

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION MINUTES
February 8, 2017
Large Conference Room, City Hall
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Calerdine called the meeting to order at 11:01 am.

ROLL CALL:

Present This Meeting: Commissioner Donenfeld, Commissioner Hirschbein, Commissioner Hudson, Commissioner Lowe, Commissioner Middleton, Vice-Chair Weremiuk, Chair Calerdine

Absent This Meeting: None.

Staff Present: Planning Director Fagg, Deputy City Attorney Daudt, Principal Planner Robertson

Chair Calerdine requested that public comment be taken during each discussion item on the agenda, rather than at the beginning of the study session.

1. DISCUSSION OF REVISIONS TO THE PROPOSED CANYON VIEW DEVELOPMENT, A 13.28 ACRE SINGLE-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF EAST PALM CANYON DRIVE AND MATTHEW DRIVE, ZONE R-3 (CASE NO. 5.1384 - PD 381/TTM 36969).

Planning Director Fagg gave a brief presentation on the status of the appeal for the project, and the revisions to the project that is being proposed by the applicant.

ROB BERNHEIMER, TIM UNGER and RHONDA NEELY, applicants, gave a presentation on the changes to the site plan, reduction in the number of units, and proposed floor plan and elevations.

Commissioner Middleton questioned if the new layout would provide privacy in rear yards with the location of the two-story element of the houses. She questioned the affordability of the project (the applicant responded that they were previously looking at a range of \$500,000 to \$600,000 to start, and that they didn't expect a material change in the pricing). She noted that it was preferable that the second-story portion of the

residence be pushed back from the garage elevation so as to reduce the massing on the motor courts.

Vice-Chair Weremiuk noted that the blank wall of the units needs to be architecturally detailed, and requested an explanation of the motor courts and how vehicles would back up. She questioned how trash pickup would function, and where landscape crews would park their trucks/trailers. She asked the applicant about the additional costs related to the flood control channels. (The applicant responded that the cost was approximately \$1 million, not including the loss of land.)

Commissioner Donenfeld verified fire access to the motor courts, and questioned the setbacks at the interior of the motor courts. He also questioned the appearance of the residences along the primary spine road at the interior of the development, and agreed that the massing of the second-story portion of the residences needed to be located towards the center of the lot to avoid a "canyon effect" on the motor courts. He verified if the flood channels would have some type of barrier to protect the public.

Chair Calerdine suggested that some driveways might take access from the central spine road so as to break up the long walls along the street. He asked where the guest parking would be located for the units without a full-length driveway. He noted a concern with the appearance of the flood control channels, and questioned how the five-foot wide back yards would be used. He asked how the project will incorporate the Line 41 drainage project, and wanted to see where the mitigation site for Casey's June Beetle would be located.

Commissioner Hudson noted that it was nice to have the motor courts, as vehicles would not be backing across the sidewalk. He questioned if a side-entry garage would be possible on lots 47 and 48, and stated that the residences should have a one-story elevation on the motor court as it would be more attractive and pedestrian scaled. He asked what the ratio of square footage was between the 2nd floor and the 1st floor, and suggested that the floor area of the second story should be minimized.

Commissioner Hirschbein requested that the applicant provide elevations and renderings of the motor courts to get a sense of the scale. He concurred with the other Commissioners regarding the guest parking issues for units without driveways, and questioned if the applicant could provide a decomposed granite trail on E. Palm Canyon instead of a concrete path. He questioned who will own and maintain the flood channels - (the applicant responded that the HOA would own/maintain the flood channels).

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Calerdine opened the public comment portion of the agenda, with the following speaker addressing the Commission:

MICHELLE JOHNSON, stated that the revisions to the project were a big improvement, but was still concerned about only one entrance to the project and the traffic that would be generated by the development. She asked if there would be any swimming pools, and questioned the rear yard setbacks between each of the motor courts. She suggested that the developer should offer one-story units, and did not like the idea of a median island in Palm Canyon Drive.

There being no further speakers, Chair Calerdine closed the public comment portion of the agenda.

ROB BERNHEIMER, applicant, noted that they were submitting a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation to Medium Density Residential as part of the consideration of the revisions to the site plan.

The Planning Commissioners offered the following comments on the revisions to the development plan:

Commissioner Hirschbein stated that this was a much better project, and thought that a landscaped median would be a great public benefit. He noted a concern about the 10' setback between houses at the rear yard, and had a strong negative reaction to the concrete drainage channels. He noted that swimming pools would need to be a minimum of 3' from property lines, and stated that the casita should be limited to a bedroom and bathroom only (no study). He also stated that 45% lot coverage should be the maximum for the individual lots, and suggested that the dog park at the northwest corner of the site would be appropriate based on current use patterns. He would like to see pedestrians be able to cross diagonally through the site, and thought that walling the project off was a negative approach.

Commissioner Middleton stated that the project was going in the right direction on the redesign, and suggested the applicants look at creating a community pool. She also stated that she would like more information on the how the motor courts work from a vehicle circulation standpoint, as well as additional information about setbacks and massing from the motor courts.

Chair Calerdine noted that the revisions were a major improvement. He noted concerns with the short driveways and guest parking, and privacy of the second story units. He requested that the applicant provide elevations along the spine street, along the motor courts, and from the outside streets. He suggested that different paving materials be utilized in the motor courts, and that plans/elevations need to clearly suggest the location for the front door of the residence. He asked if the sidewalk on E. Palm Canyon could be separated from the street with a landscape buffer, and suggested that a pedestrian access should be provided from the motor courts on the north side of the project to sidewalk on E. Palm Canyon.

Commissioner Lowe stated that the project was much better than before and that the reduced density was better. He asked if the applicant was going to include solar or provide the option for solar. (The applicant noted that they would pre-wire the development for solar.) He noted that he liked the increased open space and public garden, and stated that he did not like the walled-in look of the project.

Commissioner Donenfeld agreed that the project was much better, and stated that he liked the motor courts but was concerned about the elevations, and felt that the second-story should be pushed back towards the interior of the floor plan. He noted that he might be willing to consider gates for the project due to special circumstances.

Commissioner Hudson noted his support for a median on E. Palm Canyon, and appreciates the new architecture. He agreed that the massing of the second story needs to be manipulated/pushed back, and that the applicant needs to look at offering a one-story plan. He stated that he liked the new site plan with the sidewalk on the central street and all garages on the motor courts, and agreed with the suggestion for a community pool. He suggested that the common open space should be more central to the site (near lots 8 & 9 as a possibility). He does not support the General Plan Amendment, and suggested that the east end of the site should be a different housing product so as to offer a greater variety of housing types.

Vice-Chair Weremiuk noted her support of Commissioner Hudson's comments about additional housing types, and suggested that a second vehicular exit should be available to residents. She requested more detail on the open space at the front of the project, and supported that comment that pedestrian access should be provided from the motor courts to the trail at E. Palm Canyon. She also offered support for a community swimming pool, and the suggestion to move the open space towards the center of the development. She questioned how to get to the dog park from both inside and outside of the development, was open to the requirement for the median in E. Palm Canyon, and wants additional details and elevations for the motor courts. She requested that the developer think about one-story units on E. Palm Canyon, and stated that the revisions were much better.

There being no further comments from the Commissioners, Chair Calerdine ended the discussion on Agenda Item #1.

2. DISCUSSION OF CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR THE REVIEW OF EXTENSION OF TIME APPLICATIONS (CASE 5.1405).

Planning Director Fagg gave a summary of the recommendations of the Planning Commission subcommittee and the discussion on the proposed ordinance at the public hearing on January 25, 2017.

Chair Calerdine open public comments and with no speakers coming forward public comments was closed.

Chair Calerdine questioned if there was a need to limit the number of extensions. He stated that it was necessary to take economic conditions into account and that Planning Commission should have discretion as to the number of extensions.

Vice-Chair Weremiuk stated that she was not in favor of a two-year timeframe for extensions. She thought that there was a need to limit the maximum number of extensions, and that five (5) one-year extensions beyond the original entitlement was adequate. She thought the draft ordinance needed to be explicit as to what constitutes "extenuating circumstances," and noted that the failure to get financing or bad market conditions were not a reason to extend.

Commissioner Donenfeld agreed that the section of the draft ordinance regarding extenuating circumstances was too broad, and that it should not be related to the inability to get financing. He thought it was necessary to limit the number of extensions, but that the ordinance needed to allow for extreme circumstances.

Commissioner Middleton supported a maximum of five (5) one-year extensions, but likes the flexibility to grant an extension of up to two years. She stated that she would like City Council to have the ability to extend beyond the five years for extreme circumstances.

Commissioner Hirschbein stated that he didn't want to lose flexibility to deny a project.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further comments Chair Calerdine closed the discussion and adjourned the study session at 1:04 pm to their regular meeting at 1:30 pm, Wednesday, February 8, 2017, City Hall, Council Chamber, 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way.


Flinn Fagg, AICP
Director of Planning Services