

Architectural and Site Control Commission
Special Evening Meeting, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California

July 1, 2009

Chair Clark called the special meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the town center Historic School House meeting room.

Roll Call:

ASCC: Clark, Breen, Aalfs

Absent: Warr

Town Council Liaison: None

Planning Commission Liaison: None

Town Staff: Deputy Town Planner Vlasic, Planning Technician Borck

Oral Communications

Oral communications were requested, but none were offered.

CONTINUED CONSIDERATION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW REQUEST AND AMENDMENT TO CUP X7D-5, PROPOSAL FOR ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING FIRE STATION FACILITIES, 135 PORTOLA ROAD, WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT (WFPD)

Vlasic presented the June 25, 2009 staff report on the subject applications. He reviewed the events of the special June 22, 2009 joint site meeting with the planning commission and project evaluations developed since the site meeting. He advised that, as explained in the staff report, the ASCC could complete review and action on the "architectural review" request for the proposed additions and improvements to the existing fire station building, as the CUP for floor area additions was not necessary for this part of the proposal. He clarified that planning commission action on the CUP was, as a practical matter, only required relative to the proposed new apparatus garage. Vlasic noted that recommended conditions "a." 1-7 in the staff report were specifically drafted to assist the ASCC consider a "conditional" approval action on the architectural review portion of the proposal.

Vlasic reviewed the following proposed project plans prepared by CJW Architecture, the June 25, 2009 plan transmittal letter from CJW Architecture, and the June 16, 2009 letter from Fire Marshal Denise Enea explaining the proposed improvements:

Sheet: T-0.1, Title Sheet and Site Plan

Sheet: A-2.1, Floor Plans and Elevations

Vlasic then presented the following additional project information data received since the 6/25/09 staff report was prepared:

Proposed "Finish Color Board," dated 6/26/09, prepared by CJW Architecture

June 30, 3009 email from Fire Marshal Enea clarifying fire district needs relative to the size of the proposed apparatus garage and the planned improvements to the existing fire station

Vlasic also presented and reviewed the following communications from neighbors relative to the proposal:

June 30, 2209 letter from Janet Mountjoy, 237 Echo Lane, noting issues relative to the proposed design and location of the apparatus garage, exterior colors, lighting,

screen vegetation and drainage. It was noted that the letter requested that consideration be given to locating the proposed apparatus garage to the northwest corner of the fire district property.

June 26, 2009 letter from Susan Coffman, 235 Echo Lane, identifying issues associated with drainage and lighting and asking the height of the apparatus garage be kept as low as possible.

June 30, 2009 letter from Don Priest, 227 Echo Lane, discussing concerns over site and area drainage.

July 1, 2009 letter from attorney Kent Mitchell, on behalf of Janet Mountjoy, 237 Echo Lane, identifying questions relative to zoning and also asking that consideration be given to moving the proposed apparatus garage to the northwest corner of the site. It was clarified that the letter provided that if the proposed garage location were moved to the northwest corner, the zoning questions would be “moot.”

Vlasic noted that the “zoning questions” discussed in the letter from Mr. Mitchell were issues for the planning commission and not the ASCC, and that the ASCC should focus on the garage location/design issues noted in the letter. Vlasic then summarized the issues raised by neighbors and possible ASCC responses as follows:

- Drainage. This matter has been considered by the public works director and, as discussed and recommended in the staff report, a condition of approval would call for a detailed drainage plan to be developed to the satisfaction of the public works director and shared with the full ASCC prior to issuance of a building permit for the new apparatus garage. Vlasic clarified that the proposed improvements to the existing fire station building do not cause the drainage issues of concern to neighbors, as these are directly related to drainage conditions associated with the proposed apparatus garage.
- Exterior lighting. It was noted that a recommended condition called for development of a final detailed lighting plan, consistent with contemporary town exterior lighting standards, to the satisfaction of the ASCC prior to release of any project building permits. Vlasic also noted that he understood the project architect would present a site lighting plan at “tonight’s” ASCC meeting.
- Exterior finishes. It was noted that the proposed “finish board” included a range of “earthy” brown and green colors, all well under the town’s policy maximums for light reflectivity value (LRV), for refinishing of the existing building and that the same colors would be used on the proposed apparatus garage. Vlasic clarified that he understood the concerns of Ms. Mountjoy to be relative to the “green” tones and that she had advised the fire marshal of her preference for a more brown and dark tan color scheme. Vlasic noted that the recommended conditions also provided for ASCC consideration of a final color scheme prior to release of any project building permits.
- Apparatus garage screen landscaping. It was noted that at the site meeting the ASCC concluded that at this point additional screen landscaping was not necessary. Nonetheless, it was noted that a recommended condition would allow for the ASCC to consider conditions prior to finaling of the garage building permit and require additional screen landscaping if found necessary at that time.
- Height of apparatus garage. Vlasic noted that the story poles set to model the garage height were actually at least two (2) feet higher than the proposed garage height. He explained that the poles are 16 feet over existing grade, but that the garage would be cut

into the site so that the floor level matches that of the existing driveway. With the grading, the 16-foot height would be from the lower finished floor elevation and not from existing grade. Vlastic also referenced the comments in the June 30, 2009 notes from Fire Marshal Enea.

- Consideration of alternative apparatus garage location. It was noted that due to concerns over potential visual impacts and “value of property,” the Mountjoy communications ask that the ASCC consider a design that would place the garage at the northwest corner of the site. Vlastic noted that he had looked at the location earlier in the day and also distributed copies of the town’s base map air photo of the neighborhood. Vlastic noted that he had annotated the air photo to identify the currently proposed apparatus garage location and to also show the location of the garden area used by Ms. Mountjoy on the fire district property. Vlastic explained that based on review of the site plan, air photo, and site inspection the following conditions were noted relative to the currently proposed garage site and the suggested “northwest corner” alternative site:
 - The proposed site is located at the southwest corner in an area where only one small oak and a small walnut tree would need to be removed. Further, the site is immediately adjacent to the Ramies automotive use buildings, which have a taller height than the proposed garage. It was noted that existing trees at the southwest corner do provide screening relative to adjacent residential uses, but that there are more open views to and from the rear of the Mountjoy house. Vlastic noted, however, that fencing and planting in the garden area used by Ms. Mountjoy on the fire district property provide some screening and that the fire district has offered to install additional screen planting in the garden area.
 - The proposed site is to the rear of the east end of the Mountjoy property, adjacent to the existing garage. The alternative location would be adjacent to the west end of the parcel where there is more developed outdoor deck and use space. There is, however, more significant screen landscaping relative to views from the Mountjoy property to the alternative location than is the case with the proposed location.
 - The plans propose no windows or lighting on the rear or side elevations of the garage building that are facing residential use properties. Further, a recommended lighting condition is that internal lighting not be directed to spill light through the planned skylights.
 - The alternative location would likely require removal of four to six very large redwood trees for either or both garage location or vehicle access to the garage. It was noted that while there appears to be an “open” area at the northwest corner, the redwood trees would be impacted in any case by necessary driveway access to the garage site. It was also noted that some existing screen vegetation might need to be removed for garage development at the alternative location and that the height might be somewhat more due to different grading requirements to accommodate not only transition from the existing driveway, but also protecting the root systems of the redwood trees that would remain.
 - The alternative location is adjacent to more residentially developed parcels than is the case with the proposed location.

Vlastic noted that if the ASCC concluded that, based on neighbor concerns, that the alternative location should be evaluated, this would take some time and would also

require re-noticing of project review, as the neighbors on the north and northwest side of the site would need to be informed that a possible alternative site closer to them was being considered.

In response to a question from Breen, Vlastic stressed that the project could be considered in two parts and that the ASCC could approve the station building additions and remodeling without the need to act on the garage plan at this time. Vlastic clarified that none of the neighbor input has identified any issues with the station addition plans and that not planning commission action is needed relative to them. He added that such action would at least allow the fire district to pursue the federal grant for the station work.

Fire Marshal Denise Enea and project architect Kevin Schwarckopf were present to discuss the proposals with ASCC members. They offered the following comments and project clarifications:

- * It would be acceptable to the fire district to obtain action on the plans for the additions and improvements to the fire station building at this time and, if necessary, defer action on the garage plans, if the town concludes more time is needed for plan review and evaluation.
- A new site lighting plan, dated June 30, 2009, prepared by CJW Architecture was presented for ASCC consideration. It was noted that the plan eliminated the existing “up” light at the flagpole and provided for a new fire station sign with down directed lighting. It was also noted that the plan called for removal of many of the existing spotlights, but that the district would light to maintain four spots currently located on the existing rear apparatus garage.
- The alternative apparatus garage location suggested by Ms. Mountjoy was originally considered but rejected due to added tree, grading, and other potential impacts. Of particular concern is the need to take out a number of the redwoods planted to screen views and activities from the residential uses on the parcels to the north and northwest.
- The suggested alternative location also conflicts with the appropriate traffic and safe emergency response flow for the site. The established and appropriate traffic flow is in a one-way direction that now is achieved in a counterclockwise manner from the north to the south through the site and through the existing apparatus garage. The existing north side tent houses one of the emergency response vehicles that would be in the new garage. At times this vehicle needs to exit the site contrary to the main and desirable traffic flow. This creates risk to those using the public parking area on the north side of the fire station building and also creates potential for interfering with the need for rapid response. The proposed design avoids these conflicts.
- During initial design studies, the suggested alternative site was considered. One key reason it was rejected was due to efforts that would be necessary to resolve the traffic flow matter. It was determined that a rear driveway behind the existing apparatus garage would be needed to permit appropriate vehicle flow and that this would require removal of additional trees along the rear side of the site opening more views from the Mountjoy property to the existing fire station and proposed new garage. The currently proposed location avoided these tree impacts and the need for more driveway and impervious surface area on the site.

- The fire district is willing to consider a modified exterior finishes palette that would be more acceptable to Ms. Mountjoy. Further, the district is prepared to plant additional larger plant materials in the garden area for screening of views from the Mountjoy property to the proposed garage location.
- In response to a question, it was clarified that the internal height of the new garage would be 15 feet. The vehicles and equipment to be located in the garage would be the existing “tented” truck and likely a water tender. These are smaller than the main fire trucks in the existing garage, but do have heights with necessary equipment of 12 to 13 feet, leaving minimum room for working on the trucks in the garage. The best solution would be to have a taller height, but the proposed design has been selected to minimize visual presence. The garage is also needed to store ladders with lengths of 12 to 15 feet and as a place to contain materials and equipment now more randomly located along the rear of the existing garage.
- In response to a question, it was noted that the existing firehouse staff of four would not change with the planned station expansion and garage addition. It was explained that the staff increased from 3 to 4 roughly 15 years ago and in response to changes in fire fighting requirements. Now a minimum of three firefighters need to go to any fire as there must be two outside before a firefighter can enter a building. Thus, with three firefighters dispatched to an event, at least one could remain at the station.

Public comments were requested.

Janet Mountjoy reviewed the concerns in her letters to the town and offered the following observations:

- Have lived on the property since prior to fire station construction. Prior to station construction there was an orchard on the site. Fire Chief Larson advised neighbors of the plans for the station and that landscaping would be installed for screening. After the station was installed, the screen landscaping on the rear did not come about as planned and in 1982 an appeal was made to the fire district for the planting. This appeal resulted in the agreement for the garden use that now provides for screening. The proposed building would impact the success of this planting and the quality and value of the Mountjoy property.
- Removal of the redwoods for the alternative site is acceptable as the trees have been “limbed-up” impacting the value of the screening they provide.
- The proposed location for the garage would block views from the Mountjoy kitchen to the sky and compromise the open conditions along the back of the property, thus impacting property value.
- The proposed “green” finishes are unacceptable because they would stand out and not blend in. The green colors are “hated.”
- The fire district is seeking over three times the amount of floor area that is now on the Mountjoy property. This is considerably different that the residential standard in the neighborhood.

Geoff Baldwin, 243 Echo Lane, wondered if the ASCC had received his June 24, 2009 letter regarding his concerns over garage height and drainage. He was informed that his letter was included with the 6/25 staff report. He noted that it seemed from the comments that his concerns were being addressed.

Kent Mitchell, attorney representing Janet Mountjoy, reviewed the design concerns noted in his July 1, 2009 letter to the ASCC and planning commission. He presented photos taken from the rear of the Mountjoy property to demonstrate the visual impact concerns. He stressed the need for full and complete evaluation of the suggested alternative location and the need to find a solution that would not have the potential impacts on his client's property that are associated with the current proposal for the garage. He also shared an annotated copy of the town base map aerial photo provided by Vlasic earlier in the evening showing a possible "alternative" placement for the proposed garage and offered that, without a fair study of the location, it is hard to really understand tree and other impacts and compare them to the potential impacts of the current plan.

In response to the floor area comment offered by Ms. Mountjoy, Vlasic advised that the fire district property is almost four times the size of the Mountjoy property and that the possible floor area on the neighbor's property is roughly 3,200 sf to 3,400 sf and considerably more than currently exists.

After presentation of public comments, ASCC members discussed the project and action options before them. All concluded they fully supported the proposed additions and improvements to the existing station and were prepared to act on that part of the request. With regard to the request, however, members were not prepared to approve the proposed site lighting plan until they had an opportunity to consider it at the site, particularly with respect to the desired preservation of some existing spotlights. Further, members indicated that while the proposed finish board appeared consistent with town design guidelines and policies, they appreciated the willingness of the fire district to consider modifications in light of the color concerns of the rear neighbor.

With respect to the apparatus garage, ASCC members concluded that they needed more time to consider the suggested alternative site based on concerns expressed by the neighbor relative to potential impacts of the current proposal. Members noted that typically when a neighbor raises such concerns, the ASCC takes sufficient time to fully appreciate them and, if necessary, identify design options to resolve the concerns. It was understood that additional evaluation would include noticing of neighbors of the consideration of a possible alternative garage location.

Also with respect to the apparatus garage, ASCC members noted that thus far, they still viewed the proposed location as an acceptable and appropriate one and were particularly concerned with the tree removal and access/vehicle flow issues with the suggested alternative location. Clark stressed that proper traffic flow for emergency response was of utmost concern and that study of the alternative design needed to provide for emergency response vehicle flow that would be safe and rapid to serve the needs of the community. In response to a question, he clarified that while he was fully open to considering alternatives for the apparatus garage, he wanted to ensure that any alternative fairly considered did not compromise safe vehicle flow and/or rapid emergency response.

Following discussion, Breen moved, seconded by Aalfs and passed 3-0 approval of the proposed plans for the fire station additions and remodeling only, deferring action on the

apparatus garage portions of the plans, subject to the following conditions to be addressed to the satisfaction of the ASCC prior to issuance of a building permit:

1. A complete exterior lighting plan shall be provided that includes elimination of specific lights as generally noted on the 6/24/09 site plan and that identifies all existing site lighting to remain and proposed new site lighting. The final lighting plan shall be consistent with town polices and regulations for exterior lighting.
2. A final materials and colors board shall be provided, and finishes and material for all building elevations clearly identified.
3. A detailed plan for the proposed new front yard sign, and associated sign lighting shall be provided.
4. Details for the proposed front elevation arbor and garden wall and related landscaping shall be provided.
5. Construction staging and tree/vegetation protection plans shall be provided and once approved implemented to the satisfaction of the planning staff.
6. Prior to issuance of any building permit for station remodeling, a plan identifying actions that can be taken to enhance the sustainable, i.e., "green," aspects of site use and improvement shall be developed to the satisfaction of the ASCC. Based on this plan, appropriate "green" elements shall be included in the improvement plans for station remodeling.

After the above action, Vlasic noted that he would advise the planning commission at its special 8:00 p.m. July 1st meeting that the ASCC is not yet prepared to act on the apparatus garage portion of the request and recommends that the commission continue review of the conditional use permit matter until such time as the suggested alternative garage site can be properly evaluated.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

T. Vlasic