

**TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2010**

Present: Brown, Krebs, Schinner, Sisich, Zwick, Overberger (arrived at 7:15 p.m.)
Absent: Harris

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Brown called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

No one spoke.

PLANNING AND BUILDING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Interim Planning Director Diane Henderson reminded the Commissioners of Sonoma State University's Planning Commissioners Conference scheduled for Saturday, December 4, 2010.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of Planning Commission Meeting September 20, 2010 *Note: The approval of these minutes was continued from the October 4, 2010 meeting.*

Minutes of Planning Commission Meeting October 4, 2010

M/s, Schinner, Krebs, to approve the minutes of September 20 and October 4, 2010
Ayes: Brown, Krebs, Schinner, Sisich, Zwick
Absent: Harris, Overberger

REGULAR AGENDA

UP-1010/DR-1014 - Sarita Patel for George Lucas, 91, 101 and 111 Red Hill Avenue, APN's 006-214-04, 006-169-02 and 006-169-04 Conditional Use Permit to demolish the structure (Amazing Grace Music) at 111 Red Hill Avenue and Design Review for exterior improvements and a 93 square foot addition to 91 Red Hill Avenue. The project site is located in the General Commercial (C-3) Zoning District. (Staff person: Boyle)

Commissioner Overberger joined the meeting.

Senior Planner Phil Boyle presented the staff report. Boyle explained that the project involves three parcels directly across the street from United Market on Red Hill Avenue and that all three parcels are owned by the applicant. The building located at 111 Red Hill Avenue and currently occupied by Amazing Grace Music is to be demolished and turned into a landscaped area. Amazing Grace Music will occupy the building at 91 Red Hill Avenue and the eastern portion of the parcel between 91 and 111 will become parking for the exclusive use of 91 Red Hill Avenue.

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Exterior changes planned for 91 Red Hill include removal of a corner of the building to move the structure away from the property line and back from the street, thereby providing more visibility from the new parking lot. A gable element facing United Market, upgrades to windows and finishes, and enhancements to the roofline are also planned.

Boyle noted that the Planning Department has received a number of letters and emails of support for the project. Further, he was able to make all necessary findings for conditional approval of the project and observed that Designer Bill O'Callaghan could answer any further questions.

Commissioner Schinner asked if sidewalks were planned for the area adjacent to the parking lot.

Boyle responded that new handicap ramps are planned between the parking lot and the improved structure at 91 Red Hill. Additionally all existing damaged or cracked sidewalks will be repaired and a new curb will be built on the Miracle Mile side of the site. Boyle added that a number of existing curb cuts and driveways will be removed.

Brown asked if the Public Works Department has reviewed the project; specifically, are they comfortable with the ingress and egress planned for the parking lot.

Boyle affirmed, adding that the Fire Department has also looked at the plan. Boyle added that emergency vehicles traveling east on the Miracle Mile will be able to cut through this parking lot to get to Forbes Avenue.

Brown opened the meeting to the public and invited the applicant to make a presentation.

Designer Bill O'Callaghan presented a traffic flow plan for the proposed parking lot and an overview of the project. He advised that the plan is to begin with the remodel of 91 Red Hill Avenue, removing a portion of an earlier addition, infilling the corner to give the structure some symmetry, and pulling it away from the sidewalk. Landscaping and simplifying the roof will follow. The retail store will then move into 91 Red Hill and 111 Red Hill will be demolished. The parking lot will be built, including a breakaway bollard for the Fire Department's pull-through. Existing sidewalks will remain and be repaired as necessary; they will be extended, turned into a curb and gutter, and tied into the driveway.

O'Callaghan stated that the existing landscape will be filled in and extended. Lower plantings will improve the view lines. A series of redwood and hackberry trees are planned; most of the plantings are drought- and deer-resistant. Approximately 53% of the proposed landscaping will feature native plants.

Portions of the building will be clad in cultured stone, with a skim coat of stucco on the back portion. The window will be dark clad and new terra cotta tile will be woven into the existing tile on the roof. In front of the store some of the pads and the landings for access to the doors will be fixed. Two trees are planned for the front of the building. An existing tree has Dutch Elm disease and will be removed. An exit ramp will be built on the Miracle Mile side.

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Sisich asked if the landscaping will be irrigated.

O'Callaghan affirmed, adding that there are three separate meters.

Sisich asked if the site will remain private property and be maintained by the owner.

O'Callaghan affirmed.

Brown opened the meeting to the public.

Tom Robinson, Crooked Avenue, asked if the sidewalk will continue on the north side of the site to Sequoia Drive.

Brown affirmed.

Linda Hoch, Sequoia Drive, noted that the site is currently an eyesore and she applauds the plans for improvement.

Darleen Dinelli, Hilldale Drive, asked if the current structure housing Amazing Grace is an historical building, as she believes it was once part of a railroad station.

Boyle responded that research turned up no evidence of a connection between the railroad and the Amazing Grace site. There were two nearby railroad stops: one at the hub and another on the border of San Anselmo and San Rafael. The Amazing Grace building was formerly the site of a farmer's market or fruit stand, an equipment rental store, and various other retail endeavors.

Dinelli was curious about the duration of the project and asked what could be expected with regard to related traffic and traffic controls.

Project Manager Sarita Patel advised that it is hoped work will take place between 7:00 a.m. and 4 p.m. Patel anticipates extending those hours only occasionally if the project is behind schedule. She noted that for a previous undergrounding project, work occurred into the night on only two occasions with prior approval.

San Rafael resident Peter Stack applauded the project.

Brown closed the public hearing and returned the discussion to the Planning Commission.

Sisich applauded the project and noted it is a huge improvement to the area.

Krebs asked that the applicant be considerate of neighbors, as there has been much on-going work in the residential area of the neighborhood to date. He also recognizes that this project will improve the commercial site and thanked the applicant for his efforts in taking it on.

M/s, Sisich/Zwick, to move the staff report with conditions attached.

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AYES: Brown, Krebs, Overberger, Schinner, Sisich, Zwick
ABSENT: Harris

ITEMS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Brown advised that when he and Zwick were interviewed by the Town Council for appointments to the Planning Commission a few weeks earlier, Councilmember Kroot spoke with Brown about how to conduct meetings and offered advice for doing so in a way that allowed all Commissioners to share their thoughts equally.

Brown added that Kroot opined the Town's grading ordinance is too restrictive.

Zwick mentioned that Kroot addressed him with regard to the Town's rules for front yard fences.

Overberger advised that she believes Brown has been an effective leader at Planning Commission meetings and fair in soliciting comments from each of the Commissioners.

Zwick suggested that topics for future Planning Commission meetings might include the Town's tree ordinance and consideration of a potential historic landmark ordinance.

Henderson advised that the tree ordinance falls under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department. She will place the subject of an historical landmark ordinance on the Planning Department's to-do list.

Brown asked for an update on the housing element.

Henderson responded that it is currently being reviewed by the state, that a response is expected within a few weeks, and that the response will likely contain numerous comments to which the Town will respond.

Henderson further noted that the Planning Department has received an application to amend the Master Plan for the San Francisco Theological Seminary and that the Town has retained Bob Berman of Nichols Berman to conduct the environmental review. The Seminary has conducted several preliminary studies over several years; the Planning Department must conduct peer and environmental review of what has been provided. Henderson advised that the Commission would be apprised when a clear timeline of the project emerges.

Brown asked for a description of the project.

Henderson responded that the project entails selling several residential units that are located off-site; the Seminary's census is declining and they would want to use the proceeds from the sales to invest in the campus.

Overberger speculated on the Seminary's continued viability.

Sisich asked if the Town has a deposit from the Seminary for staff time.

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Henderson responded that the Seminary is charged for both staff and consultant time.

Krebs noted that flatland FAR has been in effect for over a year. He further observed that there have been no requests for variances since the passage of the ordinance. He asked if staff has received any feedback that the ordinance is either too restrictive or problematic; he also asked whether or not the attic ceiling requirement has become an issue.

Boyle indicated that there are some nuances in the distinctions between flatland and hillside FAR that can be difficult to grasp and that it takes some explanation. So far, applicants have not had to significantly modify projects to meet flatland FAR. Boyle added that there has been one request for an extension from an applicant who received planning approval in 2008. If the applicant were to lose his extension and reapply today, he would need to modify his project in order to meet the flatland FAR.

Overberger observed that it does not appear that flatland FAR has created any undo hardship for San Anselmo residents.

Krebs observed that there seems to have been little interest in seeking variances.

Boyle concurred; noting that the new single family home at 115 Calumet is an example of a project that came close to the limits of flatland FAR but ultimately met the requirements.

Brown asked if there has been any early feedback on the Green Building Ordinance.

Boyle advised that he will be conducting a workshop on December 3 for staff and on December 10 for the public. The ordinance goes into effect on January 1. He added that the State is still analyzing the ordinance and that the Planning Department hopes to receive their blessing within a week or two.

ADJOURN TO THE MEETING DATE OF DECEMBER 6, 2010

Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Harris