

Tamalpais Design Review Board Meeting Minutes  
Regular Meeting: November 20th, 2019, 7:00 PM  
Meeting Location: TCSD Cabin - 60 Tennessee Valley Road, Mill Valley

**I) Call to Order: 7:03pm - Andrea Montalbano (Chair)**

Board Members Present: Andrea Montalbano (AM), Doron Dreksler (DD), Logan Link (LL), Alan Jones (AJ)

**II) Approval of minutes: October 16th, 2019**

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

**III) Correspondence:**

Discussion with Marin County planner, Michelle Levenson:

Marin County planner and TDRB liaison Michelle Levenson is present to discuss the board's biannual report.

- AJ asks Levenson if she has read the Tam Plan; Levenson has.
- The previous TDRB biannual report was done in 2018; the one currently in the works is for 2020.
- AM shares with Levenson that board has completed the 2020 biannual report but not yet finalized.
- Levenson shares an update on recent board question about notice requirements for meetings. The County's legal council has confirmed that 10-day notice is required for public meetings.
- AJ notes that this limits the board's option to rule a project as incomplete, as the 30-day completeness deadline window is often closed when this much notice is required.
- Levenson summarizes a typical application timeline for the board. When an application is submitted, a 30-day clock begins to tick (as mandated by state law). Typically, a planner is assigned to the project within two or three days; the Design Review board receives the project a few days after that. After 30 days the board no longer has the option of ruling a project incomplete. Within 60 days of completeness, the County must make a decision. Levenson agrees that these deadlines do cause challenges, but are required.
- Levenson shares that room in the budget has been identified to hire a part time County employee to assist the board. This person will take and type meeting minutes and to reach out to applicants with meeting notice and information about what to bring for their presentation.
- LL asks Levenson about the timeline for this; Levenson is unsure.
- Board agrees that this would be appreciated and a helpful way to reduce workload.
- AM identifies a few other goals, such as the addition of a projector for the display of project plans and the beautification of the Tam Junction area.
- AJ questions if the County reviews and uses the Board's biannual reports.

*Draft minutes – to be approved at a future TDRB meeting.*

- Levenson says that the report is a requirement but can be helpful; past reports have helped justify finding budget for the previously discussed part time County position.
- AJ shares that the board has concerns that the County does not always understand the importance of, and impact made by, by design review board.
- Levenson shares that she, personally, has found board comments to be very helpful. Points out a recent project on Loring as an example of the design review process making a clear difference.
- AM asks if there has been discussion about updating the Tam Plan.
- Levenson confirms that Strawberry – which has an older plan than the Tam area – is also pushing for an update.
- AJ shares that, under the guidance of previous Supervisor Charles McGlashan, an unofficial group penned an update to the Tam Plan. These documents still exist and could be useful. Supervisor Sears has a copy.
- AM acknowledges that updating such a key document could be an expensive project. AM suggests involving UC Berkeley, potentially saving a significant amount of funds and opening the door to innovative ideas.
- Levenson will bring these notes up to the County. Notes that the most recent plan to be updated was Santa Venetia (San Rafael). This was many years ago.
- AM notes that, in general, the existing Tam Plan is progressive.
- LL agrees, adding that the key is that the existing plan be enforced and a timeline for an update established.
- Levenson confirms that the Tam Plan is heavily relied on for residential guidelines.
- LL agrees that the residential guidelines are important. LL also feels the plan needs to be utilized for the Tam Junction and Manzanita commercial areas.
- Looking back to the 2018 biannual report, AM shares that the board has accomplished almost all of its goals.
- Levenson asks the board for its opinion of the County website. AM and DD share that not all plans seem to be coming through the email subscribers.
- Levenson confirms that there was a technical problem in June and re-subscribing may be necessary.
- LL appreciates that board members' biographies have been added to the TDRB section of the site. AJ asks if it would be possible to have more information for applicants included, as well.
- Levenson will look into having applicant information added.
- Another important topic for the board is Tam Junction signage. Levenson shares that signs requiring discretionary review currently come before the board.
- Per the request of the County, AM has created a side by side comparison of Tam Plan signage guidelines and County signage guidelines. The board is hopeful that this will be used for all signage reviews, even ministerial.
- LL feels that a main thing the board and County must focus on is the improvement of the Tam Junction and Manzanita commercial areas.
- LL asks Levenson for clarity about the sign review hierarchy.

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- Levenson summarizes that some types of signage are allowed outright by the state. Beyond this, guidelines outlined in community plans (like the Tam Plan) trump those stated in the County code. Correcting violations is a code enforcement matter.
- Levenson recalls that the County needed to improve their feedback loop to the board. Levenson asks the board if this has been done.
- AM says there has been no change.
- AM suggest that, when denying a project, the board provide the planner with the specific part of the Tam Plan that justifies this ruling. AM would be willing to create a summary/list of plan requirements to make this potential new task easier for the board.
- Board agrees that this could potentially be helpful.
- LL notes that the undergrounding of utility lines at Tam Junction is a complex but important goal that the board plans to include in its biannual report. LL asks Levenson who might be a good person at the County to speak to about this; Levenson is unsure.

#### History of 760 Bay Road, Mill Valley:

- In follow up to a previous meeting, AM asked County Planner Kathleen Kilgariff for a history of the proposed project at 760 Bay Road, Mill Valley. Kilgariff shared that the project was denied by the Design Review Board, went to Planning, and then was brought before the Board of Supervisors three times. The Board of Supervisors approved the project with conditions.

#### Housing Accountability Act:

- AM spoke on the phone with County Community Development Director Brian Crawford to discuss the Housing Accountability Act. Crawford confirmed that its requirements can only be dismissed if a county has met or exceeded its housing goal.
- The Board's understanding is that the Housing Accountability Act does not apply to SFR.
- County is going to meet with its legal council and then will provide further information to the design review boards.
- The County will need to develop objective design standards to work with this new act.
- AM recommends that the board begin creating a list of objective standards that are in line with the Tam Plan.
- AJ agrees and views this as a good way to potentially promote a Tam Plan update.
- AM adds that SB 35 does not apply to fire or flood zones.

#### Planning Process Timeline Requirements:

- In line with the board's discussion with Levenson, AM received a letter from the County that confirmed that new agenda items require 10-day notice.
- SB 330 limits the allowable amount of hearings to five per project.

#### Density Bonus Law:

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- AM spoke to Brian Crawford about the new density bonus law, which allows for a limited number of concessions. As discussed at a previous board meeting, AM promoted the idea that the TDRB be given the power to guide these concession choices.
- Crawford will take this into consideration.
- LL agrees that, because the board has deep local knowledge, this is a very reasonable and logical request.

#### **IV) Items not on the agenda / public comment:**

No public comments.

#### **V) Agenda Items:**

##### Recap of TDRB Meeting with Senator Mike McGuire:

- AM and AJ attended a private meeting with Senator Mike McGuire to discuss the role of design review boards and other items.
- AJ shared that McGuire spent 30-40 minutes and seemed genuinely interested.
- AM created, and shared with McGuire, a document covering relevant Tam area items, challenges, and suggestions. AM felt that McGuire was receptive and appreciative.
- AJ's primary objective was to present the importance of design review.
- AM and AJ expressed concern to McGuire that new government laws are lessening the impact of design review; McGuire acknowledged this but did not provide a solution.
- Despite this, AM and AJ felt that a good rapport was established. Board agrees that maintaining a relationship with McGuire will be beneficial.
- LL suggests that the board send a thank you letter to McGuire. Board agrees and AM will write a draft.

##### Ongoing Effort to Address Signage Violations in the Tam Junction Area:

- AM has completed the creation of a side-by-side chart showing the differences between the Tam Plan signage guidelines and the County's signage guidelines.
- The intent of this chart is to make it easier for the County to enforce Tam Plan signage guidelines.
- Chart includes information about current violations.
- Board agrees that the chart is ready to be sent to the County and Code Enforcement.
- On a related note, LL asks board is there is any update on the discussion about lighting at the Muir Woods Lodge.
- DD has looked into the matter and it appears that there may not be a violation.
- Board agrees that, when the Tam Plan is updated, more specific lighting guidelines would be useful.

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**VII) Public in attendance:**

Marcel Mead

**VIII) Meeting adjourned: 8:35pm**