

**TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MONDAY, March 2, 2015**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair House, Co-Chair Swaim, Commissioners Brasler,
Krebs, Pipkin, Sisich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Cronk

CALL TO ORDER

Chair House called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

No one spoke.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting of February 2, 2015

M/s, Swaim/Sisich, to approve the minutes

AYES: House, Krebs, Pipkin, Sisich, Swaim

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: Brasler

ABSENT: Cronk

PUBLIC HEARINGS

DR-1406, VAR-1501, VAR-1502, Chris and Stacie Mancini, 16 Kemp Avenue, APN 007-172-14: Flatland design review and side yard setback variances to raise the existing nonconforming three-story house 4 feet 6 inches in height from 25 feet 2 inches to 29 feet 8 inches, approximately 5 feet 6 inches from the east side property line and 3 feet 2 inches from the west side property line (where the Code requires 8 feet). The raising of the house is proposed to mitigate current flooding issues at the ground floor level and to reconfigure usable living space. The proposed design maintains the existing footprint of the house and adds no additional square footage. The existing main living space of the home is proposed to become the upper level and to be converted into bedrooms. The existing lower level will be renovated into family room, living room and dining space. The proposal will add a crawl space under the existing house. The existing attic will remain. The project site is located in the R-1 Zoning District. (Staff person: Jonckheer)

Senior Planner Elizabeth Jonckheer presented the staff report.

Commissioner Brasler asked about the status of discussions between the applicant and the neighbor with regard to windows.

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Jonckheer replied that staff has recommended the applicant work further with the neighbors at 329 Laurel Avenue to develop a mutually-agreeable window plan that could be reviewed at the staff level if the current application is approved.

Commissioner Swaim asked if there were suggestions for ways in which to mitigate flooding at the property either privately or publicly.

Senior Engineer Dan Blomquist explained that the property is subject to localized flooding that occurs as a result of the back-up of an existing city storm drain. Solutions include raising the structure as the applicant is proposing to do and installing flood-proofing around the exterior of the house. Pumping would not be beneficial because there is no viable destination for the water. Slab on grade construction is not a recommended course of action.

Applicant Stacie Mancini explained that she and her husband would like to remodel their home so they will have more space for their family.

Designer Laura Hamlin explained that development of the ground level addresses the flooding issues and lowers the public functions. The proposed windows in the upper level will be smaller than the existing windows. The usage of the attic space will not change and the window located there could be opaque.

Applicant Chris Mancini explained that flooding is their main concern and believes many privacy issues have been addressed, adding that lowering the main living space improves privacy with the most traveled areas. He believes theirs is a sensible design.

Malcolm McCord, Crescent Road, reiterated the need to address the Mancinis' flooding issues. He appreciates the lively neighborhood and encouraged the Planning Commission to approve the application.

Jill Korst, Raymond Avenue, believes the plans are in keeping with the neighborhood and supports the project.

Grier Argall, Laurel Avenue, described the flooding issues that plague the Mancinis and other neighbors. He believes raising the house is consistent with what has been granted to neighbors in the past.

David Mandelbrot, Laurel Avenue, believes he and his family are affected differently from the other neighbors and noted that neither of the two standards required for the granting of a variance have been met.

Kina Mandelbrot, Laurel Avenue, is concerned about the impact of raising the structure 4 ½ feet and the effect this will have on light and privacy.

Chris Mancini responded that he is looking for guidance from the Planning Commission as to whether or not their project is reasonable as proposed.

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Commissioner Krebs asked for clarification of the attic height at its highest point.

Hamlin responded that it is 8'2" at its highest point, adding that neither the attic nor the basement is considered habitable space.

Krebs asked if consideration had been given to reducing the size or other alternative measures for the attic.

Hamlin responded that the height is being reduced because the existing structure is substandard; a structural engineer will be consulted to determine how large the structure needs to be.

Discussion ensued regarding alternative plans suggested by the Mandelbrots. Hamlin is of the opinion that the suggested hip roof at the rear of the structure compromises the integrity of the design.

Commissioner Pipkin asked for clarification of the side elevation and the alignment of windows.

Hamlin explained that the windows do not align because an attempt is being made to capture some natural light at that level.

Pipkin questioned the issue of design integrity vs. light and privacy concerns.

Hamlin believes the existing house creates more privacy issues than does the proposed design. An attempt was made to reduce visibility of adjacent neighbors.

Swaim asked about the height of the attic space and whether or not any consideration had been given to eliminating the attic or lowering the height of the roof.

Hamlin explained that the Mancinis are planning to use the attic as storage space.

Mancini recounted the path taken to the current proposal. He believes the current proposal is a reasonable one.

Commissioner Sisich supports the project, noting that the current design maintains the integrity of the home. While hip roofs are often used in Town to reduce mass, he does not believe it will work in this instance because it will compromise the aesthetics of the design. While not a proponent of tall attic space, Sisich acknowledged that the alternative would be to dismantle the roof to lower the pitch and the result would not be aesthetically pleasing.

While a hip roof would reduce the size of the house, Sisich urges the Commissioners to consider the context: the Mandelbrots' home is on a huge lot 60 feet away; the applicant's home is on a tiny lot shoe-horned in between larger lots. He further observed that topography is a criterion for granting a variance and that topography is leading to a drainage problem. The windows are reasonably placed and sized.

Swaim largely agrees with Sisich but believes there is room for compromise on the height.

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Krebs agrees with many of Sisich's points and appreciates the applicants' efforts to work with neighbors. He likewise understands the Mandelbrots' concerns; at the same time, Krebs believes the proposal is reasonable and that the changes suggested are not significant. He further respects the effort to keep the square footage the same. Krebs is leaning toward approval of the project.

Brasler believes the small lot size meets the criteria of special circumstances for a variance. Also, the topography is causing localized flooding. He encouraged the applicants to continue to work with the neighbors regarding window treatment. With respect to air, there is significant distance between the two properties. With respect to light, the orientation of the Mandelbrots' living space is more front-yard directed, which is not where the light is. Brasler could support the project and will listen to further comments.

Pipkin concurs with the previous comments of fellow Commissioners; however she is ambivalent about the design and believes the attic could be architecturally revisited without compromising any of the actual square footage.

House noted that on past occasions when the Planning Commission has made stipulations on design elements such as roofs, the projects have not typically come out satisfactorily. She does not see a privacy issue. Light might be an issue; however, it is more important to allow the applicants to acquire the space they would like to have than to prioritize the elimination of some of the edges of the light that is around there. House is able to support the staff report as it stands.

M/s, Sisich/Brasler, to approve the staff report with the deletion of Condition No. 2 and adding a condition that the attic window be opaque.

AYES: Brasler, House, Krebs, Sisich, Swaim
NOES: Pipkin
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Cronk

The Commissioners encouraged the applicant to work with Planning staff regarding the windows to see if there are measures that might be undertaken to mitigate neighbors' concerns.

House reminded all of the ten-day appeal process.

Consideration of the San Anselmo Community Facilities Master Plan. As part of the 2012 Town Council strategic planning survey, Town residents identified improved community facilities as one of the top three public priorities. To address this, the Council adopted a strategic goal to prepare a Community Facilities Master Plan. The goal for the Community Facilities Master Plan is to develop community supported recommendations that meet the community recreational needs and can be implemented by the Town Council and staff. The Community Facilities Master Plan explores facility improvement options, implementation costs and funding options at both Robson Harrington Park at 237 Crescent Road, and at the Isabel Cook Community Center property at 1000 Sir Francis Drake Blvd. The role of the Planning Commission is to make a recommendation to the Town Council. (Staff person: Donery)

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Sisich noted that although his home is within 500 feet of the Isabel Cook Community Center, the Town Attorney has advised that there is no conflict of interest in this matter and that Sisich can take part in discussion of the Master Plan.

Director of Community Services David Donery described community education, input efforts, and the resulting priorities for a Community Facilities Master Plan.

Principal Architect David Schnee of Group 4 Architecture discussed program options and alternatives for the Isabel Cook Center.

Donery described the process for considering changes to the Robson Harrington Park facility.

Schnee described possible configurations for Robson Harrington.

Donery discussed plans to take the Master Plan, along with comments from the Planning Commission, to the Town Council on March 10.

Brasler discussed traffic challenges on Sir Francis Drake and expressed concerns regarding the proposed soft costs of the project. He is of the opinion that the plans for drop off and pick up at Robson Harrington, as well as the four proposed parking spots on Tamalpais and Magnolia, should be addressed immediately; Robson House is an asset in need of attention.

Sisich asked about the proposed height of the Isabel Cook Center, parking plans, and potential signalization at Sunny Hills Drive.

Schnee responded that the height of the new Isabel Cook Center should be about 35 feet.

Donery would like to get a signal at Sir Francis Drake and Sunny Hills.

Community Advisory Committee member Carla Overberger, Nokomis Avenue noted the astonishing breadth of community input for the Master Plan and reminded all that the plan will result in a series of facilities that will be used by everyone. She acknowledged the challenge that comes with raising the necessary funds and pointed to San Rafael's successful endeavor.

Grier Argall, Laurel Avenue, suggested consideration of Sorich Park and Red Hill School as potential venues for a community facility in light of the parking and traffic issues associated with Isabel Cook and Robson Harrington.

Jeff Kroot, Crescent Road, is dubious of the need for extensive additional parking at Robson Harrington. He is hopeful that if parking is added below the facility, it will be done sensitively and that the old brick walls and trees will be preserved. Kroot sees a definite need for bathroom facilities at the park.

M/s, Brasler/Swaim, to move the staff report with the caveat that there will be more refinement to the project and acknowledging staff's fine work in moving the project along to this point.

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AYES: Brasler, House, Krebs, Pipkin, Sisich, Swaim
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Cronk

ITEMS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

Town Manager Debbie Stutsman announced that Interim Planning Director Diane Henderson has been named San Rafael's Citizen of the Year by the San Rafael City Council. Henderson was honored for her generous and continuing contributions to the community.

ADJOURN TO THE MEETING OF MARCH 16, 2015

House adjourned meeting at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Harris