

Tamalpais Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting: July 17th, 2019, 7:00 PM
Meeting Location: TCSD Cabin - 60 Tennessee Valley Road, Mill Valley

I) Call to Order: 7:01pm - Andrea Montalbano (Chair)

Board Members Present: Andrea Montalbano (AM), Logan Link (LL), Alan Jones (AJ), Erin Alley (AE)

II) Approval of minutes: July 3rd, 2019

- Motion to approve: AJ; Second: EA; unanimous approval

III) Correspondence:

Timeline for notification of new and cancelled agenda items:

- AM brings up that the timeline for adding a project to the agenda and notifying the neighborhood is very tight. When the board receives a project to be added to the agenda, they must give the County fourteen-day notice. The County is, in turn, required to give mail notice to the neighborhood, postmarked at least ten days in advance of the meeting. Often these letters do not arrive until very close to the meeting date. When an applicant must have their item pulled from the agenda (ie due to scheduling conflicts), the County often does not have time to notify neighbors of the cancellation, nor are they required to.
- Case in point, Homestead Valley resident Mitchell Fong is present as he had received a County mailing that a project on Laverne. This was on tonight's agenda for a brief time but removed prior to the meeting; he received no notification of this cancellation.
- AM notes that one option for giving neighbors more notice, and applicants more time to cancel after they are notified that they are on the agenda, board could hold incoming applications for longer (not putting them on the earliest possible agenda if timing is tight).
- EA asks how often other Marin design review boards meet; Board is unsure. EA brings up that many design review boards meet less frequently (every 3-4 weeks, rather than every 2) and have longer meetings with many agenda items. This may help with notification lead time issues.
- AJ notes that if board does not see new applicants immediately, the option of ruling a project as "incomplete" due to the short window of time that this choice is available. This is often the most appropriate ruling the board could make and is also helpful for applicants who have more work to do.
- LL notes that the issue with less frequent meetings that they would become very long; as TDRB meetings often last two hours as-is. Long meetings tend to drain energy for all and decrease effectiveness. Although applicants could be asked to be more concise, the conversation style and ample time for neighborhood input is very important/helpful for the community and applicants.
- AJ agrees; adds that board solves misunderstandings, which is important.

- LL also adds that a common complaint in Marin is the amount of time that it takes to get a project through planning/building, so asking applicants to wait an entire month vs two weeks to come before our board may not go over well.
- Board, with input from MF, discuss ways that issue could be resolved without changing the timing of meeting. If neighbors knew that they could subscribe to a particular project of interest on the County website, they would receive electronic alerts of cancellations and updates. Sign up process is cumbersome but doable.
- MF has County mailing with him and suggests that it be formatted in a way that is more instructional – ie, step 1, step 2, step 3. LL views and confirms that the County simply sends out the TDRB agenda, so the board has some control over the content. Suggests adding instructions for project subscription and an invitation to attend the meeting.
- MF also shares feedback that the signs posted at the site of the project could be improved by inviting neighborhood input. They are informational but not instructional.
- Conclusion: AM will keep the timeline for project review as-is. To improve cancellation issues: will personally contact an applicant as soon as possible after they are added to the agenda, in hopes that any cancellations will be made before the County mails notice to neighbors. Will also add to revised agendas (sent out electronically) the new date for a cancelled project. Will also look at how to better invite neighborhood input via the mailed out agenda, including adding the contact information of the appropriate planner so letters can be written.
- LL suggests adding a short note to neighbors explaining how to subscribe to a project and submit comments.

Amonte Blvd “no overnight parking” proposal:

- County traffic engineer Stuart Hayre reached out to see if the TDRB would like to review a proposal for a “no overnight parking” rule on the part of Almonte Blvd that runs from Tam Junction to the Rosemont Bus Stop area.
- LL has been leading this initiative and made the board aware of the effort at a previous meeting, so AM told Stuart that she feels informed and comfortable not having it brought before the board.

Requested meeting with Planning Department about Manzanita area:

- Per decision at previous TDRB meeting, AM requested a meeting with the County to discuss the County’s future plans for the Manzanita area.
- Meeting will occur and County planner Kristin Drumm will attend.
- AJ notes that it is important that we make it clear to the staff that the Tam Plan mandates TDRB involvement in the area.

Letter written to County about the proposed project on Alta Way:

- Per discussion at previous TDRB meeting, AM send a letter to the County expressing the board’s opinion that the Alta Way project is required to come before design review

because it involves the development of paper streets. County planner Jason Wong confirmed receipt.

- There is a lack of clarity of what the County is now doing in response to this request.
- AM prepared a follow up letter restating the board's opinion. Board agrees that this letter is well written and ready to be sent.

IV) Items not on the agenda: no additional non-agenda items.

V) Agenda Items:

1. Proposal for a new home on a vacant lot at 343 Loring Avenue, Mill Valley

Project: Lot Modification. Location: Vacant Lot 343 Loring Avenue Mill Valley, CA 94941 Parcel Number: 050-032-06 Status: Incomplete Project Planner: Michelle Levenson 415.473.7874 Applicant: Chad Qi 530.304.5457

Project Description: The applicant requests Design Review approval to construct a new 1,803-square foot single-family residence and a 480-square-foot attached garage on a vacant lot in Mill Valley. The revised plans indicate that the approximately 2,283 square feet of proposed development would result in a floor area ratio 29.9-percent on the approximately 6,048 square-foot lot. The proposed building would reach a maximum height of 27.5 feet above surrounding grade and the exterior walls would have the following setbacks 34 feet from the west front property line; 9 feet from the north side property line; 12 feet from the south side property line; and 52 feet from the east rear property line.

Under Marin County Code Section 22.42.020, Design Review approval is required because the project involves the construction of a single-family residence on a vacant lot that is at least 50-percent smaller in total area than required for new lots under the applicable zoning district or slope regulations, in compliance with Marin County Code Section 22.82.50. Zoning: R1-B1 Countywide Plan Designation: SF6

Community Plan: Tamalpais Community Plan

Application and Plans can be viewed here:

https://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd/divisions/planning/projects/tamalpais-valley/qi_dr_p2325

Presentation by Chad Qi, owner of 343 Loring Avenue:

- Qi (CQ) has prepared new renderings.
- The design portion of the project has not changed since last visit to board.
- Will soon install story polls, although they will be difficult to see with currently existing trees; CQ will talk to planner Michelle Levenson to see if any tree removal will be required to help with this.
- Trying to build for the terrain.
- The County had requested 20ft driveways; CQ was able to do 18ft.

- Two parking spaces are required; project has four.
- 400sqft garage was confirmed as okay.

Questions from Board / Board Discussion with Applicant:

- AM notices that the master bedroom does not have windows; CQ notes that there are patio doors instead.
- LL recommends adding windows for resale value; Board agrees, also citing the importance of air flow.
- EA asks if the windows are still vinyl. They are not, CQ has changed them to metal.
- CQ says he took all of the board's advise after the first meeting, although is still unsure about exterior color.
- CQ shares color samples and renderings with board to discuss color options of light gray vs. dark gray. Board unanimously agrees that dark gray is the most suitable option; light gray will look nearly white and too bright in the hillside location.
- CQ asks for opinion of wood type/stain for tower detail; LL suggests opting for a wood tone that does not have any orange or red hue.
- CQ shares that the railings are custom made 2x2in tube bars.
- AM notes that the exterior lights CQ has chosen are great downlights.
- AJ reviews drainage plan; feels it is well calculated.

Motion:

EA makes a motion to approve; AM seconds. Unanimous approval.

V) Correspondence:

Tam Junction and Manzanita signage:

- Board has been working on an ongoing project to inform the County of signage violations in the Tam Junction and Manzanita areas.
- AM recommends that board reach out directly to businesses in violation with a 45 day heads up before submitting to the County. Board agrees that this is an excellent idea.
- LL suggests including a link to the Tam Plan for reference; also recommends wording the letter in a way that clarifies that the board's desire is to be a help for local businesses and residents / that the motivation of this initiative is to improve the Junction and Manzanita areas in alignment with the Tam Plan.
- AJ points out that board should find out what the County will do in terms of enforcement once violations are submitted.
- LL agrees to write draft letter for local businesses.

State Housing Bills (i.e. SB 592) and their effect on the role of design review boards:

- AM summarizes new proposed housing bill SB 592.

- AJ shares his opinion that the issue with many of these bills is that they are primarily of benefit to developers rather than those in need of housing.
- Board engages in discussion about proposed bills, the need for affordable housing, and the importance of local involvement / mindful and intelligent design. Board in agreement that affordable housing is needed but blanket laws are not an effective strategy.
- Community involvement is a must because only locals are able to identify what will and will not succeed in their unique area. It is crucial to make the extra effort to assure the voices of the entire community are heard.
- LL asks if the board would like to do something proactive; board agrees it would be appropriate to write a letter.
- LL will draft a letter stating why local boards – rather than a blanket government law – are the most effective way to create successful affordable housing opportunities.

VI) Public in attendance: Mitchell Fong, Laverne Avenue.

VII) Meeting adjourned: 8:45pm