary from Psomas made themselves available for questions following the prerecorded presentation.

Chair Braun opened the floor to questions from Commissioners.

Vice-Chair Lesak questioned how to calculate vehicle miles traveled and how those measurements take ride shares into account. Mr. Daly replied stating that it is calculated through the regional travel demand model developed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and explained the formula to calculate the vehicle miles traveled.

Commissioner Dahl commented stating this is an improvement on using level of service.

Commissioner Tom followed up on Vice-Chair Lesak's question as to how it is VMT measured and explained further.

Director Hankamer called on Jillian Neary to explain the item and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) in more detail.

Commissioner Tom asked Ms. Neary to share the experience with other cities who are ahead of South Pasadena in terms of dealing with the changes and traffic and what residents are concerned with.

Ms. Neary and Mr. Daly explained that every city outside of San Francisco has retained sort of traditional traffic operations which is consistent with the general plan.

Commissioner Padilla and Chair Braun had no questions/comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

4. Project No. 2109-HDP/DRX – Hillside Development Permit and Design Review for a 496 square-foot addition at 713 Flores de Oro

Staff introduced the item and applicant architect Tom Wuji. Mr. Wuji is available for questions after the prerecorded presentation from staff.

Staff stated the addition as proposed in the presentation meets the applicable zoning and design standards, therefore, staff recommends the Commission adopt a resolution improving a Hillside Development Permit and Design Review for a 486 square-foot addition to the residence at 713 Flores de Oro.

Chair Braun opened the floor to Commission comments and/or questions.

Vice-Chair Lesak stated he would wait to ask the applicant.

Commissioner Dahl questioned if the existing code will apply to ensure the green roof stays green and attractive.

Director Hankamer stated she would have the expectation that it would be maintained as intended.

Commissioner Padilla questioned whether it would be an addition even though it appears to be a separate structure connected by a breezeway.

Staff ensured that it would be an addition with the covered breezeway connection.

Commissioner Tom and Chair Braun had no questions.

Council Liaison Mahmud provides information on legislation that precluded the City from enforcing any legal requirement on the greenery of front yards due to the drought.

Chair Braun opened the public hearing for public comment. No public comments were submitted.

Applicant Tom Wuji and staff narrated the applicant presentation. Applicant clarified in response to the maintenance of the greenery on the roof and explained the trays can be replaced, making it easy to maintain; the trays have built in drip irrigation system.

Chair Braun opened questions from the Commission to the applicant.

Vice-Chair Lesak questioned the pre-fab log cabins. The applicant explained the reasoning for the pre-fab log cabins and how it would be put together. He continued to state he was in favor of the design.

Vice-Chair Lesak made motion to adopt a resolution approving project. Commissioner Tom seconded motion.

Motion passed 5-0.

DISCUSSION

5. Update on Urgency Ordinance for Amending Zoning Code and Tolling Deadlines during the Local Declaration of Emergency

Director Hankamer introduced the item.

All Commissioners had no questions and commended staff for their hard work.

ADMINISTRATION

6. Comments from Council Liaison

Informs Commission of Council's perspective and interests regarding the proposed changes in urgency ordinance. Applauds staff for all work done.

7. Comments from Planning Commissioners

Vice-Chair Lesak commented on being thoughtful and encouraging flexibility when considering certain situations and projects.

Commissioner Tom stated it was a great discussion tonight and expressed ensuring we allow ourselves options when moving forward. Grateful to be working with this group to try and work through the challenges. Expressed appreciation for service to City.

Commissioner Padilla commented on how great it is to see everyone out in the community walking.

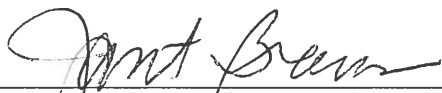
Chair Braun commented on enjoying working with everyone and thanked everyone.

8. Comments from Staff

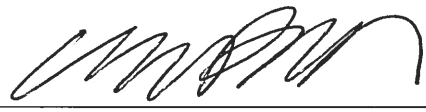
Director Hankamer thanked everyone and emphasized the appreciation in understanding the budget challenge.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Braun adjourned the Planning Commission meeting on May 12, 2020, at 8:57 p.m.



Janet Braun, Chair



Lisa Padilla, Secretary to the Planning Commission