

CITY OF SAN DIMAS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Wednesday, December 20, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.
245 East Bonita Avenue, Council Chambers

Present

Chairman Emmett Badar
Commissioner David Bratt
Commissioner Stephen Ensberg
Commissioner Yunus Rahi
Commissioner Jim Schoonover
Planning Manager Craig Hensley
Associate Planner Laura Lockett
Assistant Planner Michael Concepcion

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Badar called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. and Commissioner Bratt led the flag salute.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approval of Minutes for December 6, 2006.
2. Approval of D.P.R.B. Case No. 06-84 – A request to construct a new 5,002 s.f., two-story residence with a three-car garage located at 325 Rebecca Drive, located in Specific Plan No. 8, submitted by Mr. and Mrs. Daher. (Previously approved D.P.R.B. Case No. 04-76)

MOTION: Moved by Schoonover, seconded by Bratt to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

3. **CONSIDERATION OF TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP 06-02 (65790)** – A request to subdivide one lot (3.78 acres) located in the SFA-16,000 zone into four lots (39,000 to 42,140 sq. ft.) for the future development of single-family homes.

Staff report presented by **Planning Manager Craig Hensley**, who spoke about the issues raised by the Equestrian Committee. When staff took the map to the Subdivision Committee, the Committee raised concerns regarding Lot 2 being landlocked, the amount of grading and tree removals, and the difficulty of vehicular and equestrian access. They recommended that the project be reduced to three lots with only one lot in the south and two lots off Cody. There were also concerns about Cody Road because there are several lots taking access through an easement. An analysis was conducted to see if the public right-of-way should be extended but there were no discernible advantages in doing so. On-site there are two abandoned houses on the southern portion and some type of equestrian use on the northern half.

In 2000 the City Council adopted guidelines for the creation of new equestrian lots and this proposal meets those requirements. There is access from Gladstone on an existing driveway accessing the two lower pads and additional access from Chaparral and Cody. Staff has concerns with the amount of proposed grading and the retaining walls. A significant amount of grading is being proposed in relation to the access from Gladstone near the existing drive. Also proposed are two large crib walls, the first being 225 feet long and 14 feet high, the second wall slightly shorter in length and 11-1/2 feet high.

Staff is recommending the proposal be redesigned to three lots with two on the north and only one on the south. This way the existing driveway could be improved with only minor modification and a lesser amount of grading. An arborist report was prepared and identified 117 trees on the property; 64 of which are mature trees. The proposal would remove 53 of the mature trees and a majority of non-mature trees. With less grading and fill, more of the mature trees can be preserved.

Another issue of concern for staff is that Lot 2 is a landlocked parcel and has no access to Gladstone except for an easement that cuts across Lot 1. Normally a flag lot would be used in this type of situation but the topography of the parcel does not allow for that. Lot 3 is also landlocked, but it is possible to run a 26-foot driveway along the west and take a flag to Chaparral and Cody. Creating landlocked parcels is considered poor subdivision design and staff is recommending revision to the plan.

Commissioner Ensberg asked about the equestrian trails shown on the plan.

Manager Hensley stated these are not public trails but there would be an easement across the lots to provide access to Chaparral and Cody, which has safer access than Gladstone. However, the Equestrian Committee expressed concerns about the quality of the housekeeping areas on Lots 1 and 2 even though access has been provided.

Commissioner Rahi asked if it was required for all four lots to provide housekeeping.

Manager Hensley stated the properties are allowed by zoning to have housekeeping. When a new subdivision is processed it is typical that some type of corral area is accommodated even if the new owner does not wish to have horses.

Commissioner Bratt asked if there was a proposal by the developer to replace the trees.

Manager Hensley stated City Code requires a replacement ratio determined at the time of project approval. Usually it is 2-to-1 minimum with 15 gallon trees.

Commissioner Schoonover stated the Environmental Review said it should be a 2-to-1 replacement with 24-inch box trees. Will the measure need to be changed based on the new ordinance recently adopted by City Council.

Manager Hensley stated the Environmental Review was probably conducted prior to adoption of the new ordinance so staff will review that requirement prior to final approval.

Commissioner Bratt asked if there were any examples of crib walls in town.

Manager Hensley stated the last crib walls built in the City were in the early 1980's off of Reeder on Manchester and Kingsbridge, and they are examples of how bad crib walls can look.

Commissioner Ensberg asked for clarification on why landlocked parcels are considered poor subdivision design.

Manager Hensley stated the biggest issue is having to take access across someone else's property. Normally you try to use a flag design which at least puts the access at one side of the first parcel, but in this instance it is cutting across the middle of the parcel. The intent of the code is that each lot should have direct access to the public right-of-way.

Chairman Badar commented that he was concerned about public safety access to the back lot, but that the Fire Department had reviewed the map and did not feel the access was inadequate.

Chairman Badar opened the meeting for public comment. Addressing the Commission were:

Stan Stringfellow, 326 W. Arrow Highway, Applicant, who stated this property is challenging and felt that staff has taken the most conservative view by concentrating on grading, tree removal and access to Lot 2. He showed a power point presentation of the site. He stated several of the parcels to the west of the site were landlocked and accessed through an easement, and that a large amount of cut and fill was used on the development across the street from them. He stated Lots 3 and 4 were flatter, and the fill was to allow them to drain towards the street at Cody and Chaparral. They are preserving a significant stand of oak trees on the site but their arborist had identified one as unhealthy. There is a storm drain and sewer easement running across this property and they have designed the project to avoid development in that area. While it is unusual to have a landlocked parcel, he felt they have addressed that adequately and that all lots exceed the minimum standards of the zone.

He spoke about the ways they tried to minimize the grade from the Gladstone access, and that crib walls were proposed because they can be planted. He agreed that if they are not maintained, they do not look very good so they are proposing a maintenance agreement for their upkeep. He felt that the access would need to be significantly modified even with a three lot design and some type of retaining wall would still be required. They want to improve the road for safety reasons and better access for fire equipment. He understood the concerns about the trees but said the

report indicated there were a number of poor and failing trees and felt the development would be improving the site.

Commissioner Schoonover asked how many landlocked parcels were located to the west of the project.

Manager Hensley stated there are five lots using the easement; four developed and one undeveloped. Access for the easement is across the north of this property and is currently ten feet wide. The proposal with this map would increase the easement to 26 feet of paved area.

Commissioner Ensberg asked if the crib walls would be visible from Gladstone, and would crib walls be needed whether the project is three or four lots.

Stan Stringfellow, applicant, stated they won't be visible from Gladstone but will be to the properties to the west. He felt they would need the crib walls no matter the size of the development in order to create a safe access. He stated they proposed crib walls because they thought it would have less impact than a retaining wall.

Mark Rief, 404 Mustang Court, stated he has lived in the area for 26 years and asked if there was anything that would prevent this property from being subdivided again in the future, and if the utilities will be run underground.

Manager Hensley stated that under the current standards the property cannot be subdivided again. He added the utilities will be placed underground from the pole to the units.

Mark Rief stated he has seen a lot of grading being done near his property and that 30-40 truckloads of dirt have been brought to the property. He asked if there was a permit issued for this since he thought the discussion tonight was to determine that.

Stan Stringfellow, Applicant, thought his office had obtained permits to stockpile the dirt and they have a soils report on all of the loads, so they will take immediate steps to correct things with the City.

Naz Nageer, 412 Mustang Court, asked if the neighbors that have septic systems will be able to access the sewer with the construction of these new lots.

Manager Hensley stated he could speak with the developer and Public Works to see if an arrangement can be made.

There being no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Ensberg felt the concerns raised by staff have been addressed. The landlocked parcel is consistent with other properties around the site and the purchaser's will be notified of the access easement at the time of sale. He felt there wasn't a specific code that regulates creation of landlocked parcels and an inference has to be drawn. It appears the applicant is sensitive to the tree issue and they will be replaced more appropriately, and equestrian access has been addressed.

Commissioner Bratt concurred. He did not like the idea of landlocked parcels and that it sets the stage for future problems, but it already exists in this area and hasn't been an issue.

Commissioner Rahi concurred and asked if they would be making a decision based on the plans presented tonight.

Manager Hensley said if the Commission feels the plan is acceptable, staff will return with a resolution containing conditions which would establish the maintenance agreement, equestrian access, etc.

Commissioner Schoonover felt it was good to have four instead of three equestrian lots.

Chairman Badar stated he still had concerns about the entrance providing adequate access for fire equipment. In regards to the easement, he felt that was a marketing issue and concurred that this would give the City one more equestrian lot.

Manager Hensley suggested they continue the public hearing to January 17, 2007 and staff can continue to work with the applicant during that time and then bring back the appropriate resolution with conditions of approval.

MOTION: Moved by Schoonover, seconded by Bratt to continue the public hearing to January 17, 2007 and direct staff to bring back a resolution of approval with conditions for a four lot development. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

4. Director of Development Services

No communications were made.

5. Members of the Audience

No communications were made.

6. Planning Commission

a. Report on Meetings

Commissioner Bratt stated the entire Commission attended the California League of Cities session on ethics training held in downtown Los Angeles on December 14th. He thought the regulations were well-defined and they all benefited from attending.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Badar adjourned the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. to the regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled for January 3, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.

Emmett Badar, Chairman
San Dimas Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Craig Hensley
Planning Manager

Approved: