

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 26, 2017

The Larkspur Planning Commission was convened at 7:04 p.m. in the Council Chambers by Chair Kunstler.

Commissioners Present: Chair Daniel Kunstler, Monte Deignan,
Laura Tauber, Ignatius Tsang

Commissioners Absent: Todd Ziesing

Staff Present: Planning Director Neal Toft
Associate Planner Camaraota

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no comments.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- At its last meeting, the Council had a discussion about rooming or boarding up to three persons as it pertains to a "Home Occupation" Business License. The City does allow the boarding of up to four persons under the Home Occupation category of the Business License Ordinance.
- Staff will be bringing to the Council an Interim Ordinance prohibiting commercial cultivation, retail dispensaries, storage, and/or testing facilities for cannabis within the City for medical or recreational purposes. The Council has agreed to allow deliveries into the City. The Council has directed staff to prepare an ordinance that would allow personal cultivation within the interior of homes. The Council will be holding Public Hearings regarding outdoor cultivation for personal use. Chair Kunstler asked if this issue would come before the Commission. Planning Director Toft stated it was not a Zoning or Use Permit issue. The Council wants to apply health and safety standards but there will not be a permit and review process. The commercial uses are a land use matter and will ultimately require a zoning amendment.
- The City of Novato will be holding a "Planning Academy" in November- he will provide more information as to whether it will be something valuable for Commissioners to attend.
- The State Legislature recently passed a number of bills including the "housing package", some of which pertain to affordable housing funding, reporting requirements, and ministerial mandates for multi-family housing projects. The legislation is very convoluted and the attorneys are still working on a summary of the law. He will keep the Commission informed as he gets more clarification on the matter. Chair Kunstler noted the law was very complex and he asked if the Commission could get some type of presentation. Planning Director Toft stated "yes".

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. **DR/PREC #17-13; 100-2700 Lincoln Village Circle, A.K.A. Serenity at Larkspur Apartments (APNs 018-191-15, -17, -18, -24, -33, & -34); Travis Torres/Maximum Real Estate Partners, applicants; RPR Larkspur Owner LLC, property owners; PD (Planned Development) Zoning District; Ordinance No. 563 (Larkspur Landing Apartments). Request for Design Review approval and approval to amend the Precise Development Plan for Larkspur Landing Apartments (Ordinance 563) to reconfigure existing parking. The proposed project would reduce the number of parking spaces within carports by 75 spaces, and would add 49 enclosed garages (with overhead storage) and 9 uncovered parking stalls; resulting in a net loss of 17 parking spaces. As proposed, the project would result in a total of 499 parking spaces to serve the multi-family development known as Serenity at**

Larkspur Apartments consisting of 172 one-bedroom apartment units and 170 two-bedroom apartment units, which is the minimum required based on the total number of apartment units and bedrooms within the development

Associate Planner Camaraota presented the staff report.

Chair Kunstler noted there was a public park on the site that is maintained by the City of Larkspur and he asked if visitors to the park had legal or authorized access to the guest parking spaces for the apartment complex. Associate Planner Camaraota stated “no- those spaces were for tenants and guests of the complex.”

Chair Kunstler opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Travis Torres, representing Maximum Real Estate Partners, made the following comments:

- They are enhancing the property by providing enclosed garages for secure parking and additional storage.
- Notable enhancements have been done including new monument signs, pool and clubhouse renovations, and interior renovations.
- Future plans include painting the existing buildings and completing the playground in the adjacent City park.
- They will also be adding new fitness equipment, a new dog run, BBQ areas, and new pathways in the City park.
- He passed out a packet of the current and proposed conditions. He discussed the locations of the parking improvements.
- They will be adding some vines and other vegetation to the new parking structures.
- The garages will all be wood framed structures with Hardi paneled exterior siding to match existing apartment buildings.
- The portion with flat roofs will have a 2% rain runoff. The drainage improvements would direct run-off into a bioswale.
- The garages would provide additional overhead storage in lofts.
- There will be a provision in the lease to maintain parking by prohibiting the conversion of the garages into “storage containers.”
- They will enforce with annual unit inspections already taking place.
- The proposal maintains a total 499 required parking spaces on the site.

Commissioner Tauber asked if each unit would have a designated garage and if tenants would need to pay more to lease the garage. Mr. Torres stated it would be on a “first-come, first serve” basis. Mr. Seth Mallon, representing Maximum Real Estate Partners, stated every apartment rental gets a parking space. Additional parking can be requested and there is a small charge. There would be an additional charge for a parking garage.

Commissioner Tsang asked if the proposal for 49 garages was based on requests from tenants. Mr. Mallon stated “yes”. Commissioner Tsang asked why they were creating 49 garages. Mr. Mallon stated they had originally planned on providing 60 spaces. Given code constraints and limitations of the site, they reduced the number to 49. Commissioner Tsang noted that many of the 153 parking spaces are underneath the buildings and asked if consideration was given to convert these to enclosed garages. He was concerned that the loss of 17 spaces could have a negative impact on the residents, visitors, and other neighbors.

Commissioner Tsang asked staff if 75 guest parking spaces were required by code. Planning Director Toft stated the requirement was 72 spaces. Commissioner Tsang asked if the residents were using the guest parking spaces. Mr. Mallon stated “yes”.

Associate Planner Camaraota discussed the code and the calculations for the minimum number of required and guest parking spaces based on the number and type of units. The City does not regulate the use of guest parking spaces by the tenants or restrict how many cars residents may have. Planning Director Toft stated the formula in the code attempts to calculate an adequate amount of parking for the complex in general.

Commissioner Tsang asked about the rationale behind the location of the garages. Mr. Mallon stated the attempt was to place them closer to the larger units.

Mr. Mallon made the following comments

- The site is sloped and has constraints.
- They perform an annual transportation survey of the residents to understand how they move, where they go, what their use patterns are, etc.
- They found that 482 of the 499 spaces are being used.
- The majority of the residents travel to San Francisco, Marin, and the North Bay.
- The modes of transportation include: 36% drive alone, 25% take the ferry, 11% take transit; 10% work from home; 8% walk; 4% carpool.
- They are looking at a solution that meets the code and attempts to better improve amenities for residents and provide more options.
- There are a couple of constraints to enclosing the garage spaces under the structures, including the width of the parking stalls and the large structural columns that would get in the way. This was further exacerbated voluntary retrofitting that was performed. The turning radius was also a problem due to the constrained dimensions.

Chair Kunstler asked about provisions for additional bicycle storage. Mr. Torres stated they were adding a lot of bike parking across the property. There is currently bike parking near Building 500. Chair Kunstler referred to Building 1700 & 1900 and the plan to add parking spaces and asked if this would require any grading. Mr. Torres stated “yes” and he pointed to the slope. The amount of grading would be minimal and they would be adding a small retaining wall.

Commissioner Tsang stated the carports will have flat roofs and the garages will have a slight slope to the roof and he asked about design consistency. Mr. Torres stated the slight grade on the flat roofs would help with the runoff. They will be looking at the existing carports for design consistency, but recognize the dated appearance of the carports and realize there is no “perfect” solution. Mr. Mallon stated they would be matching the trim pieces to provide as consistent flow as possible.

Ms. Heather Donmeyer, Larkspur Courts, made the following comments:

- Parking is very tight in the neighborhood.
- She asked if the proposal meets the California Code for parking spaces.
- She asked if the allocation takes into account the below market rate apartments.
- She asked about handicapped spaces.
- She asked if there would be sound proofing for the garage doors.

Planning Director Toft stated the project has been reviewed by the Building Official. He was not aware of any violations of the California Building Code. Associate Planner Camaraota stated she was not aware of any California Code that requires covered parking in any specific ratios. They are exceeding the number of covered spaces under Larkspur’s Code. Automatic garage doors are a common feature in residential development and are not anticipated to generate adverse conditions for residents in the area.

Mr. James Holmes, Larkspur, made the following comments:

- A lot of things have changed since the 1970’s but one that has remained constant is the need for parking.

- The Citizens Committee for the Station Area Plan identified the absence of parking at Larkspur Landing as a constraint.
- The key issues should be the off-site impacts with respect to parking.
- If there is a shortage of parking then the loss of 17 spaces should not be allowed.
- He is concerned that there is no real data regarding the parking usage at this site.
- It does not look like they have any parking to spare.
- They should not rely on speculative future trends regarding driverless cars, etc. The immediate data indicates less transit is being used for a variety of reasons.
- They need to go back to the drawing board and find the 17 spaces.

Chair Kunstler closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- They are meeting the minimum parking requirements - it would be nice if they had extra parking spaces.
- He thinks this would have been approved initially in the Precise Development Plan. It is reasonable and it makes sense.
- He would have a hard time asking them to go above and beyond what is required.
- He could recommend approval of the Precise Plan Amendment to the Council.
- He referred to the Design Review application and stated the proposal was consistent with required findings and is logical. He could recommend approval to the Council.

Commissioner Tsang provided the following comments:

- They had not heard from neighbors of the property.
- The parking garages are on the Lincoln Circle property line and the presence of the building would be felt by those traveling through.
- He was curious about the need to couple storage with parking garages and how residents without garages would have storage needs met.

Commissioner Tauber provided the following comments:

- She referred to the Design Review application and stated there was nothing exciting about the design. It was not attractive or awful- it fits with what is there. She could make the findings for the Design Review.
- She likes the idea of the conversion to garages. It would make the complex more attractive to renters.
- It would be nice if there was more parking but they should not be penalized for not doing more than they are required to do.
- She could recommend approval to the Council.

Chair Kunstler provided the following comments:

- The Commission takes a close look at parking and tries to put things in perspective.
- They are meeting the requirement.
- He appreciates what they are trying to do- provide good amenities.
- He could make the findings for recommendation to the Council.

M/s, Deignan/Tauber motioned and the Commission voted 4-0-1 (Ziesing absent) to recommend approval of DR/PREC #17-13, 100-2700 Lincoln Village Circle, to the Council.

Planning Director Toft stated the Council would review the Ordinance at the October 18th meeting. The Ordinance would need a second reading and adoption.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Commissioners Reports

There were no reports.

2. Approval of minutes of Planning Commission meeting of September 12, 2017

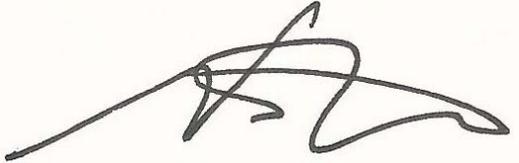
M/s, Tauber/Deignan, motioned and the Commission voted 3-0-2 (Ziesing absent, Tsang abstained) to approve the September 12, 2017 minutes as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis,
Recording Secretary

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Larkspur Planning Commission on October 24, 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Neal Toft', is written over a light yellow rectangular background.

Neal Toft, Planning Director