

~~REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2003,
TOWN CENTER, HISTORIC SCHOOLHOUSE, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028~~

Chairman Breon called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. Ms. Lambert called the roll:

Present: Commissioners Elkind, McIntosh and Zaffaroni, and Chairman Breon
Absent: Commissioner Toben
Staff Present: George Mader, Town Planner
Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager
George Comstock, Council Liaison

~~ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:~~ None.

~~REGULAR AGENDA~~

- (1) ~~Preliminary Review: Pacific Therx Request for Therapy and Fitness Facility at Jelich Commercial Building~~

Chairman Breon discussed the purpose of a preliminary review. Town Planner Mader reviewed the staff report of 8/28/03 on Pacific Therx's request to establish a physical fitness and wellness facility in the Jelich commercial building. He noted that Brian Bettendorf's letter of 8/22/03 described the proposed use in more detail. Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, he confirmed that in the staff report, item #10, the term "C-C district" should be replaced by "A-P district." Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Lisa Green said the physical training/personal therapy use in the Pollock building was about 2,100 sf, and the space in the Jelich building was 2,300 sf. Mr. Bettendorf added that a floor plan for the new use had not yet been prepared. Responding to Chairman Breon, Ms. Green confirmed that the physical therapy would be limited to the Pollock building.

Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Mr. Bettendorf said he doubted that membership could legally be limited to only Portola Valley residents. The existing clientele base was around 75% from Portola Valley for appointment-only training services. Based on the positive response from the community from surveys and from talking with people, he felt the majority of people who would be members would be from Portola Valley or the spheres of influence because of convenience. People from outside of Portola Valley had other facilities that were closer to them. Responding to Chairman Breon, Ms. Green said she did not think it was generally good policy to restrict membership. One of her current clients worked in the building, and it did not make sense to exclude someone who worked in Town.

Responding to Town Planner Mader, Mr. Bettendorf said 454 sf were devoted to fitness training in the current building. That included a 10' x 10' office. Responding to Chairman Breon, he said the name would be the same at the new location. Chairman Breon said the floor area limitations had been adopted to try to keep things small and serve primarily the Town. One way to address his concern would be to require separate names for each of the uses. As indicated in the staff report, Town Planner Mader noted that the problem of diversification of a business was not addressed in the zoning ordinance. He added that when the floor area limitations were being drafted, other fitness facilities had been looked at to come up with a number. This use was well within the limits of other facilities. One of the things that should be looked at was a good justification for the amount of space they wanted based on the clientele within the Town and its spheres of influence. He said he presumed that there were good records of their clientele which would provide a good basis for that. While it would not be exactly the same for a fitness facility, he thought there was a similarity.

With respect to the name, Ms. Green said currently the name was "Pacific Therx Physical Therapy & Personal Training." All of the physical therapy would be at the current location which would be "Pacific Therx Physical Therapy." Personal training would move to the new location along with the fitness center. The name would remain the same, but it would not be incorporated as a second business. Chairman Breon said his concern was about setting a precedent for other businesses.

Responding to Commissioner Elkind, Mr. Bettendorf said the proposed space could accommodate 10 people/hour. Responding to Chairman Breon, he said the retail portion would not be limited to members.

Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, he said retail items would include exercise equipment, such as home gyms, but an inventory of large items would not be kept. Beverages (e.g., juice, water) would also be sold from a small refrigerator or standard dispenser. Other retail items included exercise equipment accessories, gloves, water bottles, heart rate monitors, supplements, etc. He estimated one wall might be taken up by retail.

Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Mr. Bettendorf said outreach to youth would include talking to people in the Town. One of the biggest challenges to promoting physical activity for youth was having a convenient location where it could be performed. Outside of the existing activities like soccer and the other sports, a meeting place where people could be exposed to the proper principles of physical activity was important. The schools could also be approached, and there was a good market for after-school programs between 3:30 and 6:30 p.m. Responding to Chairman Breon, he said initially, advertising for the fitness and wellness use would be primarily by word of mouth. Also, an internal newsletter was sent by email to everyone that came in; those were forwarded onto others. Some local advertising had also been done in *The Almanac* and *Palo Alto Daily*. Ms. Green said the physical therapy part had not been advertised at all, and it was mostly by word of mouth.

Responding to Commissioner McIntosh, Mr. Bettendorf said the cost for personal training was \$80/hr. Membership would be \$100/month with no initial cost. Ms. Green said a survey indicated that people would be willing to pay \$100-\$200/month, even for such a small facility, because of the location and convenience. Mr. Bettendorf said other services that would be provided included cardiac risk assessments, aerobic capacity assessments, nutritional intervention programs, small group programs, and outdoor group exercise classes. He did not think that getting fit should be restrictive from a financial perspective. He felt what was proposed would serve the needs of the entire Town.

Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Town Planner Mader said the hours of operation had not been looked at in any detail. In summer, 8:00 p.m. was still light, and in winter it would be dark at 5 p.m. At the other operation, the applicants had blinds on the side toward the residences. Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Ms. Green said the current hours were 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for physical therapy and personal training. In the survey, the majority of people felt those hours were appropriate but some wanted it open a little later. The cafe and grocery store were open until 8 p.m., and she thought the neighbors would find those hours suitable. She noted that the survey started last week. People had, however, indicated that they wanted this type of facility since they moved into the current location. One question included in the survey was whether people would be willing to walk or bike to the gym to reduce traffic; 50% of the thirty who responded said they would. Also, 29 said they thought what was proposed was a good idea. Responding to Chairman Breon, she said the survey went to current clients who came in for physical therapy, with the majority of those coming from the Town.

Rosalie Cornew, 182 Brookside, said it was difficult for working mothers to get away before 7 p.m. for an hour of training. The Yoga place in Ladera had recently opened an evening class from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. Chairman Breon noted that Ladera was more commercial than the Town. Ms. Cornew complimented Pacific Therx on its services.

Dean Babcock, 400 Cervantes Rd., said Woodside and the Town were interlinked. He thought Woodside, Portola Valley and all the unincorporated areas should be considered as part of the community. Additionally, Medicare had just imposed a ceiling on physical therapy. He felt there would be more need for people who had had regular therapy to continue working with some sort of trainer in more of a physical fitness environment.

Responding to Councilmember G. Comstock, Mr. Bettendorf confirmed that 10 clients/hour was his best estimate for what the usage would be at the peak. Councilmember G. Comstock said that was roughly 340 sf per person. Ms. Green pointed out that there were also showers, bathrooms, offices, a reception desk, etc.

Commissioner Elkind said what was unique about this facility was that you had to go there and use the space. That was quite different from an interior decorator store where an interior decorator had an office, went to your home, and then came back. This was more of an on-site service like a store. In terms of

compatibility, she liked the idea of drawing individuals in and having it more of a community center/meeting place. That was something the Commission had talked about for a period of time. However, she was concerned about ten cars coming in at once at a peak hour like 8 a.m. after mothers dropped off children at school and then having ten more waiting in line to get in. That suggested the need for a reservation or appointment system. Other than that, she personally would like to see the service.

Commissioner Zaffaroni said she appreciated the concern about maximum usage. Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Chairman Breon said the Town could impose a limitation as a traffic mitigation measure. Commissioner Zaffaroni thought there could also be a peak period an hour before school got out. Chairman Breon said details about the business plan could be looked at when the application came forward, and some limitations might be appropriate. Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Mr. Bettendorf said it was difficult to predict when peak hours would be because of the number of variables. The number of memberships offered could be controlled, which would hopefully take care of the situation. Commissioner Elkind said the YMCA in Palo Alto sold two different kinds of memberships: a peak hour/anytime membership and an off-peak hour membership. Mr. Bettendorf noted that that had been discussed.

Commissioner McIntosh said this was the kind of community service use hoped for--aside from the fact that people liked the pharmacy. He thought this was an example of a very community-oriented use. He also thought the new facility would draw a higher percentage of community users than the existing use.

Chairman Breon said he did not think it would be difficult to find that this use fit with the GC zoning. Responding to Chairman Breon, Ms. Green noted that one of the other businesses had written a letter in support of the fitness center. Chairman Breon suggested that the advertising plans be reviewed and that whatever advertising was done be shown to the staff. He reiterated his concern about having a clear delineation between the uses of these two buildings. Some other businesses might try to spin off an aspect in order to get more space. Responding, Ms. Green said in one sense, that was being done here, but only because it was becoming difficult to serve all of the members of the Town who wanted to use her facility. This would allow another 500 sf for physical therapy and provide a fitness center that people had requested for a long time. She said she turned away 4-7 patients per week and most were from Town. People who lived in Town were given priority.

Chairman Breon reiterated his concern about the precedential nature of this. He would be more comfortable if it was a separate business entity--even though it was a business and legal hassle. Otherwise, he felt it would most likely work out.

Commissioner Zaffaroni said it was a use that everyone felt positive about having in the community. She said Chairman Breon's concern was about letting a business grow in that particular fashion and having other businesses want to do likewise. She agreed they should be characterized differently in any way possible. Mr. Bettendorf noted that traditionally, therapy and training weren't normally performed together in one facility. This was one thing that made his business unique. That gap had been bridged at Pacific Therx to provide the best services to people.

Town Planner Mader said hopefully the applicants could demonstrate that, based on their experience and expectations, the clientele would be limited to the criteria the Town had. Other businesses that might expand might well have to exceed that in order to use that much space.

Commissioner McIntosh said the plans should also address parking to ensure there was no infringing on adjoining stores. Chairman Breon agreed noting that people visited the hardware store for a short period of time; parking for the hardware store should be in front of the store rather than have all the spaces taken by this use. He encouraged the applicants to contact the other stores. Responding to Commissioner Zaffaroni, Town Planner Mader said parking in the back was limited to pick-up/delivery. He noted that parking spaces had not been delegated in any of the plans approved. If that was done, there would need to be discussions to determine how the other users might be affected.

Responding to Councilmember G. Comstock, Ms. Green said the type of equipment used in physical therapy depended on the philosophy of the physical therapist. Generally, it was a lower weight-training amount than a trainer's equipment. Trainers also used treadmills, bicycles, etc.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) Story Poles

Chairman Breon said the proposed addition to the Town Design Guidelines for story poles, as set forth in Mr. Vlastic's memo of 8/28/03, looked reasonable. Commissioner Elkind said there was a strong consensus on the ASCC supporting the additional guidelines.

Referring to the requirement that the story poles be maintained throughout the time period the application was under review, Commissioner Zaffaroni said some of the applications were drawn out for refinement after refinement. It might be undesirable to have the story poles maintained throughout. Chairman Breon suggested that the ASCC have the option to say when they could come down.

(b) Creek Study

Responding to Commissioner Elkind, Ms. Lambert said the RFP was out and proposals were due by this Friday. Within the next couple of weeks, interviews would be held. The project would be awarded at the end of the month, with work starting in the beginning of October.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Zaffaroni made a change to the minutes of the 8/20/03 Planning Commission meeting. By motion of Commissioner Elkind, seconded by Commissioner McIntosh, the minutes were approved as amended by a vote of 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Craig Breon, Chairman
Planning Commission

Leslie Lambert
Planning Manager