

# STRAWBERRY DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

## Minutes of 6/6/21 meeting

Board members present:

Julie Brown, Matt Williams, Joe Sherer, Chad Sparks, Penna Omega

### 7:35 PM: CALL TO ORDER

- **Official recognition to outgoing member, Joe Sherer.** The board members expressed their heartfelt thanks for many years of service to the Design Review Board and the community.
- **Review and approval of past minutes**  
2/28/2022: Motion was made to approve 2/28/22 minutes. Four approvals, Penna Omega abstained.  
4/18/2022: Motion was made to approve. Four approvals, Penna Omega abstained  
5/2/2022: Unanimously approved
- **Public comments for items not on the agenda:** None

### ITEM 1: PANAHI VARIANCE & DESIGN REVIEW (P3602)

**Project Planner:** Erin Yattaw

**153 Richardson Drive, Mill Valley**

**Assessor's Parcel 043-071-14,**

**Project ID P3602**

**APPLICANT: Geoffrey Butler**

**PROJECT SUMMARY:** The applicant requests Variance and Design Review to construct a new 540 square foot attached garage, a new 78 square foot addition and a conversion of the existing 528 square foot garage on the first floor, a new 338 square foot addition and new decks on the second floor, a new 1,475 square foot third floor addition with decks, on a lot developed with a single-family dwelling in Mill Valley. The 2,341 square feet of proposed building area – of which 1,813 square feet is floor area – would result in a floor area ratio of 41 percent on the 10,290 square foot lot. The proposed building would reach a maximum height of 38 feet, 6 ½ inches above surrounding grade. Variance approval is required pursuant to Marin County Code Section 22.54.020 because the project entails constructing additions that would exceed the maximum allowable FAR of 30 percent. Design Review approval is required pursuant to Section 22.42.020.D because the amount of proposed demolition of the existing residence would return this property a vacant lot and the building site is substandard per the slope regulations (in compliance with Section 22.82.050 Hillside Subdivision Standards). Additionally, Design Review approval is required pursuant to Section 22.20.060.E.2 because a dwelling in a R1 (Residential Single-Family) zoning district may be increased in height without Variance approval by a maximum of 10 feet when side setbacks of 15 feet or greater are provided, subject to the regulations of Chapter 22.42 (Design Review).

**Zoning: R1** (Residential Single Family)

**Countywide Plan Designation:** SF6 (Low Density Residential)

**Community Plan:** Strawberry

Applicant Geoffrey Butler delivered a presentation of the project. At this time, he would like to receive comments rather than put the application to a vote due to the unique elements and overall challenges of the project. He discussed the site development and history. He talked about the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and is requesting a small variance of 385 feet due to the unique lot conditions. He explained the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and how a free standing ADU was not possible due to the 25 percent setback requirements and how it affects FAR. He spoke about the single-family design guidelines. The new home is built into the upslope at Richardson drive and is a two-story home to the west. The other three sides of the home are three stories with large setbacks to give the house depth. This, combined with the finishes, help reduce the height and mass of the house which the story poles can't adequately represent. Concerning parking, the driveway will remain in the same location with the garage moving south to fill in the parking area under the existing deck. The four parking spaces are well hidden from the street. He also commented on the Hillside Neighborhood Context and given the split nature of upper and lower Richardson Drive; he feels few homes are affected by the height. Lastly, he spoke about site development and how there will be very low impact. The permanent landscape will be restored and supplemented to maintain privacy.

Mr. Butler then reviewed the drawings and discussion between the applicant and Board ensued.

Julie Brown inquired about the location of the retaining wall. Applicant stated it is at the top of the elevation. Joe Sherer inquired about the scale of the window. The size is 7 ft. x 7 ft. She also inquired as to the height of the retaining wall. Applicant answered that it is 4 to 4 1/2 feet tall from the existing patio area. The main floor of the house will be raised two feet. A new retaining wall will be poured over the existing as repair, rather than demolishing the existing one. Julie inquired about the landscape plan. Applicant answered that the strategy is to rehab existing vegetation through pruning, irrigation and fertilize and then plant additional plantings to enhance what is there.

Matt Williams inquired about the story poles. Applicant stated that the story poles represent the corners of the house and not the eaves of the roof.

Penna Omega asked about the existing plantings, particularly the ivy, which she feels doesn't fit with the style of the house. Applicant discussed and clarified the new proposed plantings. He hasn't had a chance to review the landscaping plan with Fire yet.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eliza Jewett Holmes lives at 156 Richardson and expressed her main concern is maintaining privacy from the street level and that light issues from the Recreation Center or the roadways.

She does like that the proposed plantings are native but worries that some of the species aren't tall enough to protect privacy. She submitted a letter for the record (see attached).

Megan Heller lives at 154 Richardson and stated that existing vegetation, which has grown over time, now blocks her views. She is concerned that the size of the house combined with new vegetation will eliminate what little view she has left.

Joe stated that he met with the neighbor at 152 - Robert Nickeloff - and gave Joe a note that read, "approves of proposed construction" and "would like removal of number of large trees on the south side". Joe said that the Black Acacias and Redwood were the trees he is referencing.

Sade Panahe is the owner of the project property (153) with the trees being discussed. He has lived in community for 47 years. When he purchased the property, the trees were already overgrown. About six months ago at the advice of the fire department, he began to trim the trees, which is why the neighbors can now see the story poles. The view is currently blocked because of multiple houses. He doesn't feel that the proposed house will block anyone's view.

Matt shared photographs he approximated at Megan's floor height which does appear to impact view.

Public comments were closed.

#### BOARD DISCUSSION:

Penna: While the renderings are pretty, it does seem huge. From either angle, it is massive and there are a lot of issues to work through. She also thinks the window is too large and worries about constant chandelier lighting. It feels like the property is just dropped onto the site, rather than nestled into the property.

Chad: Thinks the project is well thought out. He realizes there will be vegetation challenges, but with a landscape professional, the issues can be resolved. He likes the house and doesn't think it is too large.

Matt: His main concern is massing. While he is all for high ceilings from an architectural point of view, for this project, he feels 11-foot ceilings are too much. He thinks 9-foot ceilings would be adequate. He is concerned about the lower rear deck (roof deck) beyond the garage above Ricardo. That is 16 feet tall. It has walls so it's got mass and it is sticking way into the setback. It is only 4 to 4 1/2 feet from the property line. Decks are only allowed to project six feet in normal setbacks. He doesn't feel it is supportable. The whole deck that is beyond the six-foot projection is concerning. At 16 feet with mass, it becomes a plane overhanging Ricardo. He does like the architecture.

Joe: Doesn't think the project is too massive and doesn't think that it will be impactful for the neighbors. Joe shared photos from Megan's house (154) which shows the proposed house as being below the main views to the hills.

Julie: She stressed the need to be aware of setting a precedent of for neighborhood and doesn't feel this project is consistent with the context of existing neighborhood as it is right now. When she looks at county guidelines, she asks certain questions. Is it broken up in scale for hillside settings or are roof forms and roof lines broken up? This does not do that. She feels the top is too massive and asked if it really is necessary to go over FAR? Are five bedrooms and 11-foot ceilings really necessary? Conforming to FAR and bringing site lines down, would be greatly enhanced by a little deferring to the mass restrictions and to FAR. Can there be height modulations – maybe 11 ft ceilings on part of it and lower on other parts. She is confused by the front of the house. She is looking to be convinced that the Richardson approach is worthy of the building. Can entry be modified? She is struggling with the architecture butting up against the retaining wall. It has a vast illuminated window. The neighbors will be looking at a vast expanse of glass lit up all the time. It doesn't feel like it relates to the surroundings. Summary: Height, mass, connection to Richardson, how it is being done with the retaining walls and the massive window are the issues.

Mr. Butler said the feedback has been very productive. The Board is looking forward to seeing how this project progresses moving forward. All agreed the architecture is beautiful.

### **ITEM 2: Recruitment to fill vacant Board seat – Board discussion**

There was conversation about what types of skill sets would be most beneficial for potential candidates to fill the vacant Board seat created with Joe leaving. The SDRB By-laws cites designers, architects, contractors, real estate agents and the general public as options. Julie suggested looking in the Alto region on the other side of the highway to expand the candidate pool. If anyone has any ideas, encourage them to apply. It would also be helpful to let Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Board of Supervisor, know if you have someone in mind that you endorse.

### **ITEM 3: General Board Discussion**

Future meeting times: The Board unanimously approved changing the meeting start time from 7:35 p.m. to 7:05 p.m.

Board member availability/schedule over the summer: Since July 4<sup>th</sup> is a meeting day, all agreed that it should rollover to Tuesday, July 5<sup>th</sup>. No one is available on 7/18. All are present on August 1st. Everyone is likely present on August 15th. 9/5 is Labor Day so that meeting should roll over to 9/6

Discuss moving meetings because of holidays: It was agreed that moving forward, if a holiday falls on a meeting day, the meeting should automatically default to the following Tuesday.

### **ITEM 4: Adjournment 9:13 p.m.**