

# Tamalpais Valley Design Review Board Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting: March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: Tennessee Valley Log Cabin; 60 Tennessee Valley Road, Mill Valley

I) Call to Order: 7:00 PM – Doron Dreksler (Chair)

Board Members Present; Alan Jones, Andrea Montalbano, Doron Dreksler, Logan Link

II) Approval of Meeting minutes – February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

AM motions, AJ Seconds, Unanimous approval.

III) Correspondence and Announcements: Stephen DeLapp, applicant for open Board position has been asked to attend the meeting and will introduce himself to the Board toward the end of the meeting.

IV) Public Comment on Items not on the agenda:

A) April Post brings up Senate Bill 827

1. She encourages the Board to take a strong public stance against this bill because it takes away local influence and input, which is counter to the very existence of the Design Review Board.

B) Rodrigo Izquierdo reminds the Board that the information that is presented to the Board by an applicant is not always correct or honest, and needs to be verified.

V) Agenda Items

A) **Lutzker Design Review and Variance**, 214 Beryl Street, Mill Valley AP #051-181-29 Applicant: Geoffrey Butler Planner: Sabrina Sihakom

*PROJECT SUMMARY: The applicant requests Design Review and Variance approval to demolish an existing 664 square-foot single-family residence, and construct a new 1,610 square-foot single family residence with a 582 square-foot attached garage on a 3,299 square-foot lot in unincorporated Mill Valley. The proposed development would have a building area of 2,010 square feet and a floor area of 1,610 square feet, resulting in a floor area ratio of 48.8 percent. The proposed building would reach a maximum height of 30 feet above surrounding grade. The house is proposed to be located 25 feet from the southeasterly front property line, 4 feet, 6 inches from the northeasterly side property line, 4 feet, 6 inches from the southwesterly side property line, and 32 feet, 4 inches from the northwesterly rear property line. Design Review approval is required pursuant to Marin County Code Section 22.42.020.D because the project includes construction of a new single-family residence on a vacant lot that contains less than 50 percent of the minimum lot area as required by slope regulations for new lots. Variance approval is required because the project exceeds the maximum 30 percent floor area ratio established by the governing R1-B1 zoning district. Zoning: R1-B1 (Residential, Single-Family, 6,000 square feet minimum lot size) Countywide Plan Designation: SF6 (Single-Family, 4-7 units/acre) Community Plan (if applicable): Tamalpais Area Community Plan*

1. Revised Design in response to previous meeting's comments is presented by the architect; Geoffrey Butler
  - a) The applicant has reduced the size of the building by 100 SF but the FAR was not noticeably reduced and is still at 48%.
  - b) An arborist has been retained to examine and advise about the existing trees to remain.
  - c) The windows of adjacent houses were added to the plans so that consideration of placement and

privacy can be performed.

- d) The drainage plan has been altered per input by the Department of Public Works. The dry-wells were increased in size to retain water longer.
- e) An elevation comparison has been added to the drawings at the front elevation for height comparison.
- f) A landscape architect was hired and developed a plan including many local species. This is presented to the Board by Ed Tishburn. Two Lymothanus trees were added to the front corners of the property to help conceal the front mass of the building.
- g) The height of both the front and rear portions of the house have been decreased (2' at the rear, 3'-3" in the front) and the connecting gable between was lowered to create a flat roof with dormer over the stairs, reducing the height by 6'. The building no longer pushes up against the maximum allowable height.
- h) The balconies on the front and rear of the house have been modified to be a blend of open and closed, and have been extended to project over the sides to break up the side elevation. The architect and Owner are not completely content with the design of the railing as a finished product but feels that some sort of more solid railing will be included in the final design, such as solid boards with small gaps, rather than a solid wall.
- i) The 7'-5" height "mechanical space" above the garage. Was removed completely, greatly reducing height of the building.
- j) The living room floor level was dropped to bring down the overall height of the front mass of the building.
- k) The large two story glass facade facing the adjacent neighbor was removed and high windows were used instead, reducing the privacy impact on the neighbor.
- l) The story poles were adjusted to show the reduced height by lowering the ribbons. The poles were not reduced in height so that the neighbors can view the height reduction.

## 2. Neighbor Comments:

- a) Meredith Jacobson states that she fears the building is adding to an already overbuilt neighborhood. She fears an increased fire danger stemming from more density. She states that the 5'-0" side yards are solidly landscaped and would not allow through access for firefighters in an emergency.
- b) Linda Rames, Head of the Almonte District Improvement Club, states that the Club is against the project because they do not feel the size of the lot is small enough to warrant a hardship. The Club feels a variance should not be granted.
- c) Rodrigo Izquierdo lives on the hill behind the project and presents photos of the story poles. He feels the project is still too large and too tall.

## 3. Board Comments:

- a) The County requirements for granting a Variance are read to the Attendees of the meeting.
- b) It is established that the Applicant is stating that the lot size is smaller than the legally required for a building lot, and claims this as the hardship that is grounds for a variance of exceeding the allowable FAR of 30%.
- c) A Board member makes the argument that staying within the allowable FAR, the applicant is allowed a 990 SF home, and that is a reasonably sized home, and does not see it as a hardship.
- d) A Board member states that allowing this project to exceed the allowable FAR would set a precedent and it would be difficult to turn down other applicants requesting the same variance.
- e) The applicant has provided a summary of the lot areas, floor areas, and FAR's of all of the properties within 300' of this parcel. It is reviewed and a Board member points out that
  - 1) There are not many parcels in the vicinity that exceed the allowable 30% FAR, and only three parcels that have FAR's above 40%, and they are all below 42%.
  - 2) There are 5 or 6 other parcels on the list that are less than 4,000 SF in area. These parcels could in the

future request the same variance and request that they also be allowed a 48% FAR on their properties.

- f) There is much debate among the Board members about the project. Some feel it is an appropriately scaled project for the neighborhood and that the architect has created a skillfully designed and respectful solution with a well developed and well thought out landscape plan. Some argue that the lot size does not warrant the granting of an FAR so far over the allowable.
- g) LL motions that the request for a Variance be denied. AM seconds. The Board votes and the result is 2 Yeas, 2 Nays. The Board settles on a tie and the Variance is not approved by the Board.
- h) Merit Comments:
  - 1) The Board agrees that the architect made a good effort in addressing the concerns of the Board from the previous meeting.
  - 2) The Board requests that the Planning Department take note that the disagreement among the Board members stems from the interpretation of “Mandatory Finding A” on the Marin County Planning Division's Variance Fact Sheet – that the small lot size qualifies as “special circumstances.”

B) Steven DeLapp, potential Board member, introduces himself to the Board

C) Goals for the Budget Cycle Discussed

- 1) Get Tamalpais Valley Community Plan updated, clarified and strengthened.
  - a) Start with Tam Junction
  - b) Include public input and work already completed
- 2) Make outreach and preliminary reviews more accessible to applicants through website and Planning counter handout
- 3) Create short list of what is required at Design Review Board meeting and post it on website and offer as handout at Planning counter
- 4) Contact Kentfield and Strawberry Design Review Boards to coordinate and establish a relationship.
- 5) Create list of Local native plants and post it on the website and Planning counter handout
- 6) Obtain a projector so that plans presented to the Design Review Board can be projected on a screen or wall so that all members of the public can be involved in the Board meetings, discussion and review of projects.
- 7) Work on public outreach – make the Design Review Board more accessible to the community. Work to become a community resource for all aspects of the built environment.

VI) Public in Attendance; Geoffrey Butler, Linda Rames, April Post, Stephen DeLapp, Meredith Jacobson, Emily Buskirk, Loretta Figueroa, Mark Lutzker, Ed Tischbern, Rodrigo Izquierdo

VII) Meeting Adjourned 10:00PM